

*Dear Sisters & Friends  
Greetings to all, sisters,  
family and friends wherever  
you are, muffled against  
the cold seasonal Christmas  
weather.*

*Here we are enjoying the  
flourishing bougainvillea and  
flamboyant trees. Flowers  
everywhere; a totally different  
Christmas scene but still just  
as joyful.*

*Continents may separate  
us, but we come together as  
one in spirit to celebrate the  
birth of our Saviour.*

*Wishing you a Christmas  
filled with joy and happiness  
and every blessing in the  
coming New Year from all of  
us here in Tanzania.*

## NEW REGIME, NEW HOPE FOR TANZANIA

**O**ur new President, John Pombe Magufuli has just completed one year in office. He's dynamic, thorough and seriously determined to 'undo the rot', and to strive for self-reliance.

In one year he's got a lot more revenue, by collecting taxes and cutting out government extravagance; he's sacked big people not doing their jobs, fired one Minister who turned up drunk in Parliament, led a clean-up of the city which is on-going and makes a difference, scrapped foreign jaunts for government officials, doesn't go outside the country much himself, whereas his predecessor was always travelling. He has bought two planes and has plans for reviving the central railway line. He's organised companies throughout the country to contribute desks to the primary schools and he's doubled the budget for development.

For all that, however, he's causing problems unwittingly as things can't all be done at once. School staffing is worse now as they clamp down on fake certificates, and ghost workers, thousands of them. He announced totally free education but did not send money to the schools to replace what the parents had been contributing.



*Tanzania President Magufuli*

"Higher education loans for the poorest students" was the rallying cry of his campaign, but many who qualified have failed to get loans up to now. There's a lot of pain and anxiety. For ourselves, the worst is the harassment for taxes which we were previously and worthily exempt from as our work totally complements the work of the government and concentrates on the poorest, and any profits are reinvested in the schools.

At Diocesan level the Bishop and others are trying to have the tax exemptions of all the diocesan registered charities restored. They say they are being heard but its very slow.....if we paid all we are being asked to pay we would end the year broke and be unable to do necessary maintenance. On the other hand by not paying we risk penalties and accumulated arrears. It's a headache!

For all that things are looking up. It's difficult, but it's progress.

### New Churches for Maji Matitu, Mbande, Chamazi

In February the foundation stone of the new church to be built in Maji Matitu was laid by Fr. Oscar who celebrated the first Mass there. We all helped him to bless the surrounding area.

Since then a new church has been opened and a new parish established in Mbande 10 miles away and another huge church is going up in Chamazi near Saku.

The Church is surely thriving here in Tanzania. Let us pray that vocations keep pace.



*Maji Matitu Church foundation ceremony*

# Community

## Visitors:

Recently Srs **Maggie McCarthy** and **Michele Totman** came to see us on behalf of the Provincial Leadership team. They spent two good weeks with us and renamed us 'Tanzania Area Community'. They were very helpful and practical regarding the onward planning for the Mission.

Their visit coincided with **Sr. Teresa's** who was here to work on the Child Protection Policies and Safeguarding. Teresa gave very encouraging input at the Board Meeting in Debrabant and helped to design an advertising brochure/flyer for the school. She was also the Guest of Honour at our 6<sup>th</sup> Form 4 Graduation there.

Another welcome visitor was our good friend **Nel Bouwhuizen** from SOS de Ronde Venen. Nel's organisation has helped Debrabant with many projects over the years, including the perimeter wall, a classroom block, a staff house and the Form V and VI Science Labs

Adriana's grand-niece **Sarah** fitted in from the moment she arrived and turned her hand to anything whether weeding the new lawn, cooking meals, washing up or sorting and updating the Matumaini records.



The sisters tried to persuade her to join us 'full time' but she had other plans!

## Promoting Vocations

**T**he year got off to a good start with an enthusiastic seminar organised by Alice for women from schools and colleges who were interested in learning about religious vocation. It was well prepared and all our sisters supported it.



The young sisters went out, despite it being New Year's day to clean and prepare the hall. We had no idea how many would turn up but in the end there were about 30 which was encouraging. Sr. Sylvia from Cameroon, who was staying with us during her break from

*September Vocations Seminar group*

college, spoke on mission and Sr. Schola on the history of LSU. The Mass was a real celebration.

