

# Tanzania 2010

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One People

*2010 Safari to North Eastern Diocese (NED),  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania*

*Bishop Claire Burkat, Ms. Joanne Carlson  
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA*



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One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One People

I knew ahead of time that I would be preaching to hundreds of new Christians at the annual three-day Maasai gathering in the Plains District of the North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania. What scripture, which words, could I choose to speak to this ancient people? A nomadic people of cattle shepherds, many were illiterate; only the younger generations had any formal education. Four and even five generations would be listening, and dozens would be prepared by the Tanzanian pastors and lay evangelists for baptism in these three days.

My sermon would be translated twice, from English to Swahili, and then from Swahili to Maasai. At the outdoor opening service I greeted the crowd of over 400 men, women and children with blessings from the people and ministries, agencies and institutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. Joanne Carlson and I were as much of an exotic attraction to them as they were to us, so I shared my pondering with them.

*Top: At Irente Children's Home; with Bishops Munga and Mameo in traditional Maasai garb; Mt. Kilimanjaro.*

I pointed out the obvious -- that we come from two very different worlds. *“You are Maasai and I am American; you are Black, and I am White. You are people of the land and I am a woman from the city. You are tall, and I am short. But today we are again reminded that God has made us one tribe through the life, death and resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ.”*

Then I read the text for the sermon: **For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.** (John 3:16)

For those to be baptized, this scripture is the very core of the Christian faith. For those of us who are already baptized it is a reminder of the extraordinary love God has for the world and for every one of its peoples for all time.

The opportunity to bring the Word of God and to baptize in the name of the Triune God in a place far away, to a people foreign to my culture, in a language not my own, was one of the highlights of my call as a pastor and a bishop. This was truly a time when distance narrowed, offering a glimpse into God’s amazing grace!

The body and blood of Christ binds the people of God in love to one another and in service to the whole world.

The North Eastern Diocese, our companion synod in Tanzania, is a great partner in mission. Under the visionary and faithful leadership of Bishop Stephen Munga, the Diocesan staff, pastors, evangelists, agency directors, and other lay leaders, they are carrying out the Great Commission of Christ, with limited material resources, but with enormous faith, energy, creativity and ingenuity. I was once again reminded of the core practices and assets of the Christian Church: the Word of God, preached and proclaimed in witness and service, the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, prayer, apostolic creed, song, sacrificial offering and service. One especially significant spiritual gift of the Tanzanian Christians is their contagious hospitality. Greeting the visitor with brass bands, choirs, food, signing of guest books and prayer was a natural extension of Christ’s welcome to all of us.

All these elements of Christian community need little more than faith, hope and love of God and neighbor. The NED commitment to serving the marginalized in their country, especially their dedication to improving services for children with special needs, and to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, is a great witness and blessing to our agencies, institutions and congregations as we seek to be Christ’s face, hands and voice here in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Presently in SEPA we have 12 active partner congregations with parishes in the NED. We have much to gain from and give to each other. Particularly, we Americans can learn from our Tanzanian sisters and brothers sacrificial giving, hospitality, faith active in love and service with few resources, a commitment to raising people out of poverty and into hope through education, medical care and worship of Jesus Christ. Please contact Joanne Carlson if your congregation is interested in being joined to a parish in Tanzania.

By the end of our safari, I had preached 5 times, baptized 37 people children, teens and adults, laid a cornerstone for one Church, blessed the erected building of another, visited ten NED institutions,



*With Maasai at Duga Parish; Baptizing at the Maasai Gathering; a joyous reunion with sisters and brothers in Lushoto.*

five parishes, one sub parish, and one evangelistic gathering! More important than all the places were the faith, witness, hospitality and love of the people extended to us and through us to the people of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, and the whole ELCA.

As I reflect on my journey (safari) in the day-to-day account which is attached to this report and posted on [www.MinistryLink.org](http://www.MinistryLink.org), I hope you will sense the great privilege it is to be joined by Christ to this diocese, and that you will see in the lives and witness of the people, the great love of God in Christ that continues to be lavished on the world.

