

April 4, 2008

Church Council
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church

Dear Council:

My name is Susan Goldammer and I am currently serving as a lecturer of law at Tumaini University in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. I was sent here through the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America to respond to a request from the Evangelical Church in Tanzania for qualified lecturers in their universities. For those of you who know or remember me, I am a member of St. Andrew's and hope that I will be able to return to Columbia, Missouri this fall.

It has been a fantastic adventure and an education. I thought I was mentally and emotionally prepared to live in a third world country, but there is really nothing you can read or do in the United States – the land of the lucky – to prepare you. There are so many bright, intelligent, and hard working people caught in a maze of underdevelopment, lack of resources, ignorance and chaos. I have seen people without any legs pulling themselves along the sidewalks with their hands, men pushing entire flatbeds of produce down the street the size of a pickup load without any shoes, and hundreds of children waiting for hours in the rain a dala dala (local bus) to take them to or from school. You should see the streets after it rains! The sewers back up and the puddles are so deep that even people in Land Rovers cannot pass.

And of course it is the children that pull you the most. The Lutheran church has put me up in a guesthouse that is very close to the campus so that I do not need to worry about daily transportation. The guesthouse is run by the African Inland Mission, a worldwide non-denominational organization that trains and places missionaries throughout Africa. The woman who runs the guesthouse also works for Safina House, an organization AIM has created to work with street children in Dar es Salaam. Because of this living arrangement I have actually learned quite a bit about AIM's mission.

Kathleen has lived and worked in Tanzania for twelve years. She and members of her church wander the street of Dar looking for the children living on the streets, and attempt to gain their trust. It is very common in Tanzania for children to run away from home or be abandoned on the streets. Many of them go to the cities, thinking that the chances for survival are better there. Some of them are orphans whose extended families really do not want to care for them. Some of them are children of a wife who was divorced and whom the new wife does not want around. Some of them come from homes where drug and alcoholism are prevalent, or homes that are too poor to support them. One case in particular there is a concern that the girl will be raped by a grandfather as part of a witchcraft ritual. Many have been physically or sexually abused.

Most of the children Kathleen works with are boys of approximately 10 to 18 years of age, although the youngest is seven years old and was essentially given to the organization by a mother working on the streets as a prostitute. Girls on the streets routinely turn to prostitution and the organization only finds out about them when they are dying of AIDS/HIV and are in need of hospice care. Another member of her church who used to be a prostitute herself works with the girls.

Kathleen and her team spends time with the boys on the street and shares the Word with the kids. If the children are willing, they attempt to return them back to their families. The organization screens the families to determine whether or not it is a safe environment to return to. If not, if the families really do not want the children, or if the families cannot be located, they will place them in foster care homes, provide them schooling or educational assistance, and help with their medical care. Currently Kathleen has approximately 40 boys placed in the Dar es Salaam area alone and similar outreaches in several other cities in Tanzania. One family is fostering 13 boys in one house – in addition to their own five children!

Because of my living arrangements, I have become friends with Kathleen and familiar with her mission. Currently they are low on funds because they have paid for all of the uniforms, books and school fees of all of the former street children they care for (school starts in January and has to be paid in full), and have had to pay a year's rent for one of their facilities. They are having trouble relocating their drop-in center (they were evicted by new landlords) because the rents are too high.

Kathleen has a particular need I would like to share with you. There are no heart specialists in Tanzania, and I am told that mission doctors will not perform surgery here because there is not adequate equipment and support staff. However, a doctor is coming to Nairobi, Kenya, in May. There is a boy named Selamani Jumanne who is in need of heart surgery. He is fourteen years old and has sickle cell anemia as well. He is a former street boy who now lives with his mother, and Safina House helps them with school fees and medical care because they are so poor and they do not want him to end up back on the street.

In addition, Iddi, the oldest son of Mama Saleh, the housekeeper at the guesthouse and staff member of AIM, also needs surgery. He has fainted several times this year and has spent a lot of time in the hospital. I am told he has a problem with a heart valve. I have gotten to know this family quite well this year and have shared several meals with Mama Saleh and Iddi. Before he had problem with his heart, Iddi was an elementary school teacher. You can be a teacher here without a degree.

These two are extremely lucky to have the opportunity to see a heart doctor at all – particularly one whose services are free. However, the surgeries will cost approximately \$1,000 apiece for the use of the hospital in Nairobi. Kathleen is not sure where the money will come from, but she amazes me with her faith because her answer always is, “The Lord will provide.” I decided the Lord may have put me here for a reason.

I have put an e-mail out to friends and family asking for prayers, and donations if possible. Please understand that there are many Lutheran aid organizations here as well doing fabulous things. In fact, the Lutheran church is growing faster in East Africa than anywhere else. I have a friend in Rwanda that is opening a Lutheran secondary school and have met several mission staff from the ELCA working in secondary schools throughout Tanzania. The Lutheran church is also opening a new hospital in the Arusha area and there is a team working on improving medical care in that region. The ELCA has more missionaries in Tanzania than any other country in Africa – and possibly the world. I have heard nothing but positive things about the Lutheran World Relief as well.

However, I am a bit isolated in my university world and have become acutely aware of the needs of Safina House first. Please say a prayer for all the people working hard to make Tanzania a better place. Please let me know if you would like more information about any specific mission in Tanzania or Rwanda as well. If you are able, I would appreciate donations towards the heart surgeries.

Africa Inland Mission Int.
P.O. Box 178
Pearl River, NY 10965

1-800-24-0010

<http://www.aimint.org/usa/>

It is tax deductible and you can give online. Please make sure to mention that the gift is designated for the street children in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, through Kathleen Quellmalz.

God's blessings on you and your work. I know this has been a busy year for St. Andrew's and you are probably spiritually, emotionally, and financially weary. I respect your commitment to the church! Please do not feel obligated to give or feel bad if promises have been made elsewhere. I heard the church is raising money for Habitat for Humanity, which is a great organization. I know you are doing everything you can – and probably more than you should.

Sincerely,

Susan Goldammer