In September Alice organised another seminar which was also well attended by a group of enthusiastic young women.

## Golden Jubilee Celebration for Sr. Mairead

ON THE feast of the Holy Rosary, we celebrated Mairead's Golden Jubilee with éclat. It started with a special Mass in the evening for all the sisters including Bethany and Dundani. After Mass the sisters ceremoniously led Mairead to the decorated sitting room where a 'throne' had been prepared. She was garlanded and there was lots of singing and dancing as usual as well as 'fine dining'. Then we all settled in the lounge for the present giving. The community gave her a new laptop as hers has been defunct for some time. Her fellow Jubilarians in England/Ireland had made her a 'remembrance book' with pictures, stories and tributes from her family, friends and fellow sisters. The sisters made a special song for her which they sang in Swahili. Then there was more dancing and singing to round off the evening, while we older ones crept away in ones or twos.



## Community News

**Sr. Agatha** was appointed Headmistress of the Holy Union Pre & Primary school. This gave **Sr. Mairead** more time to supervise the building of the new Primary school.

**Sr. Emiliana** moved to Saku to complete her secondary school.

**Sr. Jesca** moved to Maji Matitu where she is doing some teaching and working with Matumaini as well.

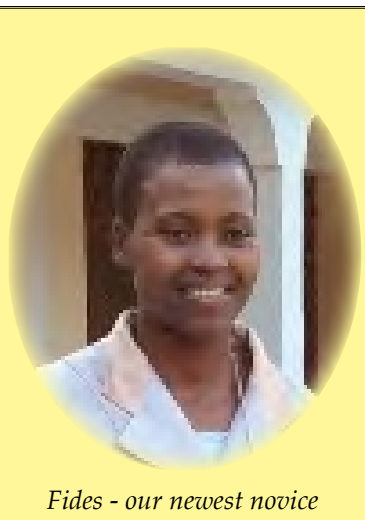
**Sr. Bene** also moved to Saku as she too is completing her secondary education.

**Sr. Schola** is based in Maji Matitu and joins **Sr. Alice** in doing Catechetical work in the parish and schools.

Two of the novices are back with us doing a three month work experience. **Antonia** is working in Matumaini and teaching religion in the primary school while **Glory** is teaching Biology in Chamazi Secondary school.

## Local Church Outreach

THE sisters take an active part in the local church especially as two, **Sr. Alice** and **Sr. Schola**, are catechists preparing children for the Sacraments and teaching religion in the local schools both primary and secondary. The novices also are active in the church teaching Sunday school and doing outreach to the local people in and around Dundani. There is also good attendance at deanery meetings, and seminars for religious. In July **Sr. Jesca** attended a special seminar on 'Life' for the whole of English speaking Africa.



*Fides - our newest novice*

# Dundani

**W**hen we thought the struggle over a compulsory purchase order was over last December, it was only a lull. The local government in Mkuranga was rotten to the core and ignored the Minister's order to leave us in peace.

So we went back to the Ministry of Lands and got another order. Part of President Magufuli's crackdown on corrupt practices helped, and a few people were dismissed from office. Now they have promised not to interfere with the Mission again and even to ensure that whatever other development is planned for the area will not disturb us. This is a bonus as we were afraid of factories being built next door to us. It was a long fight and we've still to get the deeds but it should be straightforward now.

## Intercongregational Seminar

IN MAY we had an intercongregational Seminar for Novices and there is the possibility of the Final Vows programme being held in Dundani next year as four African sisters have asked to make their perpetual profession. We would love to welcome the Cameroonian sisters and their formators here.

This year, **Sr. Inez**, ex-General Council member, spent 3 months helping **Sr. Dostea** in the Novitiate and her contribution was greatly appreciated. **Sr. Marion Frances** also devoted time and talent to making the house both functional and welcoming. Flowering shrubs are everywhere and many fruit trees have been planted. When the time is right we intend to invite the Cardinal for an 'official opening'. We have come a long way with the help of God and many people.

Sr. Dostea and the Novices already have



*Novices in the Shamba at Dundani*

an outreach to the schools and to poor families in the area. The numbers in the Sunday school are increasing and they are involved in the local basic Christian communities. They have a small income from selling water, vegetables and coconuts. They also grow maize, cassava, rice, okra, watermelons and pineapples. They are the proud owners of a growing poultry project of hens and ducks and one cow, called 'Black'.

