

Missionary Prayer Page

GLOBAL MISSION/EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA



PRAY FOR

Barbara Robertson

Barbara's work involves coordinating and implementing the diocese's HIV prevention and education program, facilitating communication between the bishop's office and our partners in the U.S. and Europe. She also gives support whenever called upon by the leadership of the Morogoro diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT).



BIRTH DATE

February 26

COMPANION SYNODS

Northern Illinois	Greater Milwaukee
Southeastern Minnesota	Arkansas/Oklahoma
Northwestern Ohio	Southeastern Pennsylvania
Northern Great Lakes	Nebraska
Southern Ohio	Metropolitan New York
Saint Paul Area	Southeastern Iowa
NW-Pennsylvania	Western Iowa
Lower Susquehanna	NE Pennsylvania
Delaware/Maryland	Eastern Washington-Idaho
Southeast Michigan	South Carolina

COUNTRY OF SERVICE

Tanzania

Prayer Concerns

- ✚ Pray that God would send favorable rains – the right amount at the right time – so that all may have enough food to eat.
- ✚ Pray for all those infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, especially with regards to discrimination, stigmatization, access to services and adequate care – spiritual, physical, and emotional.
- ✚ Pray that those who do not know their HIV status would be courageous enough to be tested.
- ✚ Pray for safe travels both within and outside of my diocese.
- ✚ Pray that all have enough food to eat and safe water to drink.



Tanzania

(see letter from Barbara on the back side of this page)

As a sponsor of Barbara, you are asked to remember her with your prayers and your financial support. Gifts of any size are welcome. Please send support gifts to:
ELCA Office for Global Mission Support
Missionary Sponsorship
PO Box 71764
Chicago IL 60694-1764

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Dear Friends,

When I initially came to Tanzania in September 1999, I thought I was coming for just two years. It seems God had other plans for me. I am now in my tenth year serving in Tanzania.

My work has been diverse. I was called as an English language teacher attached to a nursing school, located in rural northern Tanzania. Many people who visited me assured me it was not just rural but remote! While there, I started volunteering with a team of people from the hospital who wanted to educate the community about HIV/AIDS. The people in that area had very little exposure to the facts about this dreaded disease. We started out small, but the demand for our service grew. At the same time that my services as an English teacher were no longer needed, due to a change at the school where I was working, the hospital received a massive grant for a multifaceted HIV/AIDS program from the Norwegian government. I was shifted into that program as the deputy director. It was an amazing time.

In 2005, when I was invited by Morogoro Diocese of the ELCT, which lies west of Dar-es-Salaam, to be its HIV/AIDS program officer, a significant change occurred in the leadership of the diocese. The planning and development officer's position became vacant, and I was asked to temporarily fill it. Not having the slightest idea what it meant to accept that responsibility, I agreed. What was to be a few months turned into two years.

During the first two years in this position, I focused my work on women, since the Women and Children's department of the diocese is very active, and it was a natural fit to work closely together. HIV/AIDS education seminars targeted traditional pastoralist women, women living in junction towns where trucks often park overnight, young single women, spouses of church workers, and Sunday school teachers. I have also worked collaboratively with a large organization here in the community that serves in all aspects of HIV/AIDS issues.

The capacity of the diocese is limited. We don't have a diocesan hospital or health facilities which we own and operate other than a small rural clinic. So we focus on education and prevention. We also have taken steps to start a small income-generating project for women and youth. In November 2008 we opened an oil seed milling enterprise. The mill produces cooking oil from seeds such as sunflower, sesame, and pumpkin. Instead of selling seeds at a minimal price, people can now sell cooking oil. This service gives a significant amount of added value to their crop, and it encourages those who are most infected and affected by HIV/AIDS - youth and women - by expanding their opportunities to increase their income.

My official ministry is HIV/AIDS work. But I have found that I have another, unofficial ministry, which is to help people from the West and Africans understand one another better. We have very different frames of references. We have different values, different ways of operating. Sometimes, misunderstandings over cultural values and systems can arise. I have found that I am able to help translate and interpret cultures on both sides. As an American, I know what is important to us. And having lived with Tanzanians for a number of years, I have some knowledge of what is important to them.

One motivation I had for learning the local language was to be closer to people with whom I live and work. Through my Tanzanian friends, I have learned a tremendous amount about their values and culture. I frequently use that knowledge to help bridge the gap between the Western and African perspectives. I find great joy in facilitating understanding between people and am greatly blessed by those who have allowed themselves to become friends with someone who is not of their own race or culture. Great blessings come from participating in and giving witness to their daily lives.

Even though I live in a developing country and often do not have access to all the creature comforts and technology which is generally enjoyed in the U.S., I am content. I find life here to be rich and fulfilling. May God be given all the praise!

Barbara

02/09