I want to thank Joanne Carlson for making all the arrangements, and for her patience, humor and accompaniment. And thanks to Bob Fisher for designing a report on the trip that includes photos and web links.

### *Wednesday, July 28 to Friday, July 30*

Traveling to the North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania takes a full three days, involving three airplane flights, eight hours of layovers en route, and a six-hour jeep ride from Arusha to Lushoto where the diocesan headquarters is located. General Secretary Pastor Mwinuka and driver Godfrey Gao warmly welcomed Joanne Carlson and me at the Kilimanjaro Airport late Thursday night.

Friday morning after breakfast at Uhuru Lutheran Hostel in Moshi (owned by the Northern Diocese), we continued our journey to the NED Hostel in Lushoto, and were greeted by Bishop Stephen Munga, The Rev. Dr. Anneth Munga and the diocesan and hostel staff along with a brass band. The day concluded, as it would each day, with dinner and conversation with various members of the head office Management Team. Ahead of us were days of brass



*James (in red) and other children enjoy a visit with the bishop; welcome at Irente Children's Home.*



bands, flowers, meals and gifts that are traditional expressions of hospitality. For Tanzanians, especially those in the church, welcoming guests is a great blessing and honor. For those of us who are received it is, with humility, the same.

*Saturday, July 31*

We began our visits to the various institutions within the Irente Lutheran Parish, which is in companionship with Resurrection Lutheran Church, Yardley.

### **Irente Children's Home – Lushoto**

([http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=13%3Airente-childrens-home&Itemid=45&layout=default&lang=en](http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=13%3Airente-childrens-home&Itemid=45&layout=default&lang=en))

On our first official visit we were greeted by Sister Edna Mdemu, director of this home for infants and children up through 2 years of age whose parent(s) have died from AIDS or who for some other reason cannot care for them. After age 2, adoption or foster care is sought if a parent or extended family is not able to care for the child.

One little boy named James (in red shirt, above) attached himself to me immediately. So intent on demanding my full attention, he pushed away the hands of any other children who wanted to hold mine.

### **Irente Biodiversity Reserve -- Lushoto**

([http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=32%3Awelcome-to-irente-farm&catid=19%3Airente-biodiversity-reserve&Itemid=47&lang=en](http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=32%3Awelcome-to-irente-farm&catid=19%3Airente-biodiversity-reserve&Itemid=47&lang=en))

While still functioning as a farm to raise animals and crops to feed the children and staff of the local Irente institutions, Directors Annette and Peter Murless, mission personnel from the Church of



*Baptizing and receiving a carving of the Lord's Supper at the Cathedral Lutheran Parish. Hawa, a student at the Rainbow School since 2005, is now able to greet us in English. Inset: Irente Biodiversity Reserve is a place of respite and tranquility above Lushoto town.*

Sweden, have redeveloped the farm and property into a biodiversity reserve. The Eastern Usambara Mountains are considered one of

Conservation International's Biodiversity Hotspots- recognized worldwide as an area with an exceptional diversity of species and plants. (See <http://>



[www.biodiversityhotspots.org/xp/hotspots/afromontane/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org/xp/hotspots/afromontane/Pages/default.aspx) for more information about this region.) This reserve ([http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=19%3Airente-biodiversity-reserve&Itemid=47&layout=default&lang=en](http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=19%3Airente-biodiversity-reserve&Itemid=47&layout=default&lang=en)) incorporates both environmental conservation and sustainable organic agriculture.

Hikers, campers, environmentalists and tourists are welcome. This hospitality to visitors of all sorts is a funding stream to support the reserve as well as the Irente Home for Children and the Irente School for the Blind ([http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2296%3Airente-school-for-the-blind&catid=12%3Airente-school-for-the-blind&Itemid=45&lang=en](http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2296%3Airente-school-for-the-blind&catid=12%3Airente-school-for-the-blind&Itemid=45&lang=en)) operated by the NED.