Many of us went to Dundani to be present as **Fides** was accepted into the Novitiate. It was a moving little ceremony and low key as all the novices were on retreat so we had no talk at supper afterwards when usually we would be celebrating. It was good as it gave weight to the ceremony and time for it all to sink in.

The surrounding wall, built with Province funds is a terrific addition to the Novitiate and provides a semblance of security. With threats from Al Shabaab types against Christians and being still in fairly isolated countryside where break-ins are all too common, we also have a night watchman and two guard dogs.



# Education



## PRE & PRIMARY SCHOOL

**W**e celebrated the 13<sup>th</sup> Graduation of our pre-school children on 3<sup>rd</sup> December and used the occasion to encourage the parents and local government to support the school financially.

The guest of honour, (our local MP) was so appalled at the state of the road as he travelled to the graduation that he called a contractor and asked him to work on it immediately! If it happens it will make a great difference.

This year, grade 4 took their first public exams in November. We await the results eagerly expecting everyone to do well.

### Building

THE PRIMARY School building programme is still a work in progress. However the framework is now in place – dining hall, kitchen, staff toilets, 6 upper classrooms and offices including the roof.



*Primary School children say "Thanks"*



▲ *Work in progress: school dining hall*

▼ *Work complete: phase one classroom block*



A new borehole produces plentiful good drinking water. With the funding available we have done more than anticipated, but there is still much to be done – plastering, painting, tiling, paving, as well as building a storage tank for rain water.

We were disappointed not to succeed in our request for help from Misesa Cara. Keep us in your prayers. Miracles DO happen.

## COMPUTERS FOR COBET

RECONDITIONED computers have been installed for COBET and a new teacher, **Rodney**, began training the students. At about the same time an Irish friend of Annette's, **Eilish Treacy**, a principal from a national Primary School in Ireland, came as a volunteer for a few weeks, full of ideas which she shared with the new teacher, to help install and teach programs.

She came with a case full of footballs, pens, flash discs and much else, but most of all she came with enthusiasm and creativity. She soon had the students and the teachers galvanised to be innovative. The students, most of whom had never touched a computer before, were soon making PowerPoint presentations and inserting pictures of their life at COBET. She helped him to set up the first **Coder dojo** club in Tanzania and this got us free advertising in a National newspaper. She also encouraged the computer department in Debrabant to get involved in Africa Code week.



*Learning is fun when you have a proper computer and a keen teacher*

The enthusiasm and energy she engendered has lasted and it is heartening to see how the investment in technology has paid off. It is also special that the Cobet children, the most vulnerable and marginalised of all the students, should have privileged access to their own computers and that they are so well able to use them now.

# Education



## SCHOOLS OUTREACH

The Education Minister visited Maji Matitu Primary (the nearby State School which we support). Sr. Adriana attended.

It was a happy occasion for the parents who turned out in force, because he promised them ten new classrooms, more teachers and books, another well, and even a whole new school in the region. He said the money was all there (thanks to our new President!). One parent asked when it would all start and he said "on Monday" and indeed the classrooms and desks are coming up fast.

## GRATEFUL THANKS

Ambassador **Fionnuala Gilsean** and Second Secretary **Brian Nolan** helped us enormously with the Dundani land issues. Both have gone on to new posts now and we wish them the best. We hope the close relations with the Embassy will continue undiminished and that the new Ambassador Paul Sherlock will be ready to help us too, should any further difficulties arise.



WE mourn the death of Maria's nephew **John** who died of typhoid just after finishing his University training.

In November, we were greatly saddened by the death of the mathematics teacher of Debrabant, **Mwalimu Oswald Mihambo**, who was diagnosed with cancer in May.

May they rest in peace.

## DEBRABANT SECONDARY

The school is blessed with a young, capable and hardworking Principal, **Madame Angela Emmanuel**. She works with a dedicated, competent staff and we get consistently better examination results than most schools in the region. This was our first year to have a Form VI graduation. There were 33 graduates and our Guest of Honour was Fr. Stephano Kaombe, formerly Rector of Visiga Seminary and a member of the Board of Governors.



