November 2018

Dear Friends in Christ,

**JACOBOSONS IN AFRICA**

**Sharing the Love and Compassion of Christ**

**“There is a time for every season under heaven.”**

These are the Biblical words that I shared with my staff this past week as I announced that I am intending to step down as the director of Arusha Lutheran Medical Centre at the end of the year. And they are the words that I share with you as we explore this life change together.

You are faithful co-workers in Christ in Tanzania and in our health ministries. You are our partners and supporters, prayer partners and friends.

For Linda and for me, it is very clear that this is the time to transition, to turn the hospital over to the Tanzanian team we have developed, come to believe in, and for us to step into the background.

As I shared with my staff, the call I had 43 years ago when I first arrived in Arusha, still claims my life today. My call, our call, is still to Tanzania and to the health needs of this incredible part of God’s creation. The time is now right for this to be put into the hands of the next generation which we have mentored for the past two decades.

The reasons and the rightness of this are multiple. From our beginnings in Tanzania, our church’s and our personal goal was to develop institutions and services that were Tanzanian and institutions whose reputations rested on Tanzanians and not on foreigners. That time has arrived! ALMC and Selian now have over 600 employees with only a handful of expatriates.

For Linda and me, it is also a season of change. I stressed with my staff and I stress with you that we are not retiring into the sunset. Rather, we are stepping back, giving leadership to our Tanzanian colleagues, and remaining in a supportive role as elders and repositories of our institutional history.

God’s timing is amazing. December 16th we will celebrate 10 years of service at ALMC. I will then turn over the directorship to my Tanzanian colleague and mentee to go forward. As I shared with my staff, my protegees now far surpass me. I look forward to seeing the hospital move forward in their hands and I am confident of their abilities to take us much farther forward.

For Linda and me, we anticipate an ongoing call to serve. We hope to reduce the time commitments and to have more time in the US with the family we have left behind for 30 some years. But still, we anticipate being here and serving, advising, encouraging, and maintaining relationships with dear brothers and sisters in Christ like you.

Both the ELCA and our Tanzanian Diocese have asked that we remain in part time service. The ELCA desires that we maintain our relationships with you as supporting congregations. The opportunities to do new and exciting ministries are immense. The ELCA is requesting that we remain in partnership with you as supporters and supporting congregations.

So, while we are stepping back and reducing our role, we intend to remain engaged and hope to continue to link you to the exciting ministries going on here today.

God is good. Just this week, a young woman surgeon of ours, has completed her Neurosurgery training and will become the only Neurosurgeon for northern Tanzania with a population of 20 million! Such developments are such a blessing. We have also received word that we are the second hospital in Tanzania to receive the highest five-star rating for quality care from an international consortium working directly with the Ministry of Health. And now we hear, that we have been awarded the “Cleanest Hospital” award for the second year running.

God is good. We step back with hopes for the hospital to minister in amazing new ways. And we step back to provide other support and ministry without the day to day grind of meeting payroll and struggling with the tax collectors. The time feels right for us. We will still be in contact with you and hope to visit you for years to come.

We are grateful and humbled by your continued sharing in our ministries together in Tanzania.

Blessings,

Mark and Linda