### *Sunday, August 1*

#### **Worship at the Cathedral Church -- Lushoto**

Sunday morning we worshipped at Cathedral Lutheran Parish, companion with Upper Dublin Lutheran Church ([http://www.udlc.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=37&Itemid=87](http://www.udlc.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=37&Itemid=87)). After preaching at both services, I baptized five at the second service. Pastor Bendera, and retired Bishop Jali presented Joanne and I with gifts.



*With Pr. Joyce Kibanga, NED Director of Social Services; at the School for the Blind students make colorful sisal and offer music to praise God.*

*Monday, August 2*

### **Rainbow School -- Lushoto**

([http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=27%3Asome-pictures-from-rainbow-school-under-construction&catid=33%3Arainbow-school-news-and-events&Itemid=45&lang=en](http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=27%3Asome-pictures-from-rainbow-school-under-construction&catid=33%3Arainbow-school-news-and-events&Itemid=45&lang=en))

Mama Lucy Mwinuka, Mr. Robert Shehaghilo, staff and the student body at the Rainbow School for mentally and physically challenged and autistic children greeted us with flowers and song. We were impressed at the growth of the school, and the expansion of the curriculum and schedule since our trip in 2007. A physical therapy room has been furnished, which not only aids in physical therapy for the Rainbow students, but also equips local mothers with special needs children to work with them at home. In close partnership with KenCrest Centers of SEPA Synod, the Rainbow School is marking its fifth anniversary as one of the only schools in Tanzania for children in need of special education. During our visit, several college interns from SEKUCo were doing their practical unit at the Rainbow school.

### **Irente School for the Blind -- Lushoto**

([http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2296%3Airente-school-for-the-blind&catid=12%3Airente-school-for-the-blind&Itemid=45&lang=en](http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2296%3Airente-school-for-the-blind&catid=12%3Airente-school-for-the-blind&Itemid=45&lang=en))

As at each place we went the staff and students of the Irente School for the Blind greeted us with a flower necklace and song. I greeted and prayed with the group before Joanne and I toured the school. In addition to skills specific for those who have diminished eyesight and blindness, the school has rigorous academic expectations that prepare the students for secondary education, college and employment. While we were visiting they were deeply involved in studying for exams the next day. As at many schools, the students board there, so plenty of comradery and recreation are available, along with tutoring assistance



*Maasai use this bridge to move herds; gathered for worship with some in the tree, like Zaccheus; a choir begins its acapella performance.*

*Tuesday, August 3*

### **Maasai Gathering -- Nanyogie**

The Maasai Gathering was for me, the most challenging, exciting and inspiring experience of the 2010 trip. Every year hundreds of Maasai Christians gather in one place for a three-day festival of worship, song, prayer, and bible study, eating and socializing. This year they met on the plains in a place called Nanyogie where the diocese has built a Maasai Center and small health clinic. Mombo Lutheran Parish, companioned with Trinity, Quakertown, is the closest congregation and Pastor Chambo and members served as hosts for the gathering. After traveling by jeep, we parked and walked across a very rickety bridge to be greeted by approximately 400 Maasai men, women and children. The North Eastern Diocese has had an evangelical presence and ministry among the Maasai for a quarter-century. Of the 20 Lutheran dioceses in Tanzania, two have Maasai bishops. One of them, Bishop Mameo, dedicated a stone monument set up on the plain to mark the 25th anniversary of Lutheran word and witness among the Maasai people.



Bishop Munga, Joanne and I were invited to bring greetings after which I had the enormous honor of preaching at that day's opening worship service. The sermon was translated twice, first into Swahili and then to Maasai. Before I left the U.S. I wondered what message I could give to a gathering so different from my context. I decided to preach on the very core of the Gospel message: John 3:16, God's most extravagant love. After the sermon Pr. Shemkala, Dean of the Coastal Deanery and Pr. Chambo, along with three bishops, Mameo, Munga and Burkat, baptized 35 people, children, teenagers and adults. I baptized 10.

My heart and my faith overflowed all day, and it was so very difficult for my mind to grasp the extraordinary missional event in which I had the privilege to participate. A three-hour choir

competition followed, and thankfully Bishop Mameo translated the Maasai hymns for me as we enjoyed the outpouring of song and spirit.

