

Heather Johnstone

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The call in action

Dear friends,

I decided to delay writing my link letter until I had news on when I could return to Tanzania. Days turned into weeks and weeks into months and months into many months, but finally I am delighted to share that my work permit has been approved at long last! Praise the Lord. I must apply for a residence visa now which hopefully will be processed quickly (or at least more quickly than the work permit!). As of 1 October, international commercial travel recommenced for the first time since March, and my South African visa which was expiring on 31 October has been extended, so I am free to travel whenever I'm ready.

Tanzanian presidential elections take place on 28 October. My tentative plan is to spend a few days in Nairobi and then travel to Tanzania in early November (assuming my paperwork is in order by then!). Things are starting to happen, and as my vicar Sarah Guinness says, the timing seems to have been perfectly choreographed by God, which is so true and an image I love.

However, unfortunately the work permit is for one year only and my "final grant", which did deflate my euphoria significantly. Apparently, there is a new rule which caps work permits at five years and I have already had two two-year permits, hence the one year granted. Nevertheless, the labour ministry has said that at the end of the year Bishop George should write to the commissioner and they guarantee I will receive an exemption certificate and will be allowed to continue serving the Diocese of Mara.

I trust that God will continue choreographing the steps and moves in the ballet of my life and my ministry in Tanzania.

Praise point: Thank God that my work permit has been approved.

Prayer point: Pray that my residence visa will be processed swiftly. Pray too for the travel arrangements I need to make (nothing is straightforward in these COVID-19 times) and that the various legs of my return journey will be safe and problem-free.

Our supporters dug deep and through generous donations we have been able to give every single Rehema employee (full-time or part-time, temporary or permanent) an investment of TZS 400,000. At a time when there is no work for our employees and no real idea when we might be able to re-open for trade, it was very important to be able to give everyone the opportunity to start their own small business so that they may provide for themselves and their families.

I am hearing wonderful success stories of their various endeavours but of course not everyone is going to be successful as an entrepreneur and some have been struggling to feed their families. We have arranged for regular food assistance for those



Name: Heather Johnstone

Location: Tanzania

My call: To work with women and children in crisis.

My role: Managing the Rehema Project, which exists to help empower the most disadvantaged women and children in Mara.



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Some of the Rehema women receiving their seed money to start small businesses; supplies from the market

who are falling through the cracks. Mostly we supply 40kg of maize meal which people use to make the Tanzanian staple, ugali. Furthermore, we have been able to be quite productive and have achieved a lot despite everything.

- We built a house for a young woman who was the victim of domestic abuse. Her husband used to regularly beat her and their children. She is now out of that toxic environment and she and the children are safe in their new home. The husband is living elsewhere with a second wife.
- We built toilets for the church community at a nearby village.
- Carpenters are currently making an additional 10 desks and 30 chairs for the nursery school at Nyambeshi.
- We enabled the church in Mkingingo to finish concreting their floor and buy chairs to use instead of using makeshift benches made from branches of trees that had been cobbled together.

Praise point: Thank God for the many individuals and link churches who support the Rehema Project and have empowered and enriched lives in the process.

Prayer point: Pray for the success of the small enterprises started by the Rehema women.

I have kept myself busy in South Africa while waiting for the opportunity to return to Tanzania and have been volunteering for a fantastic project called Ladles of Love. Danny, the founder, was determined to create a new kind of soup kitchen powered by love and offering comfort to fellow humans who have temporarily lost their way, which is something I fully subscribe to. Prior to lockdown, Ladles was serving soup and sandwiches to 200 needy people in Cape Town every week. As the need has multiplied due to the economic fallout caused by the global pandemic, the project has grown exponentially and is now working with more than 110 NGOs (who each support a further 250 beneficiaries of their own) and supply food to numerous soup kitchens and shelters. They have served 6,300,000 meals since lockdown started.

It is often mistakenly called Ladies of Love, but as Danny said on International Women's Day, he is happy with that mistake as the project is blessed with a team of strong, capable women with big hearts and incredible energy who make up more than 80 per cent of the volunteers. I am privileged to have played a small part in this great project, making sandwiches and boiled eggs twice a week, and driving for them three times a week.

I recently watched the film Pili, directed by Leanne Welham, and was blown away with how very true to life the film is. If you'd like to see what life is like for many Tanzanian women in rural Tanzania, this film is worth watching. It is available to buy or rent on Amazon or BFI Player.

Prayer point: Pray for people everywhere – that they find peace in these difficult times and that they keep Jesus close.

Heather

Photos from top to bottom: The house we built for a young woman; the young woman with her children in front of their new house; Ladles of Love beneficiaries



GOING FURTHER WITH CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY

Africa conference online: Discipleship in Changing Times. A virtual gathering 6–7 November to connect with mission in Africa, with contributions from CMS and CMS-Africa people in mission. For more information and to sign up, go to churchmissionsociety.org/ac2020

If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org or call 01865 787400

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