

# MINISTRY MOMENTS



*"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)*



## EMBRACE THE NEW YEAR-THINK POSSIBLE...

*But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)*

*In the hustle and bustle of life's demands, we often find ourselves juggling various responsibilities and commitments. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, it feels like we're barely keeping up. Yet, in moments of doubt and uncertainty, we are reminded of the words of Jesus - "but with God all things are possible." Perhaps you've found yourself taking on additional responsibilities or even facing new challenges like me. It's easy to feel overwhelmed or anxious. Remember that God is with us every step of the way, guiding us through the twists and turns of life's journey.*

*As we embrace this new year, let us lean on God's promise of possibility. Trust in His unfailing love and wisdom, knowing He can turn our impossibilities into opportunities for growth and blessing. May we approach each day with faith and courage, believing every day that all things are possible with God and that we can keep thinking POSSIBLE.*



## UPDATES FROM THE FIELD:

### ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE REGION...

The year burst into action with a flurry of activities. From February through the end of August, I am taking on additional responsibilities while our regional director embarks on a study leave. Alongside my colleague Britt Odemba, we continue to serve as our region's volunteer coordinators, a task we embrace with unwavering enthusiasm and dedication despite the whirlwind of tasks. Across the continent, theological educators have been busy imparting knowledge in seminaries and training centers in Madagascar, Uganda, and Tanzania. Among the highlights in January was hosting the second in-person course for the Concordia Seminary St. Louis Masters online program in our field office. Dr. Peter Nafzger led an enriching one-week intensive on preaching, complemented by a workshop tailored for local Kenya Lutheran pastors. Witnessing the camaraderie among students during face-to-face interactions was truly heartwarming.

Immediately following the class, we welcomed a new missionary family, the Paynes. Following their arrival, they underwent a week of field orientation in Kenya before embarking on their journey to Tanzania for language acquisition. Rev. Bryan and Deaconess Keah Payne will serve at the newly established seminary in Shinyanga. We look forward to them getting settled into life and ministry there.

### AGRICULTURAL CONSULTANCY IN SIERRA LEONE...

I traveled to Sierra Leone in February to lead the Agricultural consultancy team. The Agricultural consultancy team has mainly served in East Africa for the past 12-plus years. The main focus of the Agricultural Consultancy team is to share the love of our Lord Jesus Christ with our brothers and sisters in Christ through teaching and encouraging church leaders and church members to adopt sustainable agricultural practices and management of their resources, thereby bringing the blessing of helping them and their neighbors to improve and protect their property and business. Through face-to-face contact in villages, the Ag consultancy teams train people to better manage their crop production, protect and improve their soils, practice improved storage and marketing of crops, and work together in harmony as our Lord desires. This team to Sierra Leone consisted of veteran missionaries Ralph and Sharon Von Qualen and Gwen Zagore.

Our time in Sierra Leone was filled with opportunities to deepen our understanding of the Lutheran Church and its current agricultural methods. Throughout our visits to various regions and the seminary, the team taught about Management of the Harvest and Soil Fertility, Wise Management, and How to Start a Small Business. We gained insights into local agricultural practices during a visit to a cassava farm and the Ag. consultants were able to advise on how to stop the spread of disease in the plants. The team also made a great connection with the dean of the School of Agriculture and Food Science at Njala University. He will be a good resource for the church as they put into practice some of the techniques that were shared.

### VISITORS TO AFRICA...

In March, we welcomed several visitors to the region. Mr. Zach Schnare from the Mission Advancement office at the International Center was a first-time visitor to Africa. His itinerary included visits to various ministries and the seminary in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, and Ghana, as well as attending our regional retreat. These visits are instrumental in providing mission advancement representatives with firsthand insights into the ministries and projects in the Africa region, enhancing their ability to advocate on our behalf. Additionally, we were delighted to host Rev. Heder Piepe Gumz, the Vice President of Missionary Expansion for our partner church in Brazil, Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil (The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil). He met with Alliance missionaries serving in Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Africa. This afforded him a firsthand look into their ministries and an opportunity to visit our Africa field office and engage in discussions about our collaborative efforts. His visit fostered mutual appreciation and encouragement, strengthening our relationship. It is a blessing for us to serve as part of God's mission and to share His mission with you.

*Together In Christ...Shara & Michael*

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## Prayers & Praise

- Pray for God's strength and guidance as Michael and I serve in Africa.
- Pray for the Alliance & LCMS missionaries serving through LCMS International Mission.
- Pray for the Payne family as they begin their service in Tanzania.
- Thank the Lord for the visitors and volunteers to the Africa region.
- Praise God for all of YOU and the love & support that you give to me and Michael.

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