

Filled with hope



Graduation is always a time of celebration for students, family and friends.

But when the first class of Assistant Medical Officers graduated from the Arusha Lutheran Medical Center in Tanzania, the entire country had something to celebrate.

The school, the first faith-based program of its kind in Tanzania, is directed by ELCA missionary, Dr. Mark Jacobson.

The second largest country in East Africa, Tanzania has fewer than 2,000 medical doctors. The shortage is especially critical in rural areas.

In response, Mark and his team train “assistant doctors” who come to the two-year program as clinical officers or physician’s assistants and leave with the lifesaving ability to perform basic surgery.

The impact on the lives of people in Tanzania is immediate. Dr. Wallace Sahana, a recent graduate, drove 14 hours after the ceremony to immediately assume his new duties at a 150-bed hospital on the western side of Lake Victoria. Until his arrival,

there had only been one Assistant Medical Officer at the facility.

“Overnight, the number of medical professionals at the site was doubled,” says Mark. “The quality of care improved and the people were filled with hope.”

Mark and his wife Linda, who have lived in Arusha for nearly 30 years, say they’ve been able to answer God’s call only because of the financial support and prayers of ELCA members.

“(ELCA members) have made it possible to accomplish so much and to serve God’s people with love and compassion,” says Mark.

Mission Support, alongside missionary sponsorship covenants, helps to ensure that missionaries like the Jacobsons can teach, preach, heal, build and grow alongside the ELCA’s global companions in 50 countries.

“I’d like every ELCA member to know how important they are to these ministries and how truly we believe that we are sharing in this work,” Mark adds. “Together, we become the healing hands of Christ.”

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