

VOL XIX

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CHRISTMAS 2017

# Tidings from Tanzania

## Tanzania is growing up!

PRESIDENT Magufuli is doing trojan work restoring Tanzania (corrupt, lazy and complacent) to the rule of law. There is more discipline now in the public service. Nobody, however senior is spared. Ghost workers and embezzlement are a thing of the past. Costly jaunts abroad are severely curtailed. Extravagant expenditure for public holidays is only a memory. The money saved is allocated to development.

Reforms in mining laws protect our natural resources and curtail excessive profits. Revenue collection has hugely increased. Infrastructure projects are attracting investors at home and abroad with industrialization as the main goal. Hundreds of factories have been built or revived. Power shortages however continue to reduce competitiveness.

While much is being achieved there are still a few problems. The much vaunted free education programme has contributed to ever more overcrowding in schools, fewer teachers, insufficient resources and desperately poor results.

For all that, President Magufuli is doing a terrific job and is a much needed example of good leadership on the African Continent.

## Dear Friends

**A**s winter takes a grip of half the world and torrid heat the other half we look back on this tumultuous year as it draws to a close. We give thanks for the many blessings we have received and the difficulties which have been overcome.

The blessings include the outcome of the General Chapter held in July and August. While they were here Srs. Margaret, Annemarie and Dostea (who was our first delegate from Tanzania) gave a lively and comprehensive feedback on the proceedings. We congratulate the new Leadership team and wish them well.

Meanwhile we have elected our own leadership team for Tanzania: Sr Annette, area leader and Srs Benedicta and Alice, councillors.

Other blessings included the first profession in Tanzania of two novices Antonia and Glory in February, the final profession of Alice and Jesca in September and, the reception of

Elizabeth, Eliza, Flavia, and Sylvia to the postulancy in October.

## Preparing for the Future

ALL the professed sisters are following education courses to equip them for their future apostolates. Sr Marion transferred to Dundani Novitate to help with the teaching. She has many skills to share with the young people there.

It is a difficult time here in the short term, with most of the sisters away on courses and few remaining to support the existing ministries. However we are meeting the challenge with the help of dedicated lay people.



Community photograph to commemorate the seminar given by Srs. Mary and Gabrielle

*May this blessed time of Christmas renew our hope for a better world and give us energy as we welcome the light of Christ. We thank each and every one of you who shared with us in 2017, helping us to relieve suffering and want and open up opportunities to the marginalized and disadvantaged. It is through your help and support that Holy Union Mission flourishes. May God bless each and every one of you in 2018. This is the prayer of the Holy Union Sisters in Dar es Salaam. Happy Christmas and Happy New Year to one and all!*



# Holy Union Pre & Primary School

**T**he Holy Union Pre/Primary school, now in its third year, is flourishing under the leadership of Srs Mairead, Agatha and support of Sr Benedicta in the Montessori pre school.



*School building with bridge to upper level*

The school will open grade six in January, the penultimate year in a Primary School and Sr. Annette has her eye on possible students for Debrabant after grade seven.

Sr. Agatha continues to lead the Holy Union Pre & primary school from strength to strength with a dedicated team of lay staff and has this to say: "Numbers are increasing and the standard is good. There is no Ofsted here but inspectors drop in at any time and have proved satisfied, encouraging and helpful, giving the school a very good overall grade. Both last year and this year the grade 4 children have done well in their exams, coming 7th out of 18 schools in the district.

## Building works

We thank all those who have helped us to reach this stage. Mairead has her hands full piloting the building works, no mean feat as the school is built on a very steep slope. The latest addition of an all purpose hall and classroom block is nearing completion. Even now we regularly celebrate Mass for all the children in the hall. Next year (2018) we will be able to start using the whole building including hall and classrooms. However there is still much to be done especially making the surroundings safe and accessible for the children and completing internal work. We wish you all the best and remain united in prayer. Welcome to Holy Union School".

## Outreach

HOLY Union continues to provide an outreach to the local government schools. It funds allowances for volunteer teachers in Saku and Maji Matitu Primary schools and Charambe Secondary to help reduce the very high student to teacher ratio.

It runs the Cobet programme for over 200 youth, (who are late-starters in education or who have dropped out too early due to family problems) on behalf of Maji Matitu Primary and also greatly assists the Kindergarten there. Daily porridge encourages the young people to remain in school and a higher than average teacher-pupil ratio ensures excellent progress and better results. This is also a considerable help to qualified but as yet unemployed teachers.

### Churwi Primary

This year we helped Churwi Primary to complete a classroom for their kindergarten. This was with the assistance of Creagh

National School, Ballinasloe who have done so much for the schools here through fundraising done by their Confirmation class every year. The classroom had been started by the parents more than 4 years before.



*Churwi classroom today...*



*...Three years ago they were being taught like this*

## Health Clinics

At the request of the local government, we also helped to refurbish Arafa Health Clinic in Saku, the only registered clinic there and serving 15,000 people.

As well, we donated a plot this year for the people in Churwi to build their own Health Clinic, a need they have spoken about for a very long time. This hill community are isolated every year for months during the rainy season and have special needs now that the population is increasing there all the time as people move in from outlying areas.



*Opening ceremony, Arafa Health Clinic, Saku*



# Debrabant Secondary School

**I**t has been another very successful year in Debrabant Secondary with 30 students graduating from Form 6 in May and 87 Form 4's graduating in November. Most of the 'A'level students have already started university or college courses.