Gifts were exchanged, a meal followed, blessings, goodbyes and a walk over the bridge again to a long jeep ride back to Lushoto.

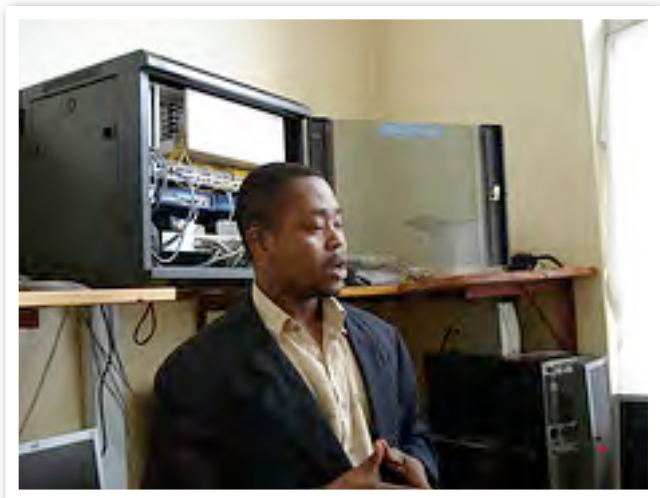
*Wednesday August 4*

**Sebastian Kolowa University  
College (SEKUCo) –  
Magamba**

(<http://www.sekuco.org>)

Since the students at SEKUCo were on break, classes were not in session. However, we had some updates on the growth and progress of the university from its provost, the Rev. Dr. Anneth Munga, and faculty from various departments. Our SEPA Synod along with German, Swedish and Finnish Lutheran partners and others helped the NED in the building and development of this unique college, focused on equipping teachers and other professionals to make Tanzania a welcome place for people with special needs. Joanne and I toured the second campus, adjacent to the first, which is a renovation project of a long underused secondary school building. Originally owned by the diocese, during which time the school thrived, it was then taken over by the government during a period of nationalization in the 1960's. In 2005 it was returned to the diocese by the government for the development of the SEKUCo campus. You can imagine how many lives are changed by this opportunity for higher education, but also the villages within walking distance or a short bus ride are also favorably impacted by the goods and services needed by the student population.

What began five years ago as a hope and a God-given vision has become a college with a student body of



*At SEKUCo, a technology staffer with the school server; a library already too small for the growing student population; the sign that marks the campus entrance. Inset: With Provost Anneth Munga and some faculty and staff.*

more than 800 and growing. In December of this year SEKUCo will hold its first commencement with a graduating class of approximately 135 students.

Joanne and I have asked Susan Pursch, Chairperson of our Synod SEKUCo Committee, to represent the synod at the graduation and she has agreed to do so.

*Thursday, August 5*

### **Lwandai Secondary School**

Two hours up the mountain today brought us to a warm and energetic welcome from 600 high school students and faculty of the Lwandai Secondary School, owned and operated by the diocese. In 2007 I dedicated a girls dorm, and many were eager to show the full occupancy of the building and the need for much more housing, particularly for the boys this time. After some conversation and discussion with the faculty and local deanery pastors, I had a chance to greet the students, give a short message and prayer and answer their questions.



*Greeting students at Lwandai School.*

### **Mlalo Lutheran Parish**

After the usual hospitality routine practiced almost everywhere by our Tanzanian hosts -- singing, signing the guest book, eating a meal together -- Pastor Mahonge, who also serves as dean of the Northern Deanery, and the people of the oldest Lutheran church in the diocese gathered in the sanctuary for a visit and a short worship service. One of their choirs sang several songs, and after introductions all around I had an opportunity to offer a homily and prayer, before I answered questions and had conversation with the people.

### **Mlalo Clinic**

A small facility owned by the diocese provides basic medical care for the people in the area. We arrived minutes after a mother delivered a baby boy. As we gathered around her bed with family and staff, I had the privilege of offering prayer and blessing this newborn child.

