



# Global Health Ministries

*Helping the hands that heal*

Sharing news with our partners

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## Churches as Change Agents

*By Pastor Doug Cox, Executive Director*

How can the church, and even individual congregations, be primary change agents for health and development? In Nigeria, Central America, and many more countries our partners are demonstrating just how it's done.

I just returned from Nigeria where in 63 villages, Lutheran leaders have mobilized communities to sleep under mosquito nets, wash hands, drink clean water, generate income, manage their savings, and so much more. Whole villages, where Christians, Muslims, and traditional believers are living as one community, are mobilized to work together to improve the health of the village.

Not only physical health has improved, but a striking sense of unity has formed even though tensions run deep in this region due to the presence of Boko Haram and ISIS. Increasingly, Muslim terrorist groups cross the border from other countries into Nigeria seeking money and influence. Although foreigners may share the same Fulani tribal identity as local Muslims, the local Muslims don't adhere to terrorist ways. Yet Christians targeted by raids in this region have indeed retaliated against their Fulani neighbors. That is changing, little by little, thanks to the unity brought by the Lutheran health efforts. Just 2 months ago terrorists raided one of the villages where GHM partners. One Christian boy was murdered. But in this village, Christians and Muslims deeply respect each other because they have been working together for years to improve health. So this year, in this village, the family and friends of the murdered boy loudly defended their neighbors. Standing in the middle of the village, they announced that foreign terrorists, not their Muslim neighbors, had done this. The Fulani villagers were already preparing to flee for safety, but their Christian neighbors rallied the whole community to stand together in peace. In Nigeria today, health, development and peace are powerfully demonstrating the love of Christ.

In El Salvador the Lutheran church also mobilizes health promoters across the country. This is a "church of the poor," as their national leader Bishop Gomez declares. Pastors coordinate networks of volunteer health promoters. Together they train their neighbors in sanitation, first aid, malaria prevention, reproductive health, nutrition and even herbal treatments. Today this powerful network is problem-solving to address lack of access to water, income generation and more development challenges, even as poverty, natural disasters and gang violence threaten their communities. In 2017 this model of Lutheran congregations becoming change agents for health and development spread to their neighbors in Nicaragua. National leaders from both of these Central American countries will be speaking at the Global Health Ministries Conference this year on Oct. 5th.

Global Health Ministries has been instrumental in Nigeria and El Salvador over the past decade to train, fund and consult with these church partners to develop community-based efforts that improve health. As of 2019, in over 60% of the countries where we partner, Lutheran congregations are engaged in some stage of developing community-based primary health care (CBPHC) with support from GHM. Encouraging and partnering with these local efforts is a major focus of our mission together.



*A gathering like this is a common sight in Nigeria, and many places in Africa - a circle of village leaders, gathered under the shade of a tree, discussing matters of importance to the community. In this village circle the leaders sharing ideas are women, trained as village health promoters.*

*GHM is an independent Lutheran ministry enhancing the healthcare programs of Lutheran Churches in other countries.*

## Answers to Prayer

By Scott Lien

The arrival of a GHM container is always cause for celebration, but recent news that contents of two containers have reached their final destinations in Tanzania is an answer to prayer, on both sides of the ocean. Changes in Customs regulations in Tanzania went into effect after the first container was already at sea, and eventually both shipments were held in port for months, waiting for Customs clearance. More than 200 containers from many different NGOs and other suppliers were also “stuck” in port while we waited.

GHM and the 24 health centers in Tanzania who received items from these shipments thank God for friends at Dodoma Christian Medical Centre (DCMC) and all who worked to free these containers! GHM partners with DCMC as the consignee for our “centralized shipments” to Tanzania, allowing us to reach smaller, often more remote, health centers with medical supplies.

While writing this article, Rob Thames, GHM’s Director of GHAP, and Scott Lien, GHM’s Director of Operations, are traveling to Tanzania and will meet with officials in the Ministry of Finance to better understand the updated Customs clearance process. Please pray for success and a good way forward so that we may continue these shipments to Tanzania! The opportunity and needs are great, and God is always good!



Unloading at Machame Hospital, TZ

## Celebrating Shipping!

It is awesome every time GHM ships equipment and supplies overseas .. and we watch as our partners gain momentum as a major turning point in their capacity to provide health care. This is the story of Demsa Referral Center in Nigeria. In 2017, a GHM container arrived to equip the newly renovated health center with supplies and equipment for an Emergency Room, Operating Room, and maternity, pediatric and dental units. Today, Demsa is the leading hospital in its region, and recognized by the government as an immunization center and TB referral center. Demsa is in the process of being granted recognition as a primary health care provider by the state.

In that context, a newly elected state senator chose Demsa to host a five-day free clinic in August, 2018. Paid for by the government, Demsa saw 8,000 patients, performed 216 general surgeries, 162 eye surgeries, 72 dental surgeries, and distributed 105 eye glasses! This underscores the great need for services and also puts Demsa at the forefront of people’s minds across the region. Praise the Lord!