**Eilish Treacy** (Principal of Eyrecourt National School in Ireland) visited us again as a volunteer in July.



**W**e are acutely aware of the constant appeals for help due to the appalling events occurring around the world. As we continue to invite your support, we assure you your contributions all go to improving the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable. As you will have read, there is no let up to the numbers coming to us for help.

**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.

**By Cheque:** Cheques payable to 'LSU Tanzania' may be sent to:

The Bursar  
29 Pulteney Road  
Bath BA2 4EZ

Thank you from us all here in Maji Matitu. You are always in our prayers.

Charity No 233872



## Africa Code Week

WE were introduced by Eilish Treacy to Bernard Kirk and his colleagues from University College Galway, who were looking for a school in which to organize training in



*Coderdojo team: Equilax, Pauline, Reginald*

computer coding, as a preliminary to Africa Code Week (ACW) in October. We seemed to fit the bill and were delighted to welcome the team from Galway.

The students built on the foundation in Coderdojo Eilish had given them the previous year. Our teachers and teachers from neighbouring schools also took part. An excellent lunch was provided on both days, as well as the superb tee shirts our teachers had designed with a great variety of logos. The Galway team were back on October for Africa Code Week, during which about six hundred students and teachers in Debrabant and Cobet / Maji Matitu were introduced to coding. The team put in another tough day of training, but nobody wanted to miss it.

We benefitted again when Bernard invited our Steel Drum Band to play at the launch of ACW. It was the Band's first outing and they had to learn the German National Anthem in a great hurry. The venue was Seaciff, one of the most prestigious tourist hotels in Dar es Salaam. Among the guests were Minister Ciaran Cannon from Ireland, the Irish Ambassador, Paul Sherlock, the German Ambassador and our own Minister of Education, Joyce Ndalichako, as well as the whole ACW international team.

All were charmed by the young band who played their hearts out and got a great reception. It was an unforgettable experience.

## Student numbers

OUR greatest challenge at this time in Debrabant is to improve our enrolment figures. With little money in circulation due to the austerity regime, parents cannot afford private education, even though we

do our best to make it affordable. We have to use every means to advertise our school and hope for the best. Last year, Sr Teresa Finn helped us to produce an excellent brochure and we will use it again now. Hopefully, our efforts will bear fruit.



*Africa Code Week: training session*

## Hidden talents

The ACW team left behind a large sack of Lego - something very new to the children here and now hugely popular, especially with the Cobet group, who are amazingly creative. Srs. Mary and Gabrielle from Gloir judged a Lego competition while they were here and were very impressed with what the children produced.





# Matumaini

**T**he main challenge facing Matumaini is the escalation of numbers. Last year, 2016, we had 212 children attending. By October 31 this year we have 392, including 190 new registrations - an increase of 100% over last year. Average daily attendance has almost tripled in 3 years, as the chart shows.

## Strength in Numbers

LOBBYING Government and health authorities has been largely unsuccessful. We are received politely, congratulated on our initiative, but no help is forthcoming, not even registration. The solution seems to be to join up with other organizations so that our 'voice' becomes louder.

This year we have had meetings with groups from Vikindu, Mkuranga, Kibaha, Kawe, Mvuti, and Muhimbili



Group meeting, Matumaini Centre

orthopedic department. All these places are spread out and serve different areas.

They also have different aims. Vikindu specialize in children with hydrocephalic or spina bifida problems. Juma, from Kibaha, makes special lightweight boots to strengthen ankles and to correct foot problems. Matumaini concentrates on a 'First Aid' approach. It is the oldest of the groups and has many more clients. For special problems we refer them to the appropriate specialist.

In discussion we realized we can help each other by sharing resources, such as our workshop and volunteers from Vikindu who have contacts from University students and others. We have made a start at preparing a memorandum to take to the District Commissioner and higher if possible.



Exercise session. Dads get involved too (occasionally!)

## Appointment System

TO meet this challenge an appointment system has been set up. Children registered in the last six months can come any day but others must come through an appointment system, depending on the needs of each child and the ability of the parent to continue the exercises at home.

The centre remains available to all. They can use the apparatus or attend our education department where they are learning life skills and occupational therapy to make the children more independent so they can attend special schools.

We aim to make the parents confident



Parents' meeting. The stress is on self-reliance



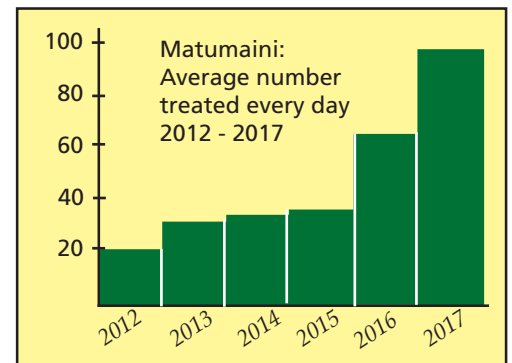
Dr Jovin at work

## Seminars

DR. JOVIN, our visiting specialist, has been very helpful in giving two seminars to staff and parents, raising their expertise and suggesting simple exercises and apparatus. Working with the balance ball is fun as well as improving mobility. We have to keep an eye on the ball as the more mobile children tend to use it as a football!



Exercise with balance ball



that they can be the instrument of their own child's progress, thus reducing their dependence on the Centre.

## Parents' Meetings

WE have held two meetings to explain the appointment system to parents and stress the need for daily exercise. We took this opportunity to teach everyone the best way to use the equipment, for how long and which pieces were suitable for different age groups. The staff also learned from this and can advise the parents. The meetings were well received and the reason for the new system readily accepted.