

LETTERS FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA
'I learn from, advocate with, and walk beside'
April 8, 2010

Dear Family and Friends,

Three months have already passed since the beginning of the year and the LAAP team continues to move forward with the HIV activities as well as the new Lutheran Malaria Initiative.

In January, LUCSA staff, ELCA, and representatives from five countries (Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Angola) came together for a strategic workshop to plan for the Lutheran Malaria Initiative program. This is a combined effort between the LUCSA Member Churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and Lutheran World Relief to mobilize the nearly 8 million Lutherans in the United States to join the battle against malaria.



(Mrs. V. Mzezewa, LAAP Coordinator with Mr. T. Tshili, Malaria Program Officer at LMI Strategic Planning Meeting)

The World Health Organization Malaria Report 2008 stated that there was an estimated 881,000 deaths from malaria worldwide in 2006, of which 90% were in the African Region and 88% of the deaths were children under the age of five. People with HIV have a lowered immune

system and therefore could be more susceptible to malaria and tuberculosis as they are unable to resist opportunistic infections. It is important all people in malaria infested areas are assisted with access to drugs, insecticidal nets for protection against mosquito bites as well as information and education. There needs to be increased efforts for sustainable improvements to break the poverty cycle, networking with governments, local NGOs, and other faith-based organizations. To impact horrible diseases, there must be a holistic approach.

Churches play a large role in Southern African communities and their parishioners turn to them for help in time of need. The church leaders have the ability to mobilize people to help increase the number of faith groups to work together with public agencies to address health problems in order to reduce the incidence and prevalence of malaria. Thus working toward The Millennium Development Goals (Goal 6: Combat HIV-AIDS, malaria and other diseases). The Malaria Program Officer employed has been a health administrator in Zimbabwe and will be working closely with a doctor seconded by ELCA Global Mission as a medical consultant. To read more about the program, please go to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America website – www.elca.org.

Other HIV-AIDS program activities included an InfoHut Staff Development Workshop for teachers of the Zimbabwean Lutheran church schools in January; a Workshop for HIV-AIDS Project Managers (and visit to 5 HIV-AIDS programs) in Botswana in February; and a consultation on Mainstreaming HIV-AIDS and Church Competence for 33 Bishops and Theological Curriculum Developers in March. The HIV Team just returned from a trip to Zambia where they facilitated a workshop on the implementation of Mainstreaming for senior pastors (Deans) and HIV-AIDS Resource Persons from 4 countries (Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The latter trip to Zambia included project support visits in Bulawayo and Harare in Zimbabwe and also support visits in Zambia. Proposals have been written as well as reports and the team will continue to have a busy 2010.

My contract with ELCA is coming to an end (as I have known it for the past 4 years) and I will be leaving June 29 for my home in Greeley, Colorado. I pray I may continue to represent our church and our Lord in whatever way he leads me. This has been the most amazing journey and a huge part of my heart will always remain in Africa.

I am fortunate in that my son will be able to visit next month and get to know some of the people I call family (and who have already adopted him). I have many names here-ma, mama, gogo, granny, auntie, and Sisi (sister). I have been blessed with the gift of friendships and so much more.

I will write another newsletter before my departure. I encourage our Lutheran sponsoring churches to continue to support the Global Mission ministry in walking with, learning from and sharing gifts with each other. Jesus was a minister of the people. He did not sit on a throne putting himself above others, but walked among the poor, the sick, and the hungry and those who doubted him and threatened his life. In the end, he gave his life because he loved us. May you find peace in His love this Easter Season.

Prayer Requests:

- 1) For those infected and affected by the AIDS virus, Malaria and other devastating diseases.
- 2) For those who are struggling in war torn countries and that our leaders, all over the world, may have the wisdom, insight, courage, and God given direction to lead us towards peace.
- 3) That we look beyond ourselves to our neighbors' needs (those in other cities and countries) that we may give our support to each other, rather than look only at what will make us more comfortable.
- 4) That we lift Christ's teachings of love, forgiveness and compassion to each other.
- 5) Pray that we may take better care of God's creation, the Earth and all its inhabitants.

In God's Grace,
Paula

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