Your gifts to GHM’s Shipping ministry helped make this possible - thank you! We have the opportunity to make a difference like this for other low-resource hospitals and health centers, and the people they serve. GHM has committed to send containers of medical supplies and equipment to waiting partners in Cameroon, Zimbabwe and Liberia yet this year, but funds are still needed to make this happen. Your gifts to GHM’s Shipping ministry can make the difference! Thank you for helping the hands that heal in this important way.



Patients and families waiting to be seen at Demsa. 8,000 came from across the region for healing.

## Fall Conference!

GHM’s global partners, from Nigeria to Nicaragua, are actively engaged in a bottom-up approach to moving the needle on health. Here at home, local health systems and social service agencies are also innovating to improve community health. We’ll be hearing both global and local stories of the impact of community-based efforts for better health at GHM’s annual Fall gathering this year.

We welcome GHM partners Rev. Concepcion Vanegas from El Salvador and Rev. Dr. Soliette Lopez from Nicaragua among our speakers, and we’ll hear a local perspective from Lutheran Social Services and Fairview Health Services. Please join us! The program begins at 9 am on Saturday, October 5, at Nativity Lutheran Church, St. Anthony, MN. Register at [www.ghm.org](http://www.ghm.org), or call 763-586-9590.



## News from Juba

By Kim Dickey



The Primary Health Care Unit at Reconciliation Lutheran Church and Community Center in Juba, South Sudan, is a busy place. In early September it was even busier, hosting its third Fistula Camp.

29 women who came from all over South Sudan received fistula repair surgery during the five-day camp. Obstetric fistula is most common among women who give birth without access to medical help and who experience prolonged, obstructed labor. The “fistula” is a small hole that can result from constant pressure from the baby, and leaves the woman incontinent.

The Primary Health Care Unit was designed as an outpatient clinic, so three classrooms were turned into wards to handle the patients and their family members. All of the surgeries were successful. Several patients will need a second procedure, which was expected, but already, lives have been changed and, indeed, renewed. Women who suffer this injury often find themselves cast out from their villages and even their families. After surgery, hope is restored, and they can reclaim life in community with others.

The number of women coming to the clinic to deliver their babies has been increasing, even though the clinic is not designated as a birthing center. Perhaps it should be! Access to medical help is what this busy place is all about.

## GHAP on the Go

By Rob Thames

Salamu! (Greetings)

They may not have the whole world in their hands, but theirs will be helping the hands that heal in Tanzania. Scott Lien, Director of Operations, and Rob Thames, Director of GHAP, left 9/7 for work that will take them to partners across Tanzania.

They will be joined by GHAP team members

- Dr. Simon Megiroo, ADCM, BSc.PC, MPH, Diocesan Medical Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania/North Central Diocese, and Zonal Health Coordinator of the Christian Social Services Commission (Arusha, Kilimanjaro and Manyara Regions);
- Rebecca Hartwig, DNP, pediatric nurse practitioner, RN and community health nursing teacher at Augsburg College; and
- Nyika Friberg, recent University of Minnesota graduate. Nyika is currently doing research with a physician in Kenya as part of a gap year before medical school.

The GHAP team is beginning work in the Lake Tanganyika Diocese (LTD), based in Sumbawanga. Our new LTD partners have an exciting and ambitious vision to improve health over the next decade+ and they have requested GHAP’s help to assist in their planning.

I am tremendously grateful that such talented professionals – not to mention great people – as Dr. Megiroo, Rebecca, and Nyika offer their time and talent. Oh, by the way, they are all fluent in Swahili!

Kwa heri (Good bye) for now!

Rob

## Welcome, Ashley!



We’re excited to welcome Ashley Rabemahefa who is bringing her social media savvy to GHM as our Social Media Coordinator. Ashley has a heart for mission, and comes to GHM with a special understanding of the importance of our ministry for our partners. Ashley’s father-in-law is Dr. Charles Rabemahefa. Dr. Charles, originally from Madagascar, is Chief Dental Officer at Dodoma Christian Medical Centre in Tanzania and a long-time friend to GHM. Ashley and her husband Fehy have four beautiful daughters,

the youngest born just last month.

Check out our Facebook page, where Ashley is busy posting for GHM. You can follow us on Instagram, too!



## The B-line



Bea is on sabbatical this month, but looks forward to returning next issue!



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Health  
Ministries**  
*Helping the hands  
that heal*

**GHM Newsletter Oct-Nov 2019**

Email: [office@ghm.org](mailto:office@ghm.org) • Web: [www.ghm.org](http://www.ghm.org)  
763/586-9590

**GLOBAL HEALTH MINISTRIES**  
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*Save the Date!*

For Global Health Ministries'

*Spring Gala*

**Friday, April 17, 2020**

Edinburgh USA Clubhouse  
8700 Edinbrook Crossing  
Brooklyn Park, Minnesota