

St. Nicholas Children's Centre Kemondo (NCKK)
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Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He, the Creator of the Universe, has mercy on us all. Alleluia.

Easter 2020

Dear Friends and Supporters of St. Nicholas!

"This is the loneliest lent I ever lented", – is a saying that goes around on the social media right now. Unfortunately, the Corona-Pandemic will not be over with Easter but will continue for many more months to come... I am sure you too had different plans for 2020 than to be on quarantine.

Between January and March we had twelve volunteers and visitors from Germany. But everybody who was still visiting with us was advised by their embassies and organizations to return home immediately in Mid-March. This is the first time that we have no visitors at all at St. Nicholas.



On March 16th Tanzania recorded its first Corona-patient. On March 18th the schools closed. I drove around for hours in the pouring rain to collect our children from five different boarding schools. Our two blind children who are schooling in Rwanda had already returned two days before. Of course the children were excited about the unexpected school holidays.



I declared our house to be a fortress and locked up all gates to the compound with padlocks. Usually we just have a night guard. During the day all doors and gates are wide open. But since March 18th our older boys take 2-hour turns being watchmen at the main gate. The children have to stay on the compound, visitors are greeted at the gate but they may not enter.

This is working out much better than expected. We are blessed to have such a big compound.

Compared to the strict rules at the boarding schools life at St. Nicholas is pretty easy for the children and they are accepting the situation.



Washing hands at the main gate

All children have chores and duties. They also have to study for two hours every day. The schools gave out so called “homework packages“. The older children are assisting the caregivers in their daily work. So everybody is kept busy.

The new building that we were able to complete last year is a big blessing. Twelve boys moved into this building. They have a male caregiver who is looking after them. The boys cook their own meals, they clean the house, do their laundry and work in the garden.



Study time

Because we have no more guests and volunteers we have six empty guest rooms.

Having empty rooms at our house is rare and this is a good opportunity to renovate the caregivers’ bedrooms and my office. We do two rooms at a time and the caregivers have to move to the guest rooms while their rooms are being fixed. The big boys are helping with the renovations.



The big boys who are living in the new building



Working in the garden



Renovating



Cooking



Doing laundry

At present we are all healthy but if the virus reaches our house, our vulnerable children with severe disabilities and weak immune systems are at high risk. So far life continues in Tanzania as usual with very few restrictions. Schools are closed, public gatherings are forbidden. In front of every shop is a bucket with water and soap for washing hands. But those measures are insufficient when at the same time buses are still overcrowded and the churches are full, especially for the Easter services. People do not keep any distance to each other. Imposing a range of prevention and containment measures in Tanzania such as lockdowns, curfews, isolation and quarantines is difficult. In Africa daily life happens outdoors. People have no food and supplies stacked at home and no money saved. People live from day to day. So far, Tanzania has only 24 confirmed cases of Corona and one person who died of it.



Construction for washing hands

However, looking at the statistics of countries worldwide the situation in Tanzania can change any time. But as few people get tested, many cases will go undetected, consequently the virus will spread and most people will die without being diagnosed. Time will tell how bad it will become.

On one side Africa's population is very young with only a few elderly people. On the other hand there is a great number of people with poor health, chronic diseases and disabilities and people with HIV. In general, Tanzania's health system is under-resourced. A visit to the doctor and buying medicine has to be paid in cash. In times of a severe crisis, the country depends on international help. However, people in Tanzania accept disease, death and fate with the comment, "Ni mpango wa Mungu" – "This is the will of God."



Washing hands on the farmers' market

So far about how we are doing at St. Nicholas. What else is new? In December Social Services brought us a young women. Her name is „Zawadi“, meaning gift. At first I was not too excited about receiving this “gift“, because most likely Zawadi is in her mid-twenties which is

definitely too old to be placed in a children's home. Social Services gave us hardly any information and Zawadi herself is not able to tell us about herself. She has a mental disability and epilepsy. She neither speaks the nation's language Swahili nor the local language Kihaya. In fact, she is not talking much at all and she does not pronounce her words clearly. We are guessing that she comes from Burundi. Zawadi has been living with us now for the past five months. She has visibly gained weight and her health has improved a lot. She reminds me so much of Maria who sadly passed away three years ago. Both women have the same disability which might explain why they are a lot alike. Zawadi is happy at our place.

She has a great sense of humor and makes us laugh a lot. She loves to come to my office and checks if I am busy working or not!



Zawadi at her arrival in December 2019



Zawadi in March 2020

In the past few months I was able to build up a leadership team. By now Sr. Celestina, Mr. Clemence and Mr. Njunwa do most of my work. Hoping that life will resume to its normal state I plan to move to Germany with my two daughters Anita and Aisha in September 2020 in order for them to attend a German High School. Thanks to the internet communication has become easy and I will stay in close touch with St. Nicholas from Germany and I will go to visit as often as possible. It is my hope to return to St. Nicholas after five years.



Thank you so much for your faithful support! We are wishing you a blessed Holy Week, a happy feast of the Resurrection and we are praying for all of us to stay healthy and to be able to resume our normal day to day life as soon as possible!

Stefanie Köster, children and caregivers