*Friday, August 6*

### **Mikanjuni Parish -- Tanga**

After breakfast we packed for a three-day safari to the Tanga region of the NED, along the Indian Ocean. This time after a four-hour trip down the mountain, across the plains to the coast, in the opposite direction of Mlalo, we unpacked and had lunch with Dean Shemkala and the pastors of the Coastal Deanery at the Mbuyu Kenda Hostel (<http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?>



*A joyous welcome at Mikanjuni; led in procession by a brass band and area pastors on motorbikes; with the pastor and people at Mlalo.*



option=com\_content&view=article&id=2179%3Ambuyukenda-restaurant-and-hostel-in-tanga&catid=26%3Arestaurants-and-hostels&Itemid=47&lang=en) owned and run by the NED as a place for visitors and a funding stream for the diocese.

After lunch we traveled to our newest congregational companion, Mikanjuni Lutheran Parish, now connected to St Luke, Devon. A band greeted us as we first were asked to sign the guest book and then were escorted into the very large sanctuary. Mikanjuni had for about 11 years been a sub-parish of Kana Lutheran Parish, companion to St. John Lutheran Church, Philadelphia (Mayfair). It became a parish just one year ago and its pastor, Pastor Mtangi, was ordained at that time and has already had a significant impact on the mission of the parish. Bishop Munga, Dean Shemkala, General Secretary Mwinuka, Joanne Carlson and I gave greetings and presented gifts from St. Luke. Likewise the people sent gifts back to Devon with blessings and prayer.



*The church at Mikanjuni.*

*Saturday, August 7*

**Muheza Lutheran Parish, Mabokweni and Duga Sub-parish (of Makarora Lutheran Parish)**

I am glad I did not know how long and exhausting this day would be before we left.

In the morning we travelled to Muheza Lutheran Parish. Pastor Mweta, Dean Shekizongolo of the Plains Deanery and Bishop Munga led the worship service, while I had the honor of laying a foundation stone for the new building, preaching a homily, and praying for the ministry. We presented gifts from and received gifts for their companion church, St. Paul, Lionville.

After a wonderful lunch we travelled an hour by jeep to Mabokweni, a property on the Indian Ocean recently acquired by the diocese, which will someday be a coastal satellite campus of SEKUCo. It felt good to stretch my legs and breath the ocean air. Bishop Munga had told me and Joanne that we were then going to Duga Sub Parish of the Makarora Lutheran Parish which is companioned with St. John, Melrose Park. He told us that Duga is a Maasai location, but nothing could prepare us for the 2 ½ hour jeep ride, more than 50 miles into the bush on the bumpiest road we have ever travelled. At least half the time we rocked along at 10 miles an hour. By the time we arrived it was close to 5 p.m.

The cheers, clapping, and singing of about 100 Maasai Lutherans greeted us, with every one of the women and some of the men wanting to shake our hands. The outdoor altar was a table covered by a green parament. A short (1 hour) worship service included baptisms. Some people from Duga were baptized at the Maasai gathering on Tuesday, but others wanted to wait until we came to their home place on Saturday. This evening I baptized 8 children, teenagers and adults.

Joanne and I had a most amazing encounter with some Maasai women who took us into a private room in the mud church, and dressed us in Maasai clothing and jewelry. It's a good thing we both have pierced ears because bead earrings were part of the deal. Of course with no lights the evening was slowly getting darker and darker, but before we left we were ushered into the small mud church building and ate meat, the main staple of the Maasai. It was now close to 7 p.m and we had a 3 hour trip back the way we came over the bumpy terrain, this time in the dark. We arrived back at the Hostel at 10 p.m. at which time we still had dinner with the Head Office staff and finally "crashed" in our rooms soon after.



