

JACOBSON NEWSLETTER

June 2020

COVID UPDATE

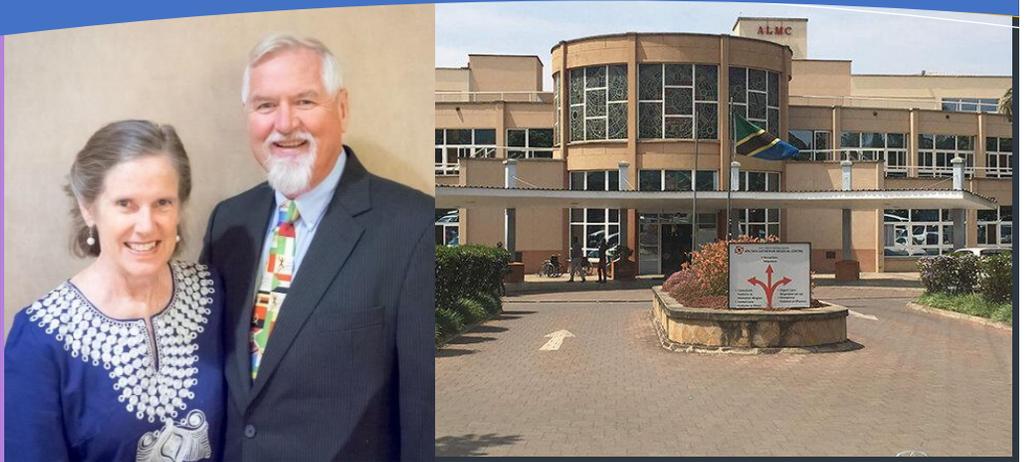
Tanzania hasn't issued a summary of their Covid 19 cases for almost two months. Two weeks ago, the President announced that God has cured Covid in Tanzania and we are free to return to normal. The borders have been opened and schools are open again.

Yet in the background, the hospitals are caring daily for Covid patients and neighbors know who is sick at home and who has died at home. But without statistics, no one is able to get a handle on what is really happening with the pandemic in Tanzania.

Covid seems not to have had as horrific an impact on morbidity and mortality as anticipated. Perhaps because of the young average age of the population with 50% of the population being age 15 or below.

Whatever understanding is eventually learned about Covid in Tanzania, it is already abundantly clear that the greater impact of Covid has been upon the economy. The tourist industry has collapsed and brought about great unemployment. The lost revenues in many industries are bound to lead to struggles with famine, less access to health care, and difficulty for students to remain in schools.

USAID has predicted that the after effects of Covid may do away with decades of development across the African continent. Our challenge is no longer an epidemic but rather a doubling down for development.



Sent to Repent, Repay, and Reconcile

Well before the murder of George Floyd in my own back yard, I had been asked to share the meditation at the ELCA Chicago offices Wednesday morning chapel service where the Gospel was the Great Commission. Seven days after his death and in the midst of an ongoing eruption of outrage and rage over never ending injustice, the service was going to happen. Wouldn't it be better to have a person of color speak rather than a person of white male privilege? No such reprieve and so I stumbled forward.

Still sensing that even now, or especially now, we who strive to follow Jesus are a sent people. "Go" is the command and so we are sent. I am feeling the struggle of being sent:

- To repent and acknowledge my complicity and privilege
- To seek to restore through reparations
- To reconcile or re-create

Reconciliation, or re-creation are a metamorphosis to a new reality – a new creation. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here." 2 Cor 5:17 Yet reconciliation is costly and hard and creative.

Amongst the Maasai people, who have been my teachers now for many years in Tanzania, we learn of both the cost of reconciliation and the power to create a new reality.

One of the most serious offenses among the community is to kill, to murder. And murder can lead quickly to outrage, vengeance, and further violence. When this occurs, the perpetrator, admitting his guilt retreats to the home of his mother, where he literally, lays down under her bed of protection. The murderer has thus confessed and admitted his sin and as he is in community, the community seeks a way to reconciliation.

NEW SCHOOL OF NURSING CAMPUS OPENS

School Closures for Covid provided an opportunity for the SON to complete preparations for the move into our new campus at Ekenywa. We celebrated and welcomed the students into our new and renovated facility on June 1st. This long time dream has become a reality thanks to so many of you who have been absolutely incredibly generous and supportive.



The elders gather to seek reconciliation. First a negotiation on reparations. How many cattle, the most precious of Maasai possessions, indeed their very lifeblood, how many cattle will be paid in reparation. The cost of reconciliation is great and many cattle are required. When agreed upon, a ceremony of reconciliation is called by the healer-priest, the *loiboni*.

Both families gather together in a great circle. Into the center, two nursing mothers come, one from each family. They exchange their infants and nurse the other's child. The cost of reconciliation is great.

Then two of the senior elders, the male leaders come to the center of the circle where each, with a slight slice from their elongated knife, draw blood from the wrist of the other and intermingle it with their own. The cost of reconciliation is great.

Then a blessing is pronounced by the *loiboni*, spoken and with the sprinkling of milk in a baptismal like ritual, which calls upon God to bless this reconciliation. It is holy work.

As the ritual ends, the *loiboni* announces the miracle of reconciliation, the hope of a new creation. For now, the two warring families are transformed into a new, larger, single family. It is a symbolic and literal creation of a new family. Even to the extent that intermarriage between them is now forbidden. "The old has gone, the new is here."

The cost of reconciliation is great. Not to reconcile leads unto death. The hope of reconciliation is even greater. In Christ, "The old will go, the new will come."

Therefore my friends, let us Go! We are sent. Remembering always Christ's promise to us, "I am with you always, even until the end of the age."

Blessings all,

Mark and Linda