▲ Debrabant Football Team

Debrabant Steel Band ▶

Debrabant Netball Team ▼



on music, art or drama or even P.E. in the present curriculum and unlimited scope exists for developing the huge potential that is there.

### Unwelcome Visitor

IN MARCH El Nino paid us a visit. There was a terrific storm with thunder and lightening and torrential rain. It caused havoc with the roads, destroyed houses and



flooded many outside toilets. Traveling to town one saw scenes of destruction and land slides everywhere. Our house is sound and even though our land is on a slope, the foundations to the new hall and classrooms we are building seemed to anchor the land so there was little damage.

The school is becoming known, not only for academic excellence but also for a range of extra-curricular activities. This year we scored first place in our sector in the Young Scientist Tanzania competition and we were third out of 150 participating schools nationwide. Our students also participated in interschool debates which were broadcast on the national TV network.

Our only musical instruments are still the Steel Drum Band and for some of us this is a searing deficiency in the education we offer. To improve would need much extra investment which we cannot manage for now. There is little or no emphasis

Debrabant was not so lucky. Torrents of water washed away a large section of the wall flanking the football field. The bottom right hand corner, next to a road, collapsed for about 100 yards. Deep holes were made in the ground so the roots of trees were visible. Not only that but a gully, built by the sisters next door, was destroyed by our falling bricks and part of their wall fell also. Now we have rebuilt it more strongly and with holes to allow the flood waters to escape. There is also a network of water channels within the school grounds which hopefully will direct the water out of the area safely next time.

# Matumaini

**W**e are acutely aware of the constant appeals for help due to the appalling events currently occurring around the world. As we continue to invite your help, we assure you your contributions all go to improving the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable. Nothing is wasted.

Thank you from us all in Dar es Salaam. You are always in our prayers.



#### Visit us at:

[www.holyuniontanzania.co.uk](http://www.holyuniontanzania.co.uk)

**Contact** (in Tanzania):  
avdb1032@yahoo.co.uk

**Contact** (in UK):  
louisvdb@me.com

**Online donations:** go to [www.virginmoneygiving.com](http://www.virginmoneygiving.com) and type 'LSU' into the 'Find a charity' box. You will be directed to the La Sainte Union page, where you can find out more about our work and make your donation.

**T**his year, being the Year of Mercy, there was a big drive on to raise money for Matumaini. The local deaneries agreed to give us the proceeds of their Lenten collections and many of them came to visit and see the work for themselves. This is all testimony to the increase in interest and support from the local Tanzanians - a far cry from when we started seven years ago, and disability was regarded as a curse and a dishonour. Now the word is out. One new mother, when asked how she knew about Matumaini, replied "Everyone in Dar with a disabled child knows about Matumaini and that they get real help there"

#### Growing numbers

THE numbers of children increase all the time. We now have well over 700 children on the database who have been helped by the Centre. They come and go though, fortunately, they don't all come at the same time. We average over 200 children a week. The exercise hall is now too small



*Ceremonial ribbon-cutting at the new 'Banda'*

so we have built a big open air 'lean to', known in these parts as a 'Banda', fixed to the back wall of the workshop. It takes up about one third of the space of the playground and can be used for meetings such as seminars and parent meetings, as well as extra space for exercising.

#### Help from on high

RECENTLY our local MP Mr. Issa Ally came to visit Matumaini. He is a young man, very observant and anxious to see what is being done and what can be done. Altogether he was very encouraging. He even promised to help us navigate the new tax regulations for private educational establishments which are proving a nightmare.

#### Our own oven – at last!

A GREAT triumph has been the acquisition of a special oven for melting the plastic needed to make our own calipers, thus saving time and money in sending the moulds away. After three years of effort we finally acquired a secondhand oven. It needed extensive repairs but now it works like new.



The local hospital for disabilities has a connection with the international Red Cross and their Director Mr de Wet helped us to obtain Teflon and sheets of plastic so that we can get started. We are even hoping we will be awarded accreditation so that the Centre can be used for training, which will bring in more income.



**Bertha** is a trained teacher for children with disabilities. Now retired, she doesn't want to lose contact with such children, and has volunteered to help us. Here she is giving a seminar to the women in the new 'Banda' on teaching life skills to their children to make them more independent. They loved it and asked for more.

The inscription on the wall reads: "We thank God for all our children, may they be blessed"