*Bishops Burkat and Munga dedicate the cornerstone of a new church at Muheza; on the "road" to one of the most remote areas of the NED; baptizing at Duga.*



*The huge church at Korgowe is filled nearly to capacity, and it is not yet completed; exchanging gifts; the people spread a welcome banner. Inset: With the pastor, wife, and parish leaders.*



*Sunday, August 8*

### **Korogwe Lutheran Parish -- Korogwe**

After an early breakfast we left Tanga at 6:30 am, travelling to Korogwe Lutheran Parish, companion with St John, Pottstown. In 2007, I laid the cornerstone of the new church building, which was not much more than a foundation at the time. This visit was originally planned as the building dedication, however, for various reasons including the global recession, the building was not quite finished. Nonetheless, we were delighted to see the large, nearly-completed two-story building that holds 1,500 people. Not having regulations like in the U.S. it is being fully occupied even as construction continues. A procession led by a brass band began the service. Dean of the Tambarare (Plains) Deanery and pastor of Korogwe, Pastor Shekizongolo, invited me to preach, pray and baptize. Pastor Mahonge, now of Mlalo but a native of Korogwe, was the liturgist and Pastors Kibanga and Mwinuka represented the diocese while Bishop Munga presided at confirmation at a different parish. After the sermon, which like all the other speaking opportunities was translated into Swahili, two choirs sang, and the band enlivened the service.



At this service I baptized 14 children and adults. Greetings, gifts and blessings from St. John, Pottstown were given, and the leaders of Korogwe gave Joanne gifts to bring back with us to give to St. John. A most generous gift of \$600.00 from St. John was presented to Pastor Shekizongolo to help complete the building. After a wonderful dinner we enjoyed a beautiful ride back up the mountain and happily returned to the Tumaini Hostel ([http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2066%3Atumaini-hostel&catid=26%3Arestaurants-and-hostels&Itemid=47&lang=en](http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2066%3Atumaini-hostel&catid=26%3Arestaurants-and-hostels&Itemid=47&lang=en)) in Lushoto.

### **Dinner at Bishop Stephen and Pastor Anneth Munga's home -- Lushoto**

After Joanne and I got a start organizing all the gifts and fabric we were given to bring back, we drove to Bishop Munga's home for a most delightful dinner and conversation with the Mungas and staff from the Diocesan office.



*Monday, August 9*

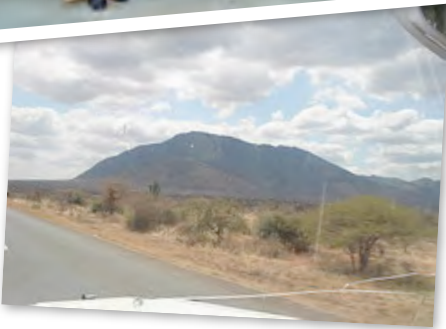
### **Departure from Lushoto, visit to Makumira University College – Arusha and Mwangaza Education for Partnership Centre - Ilboru**

After a final breakfast at Tumaini Restaurant ([http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2065%3Atumaini-restaurant&catid=26%3Arestaurants-and-hostels&Itemid=47&lang=en](http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2065%3Atumaini-restaurant&catid=26%3Arestaurants-and-hostels&Itemid=47&lang=en)) thanks, hugs and prayers for traveling mercies were extended and then we were on our way down the mountain, and on to Arusha. That afternoon, on the way, we visited Makumira University College and Mwangaza Education for Partnership Centre, a joint project of the ELCT and ELCA, before settling into the New Safari ELCT Hotel in the center of Arusha.

*Tuesday and Wednesday, August 10-11*

### **Journey home**

After a good sleep we reversed our long journey, flying from Kilimanjaro to Amsterdam (including layover, 16 hours), then on to Detroit (13-and-a-half hours, including a three-hour delay), and finally the last two-hour leg to Philadelphia, arriving home just before midnight.



*The Munga's with Daniel, one of their four sons, as we are welcomed into their home for a farewell dinner; with three co-directors of Mwangaza and NED General Secretary Pastor Mwinuka; scenery as we reached the base of the mountain and headed through the plains toward Arusha.*

### **RESOURCES:**

See a Tanzanian perspective on the bishop's visit on the Diocesan website: [http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2302:sepa-and-ned-companionship&catid=8:newsclips&Itemid=50&lang=en](http://www.elct-ned.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2302:sepa-and-ned-companionship&catid=8:newsclips&Itemid=50&lang=en)