

Love for the Least

The Global Missions Team at the Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit, Emmaus, PA, led an advent appeal this past holiday season to support the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at Arusha Lutheran Medical Center in Tanzania, which was established by ELCA medical missionary Dr. Mark Jacobson, and also had the opportunity to lead the church's worship services on their annual Global Missions Sunday, held this year on January 22, 2023, to share about this ministry with those in attendance.

When a baby is born prematurely in Tanzania, it is considered as good as dead. Premature babies there are often referred to as 'stillbirths.' This was not acceptable to the staff of Arusha Lutheran Medical Center. Fifteen years ago they began to offer neonatal intensive care, and pediatrician Dr. Steve Swanson joined the program in 2011. Initially they were only able to save 4% of the babies. Today they serve almost 400 babies annually, and the survival rate in 2022 was 92%.

The care at the Arusha Lutheran Medical Center NICU is the best in Tanzania, and in most of East Africa. No baby is turned away because of inability to pay or insurance status. The five doctors and 26 nurses who staff the NICU do not just care for the tiny infants, but for the parents as well. A hospital bed and meals are provided to every mother with a baby in the NICU and both parents are encouraged and coached on how to interact with their babies.

Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit raised \$3,785 from their Love for the Least appeal to be directed to the Arusha Lutheran Medical Center NICU in Tanzania, and 175 premie knit or crochet hats were lovingly crafted for the NICU infants, which they hope to send to Tanzania. These hats can save lives by helping to keep the babies warm.

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