



## Link letter from Heather Johnstone October 2018

### Dear friends

I feel that I have just come up for air for the first time in months following an extremely busy season with lots of activities and responsibilities outside my job also competing for my time. As a result, I almost have too much to share in this link letter. I think, therefore, that the best approach is to include lots of pictures and let them speak for themselves.

### Mary's cabinet

However, there is one exception, where I will expand – Rehema is the “voice of the voiceless” after all. It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words and that is certainly true most of the time. However, you might be excused for ignoring the innocuous little photograph of a cabinet. (See the photograph on the board at the back of church) Any photographer will tell you that there are a myriad of things wrong with the photograph but this picture has a beautiful story hidden in the depths of its “blandness”. It's a story of hope, determination and faith and a quiet tribute to Rehema – the story of a lady called Mary.

Mary is a devout Christian, the wife of a pastor, mother of nine children, a grandmother and full time carer of two of these, a seamstress and sole provider for the ever-expanding clan. She was lucky enough many years ago to be sponsored to attend a Girls' Brigade sewing course. She had a natural aptitude for sewing and flourished. When the Rehema Project started, she was recommended as a seamstress and, amongst other things, she still to this day makes our beautiful soft toys featuring the wild animals from the Serengeti including giraffes, elephant and recently rhinoceros too.

Mary is an extremely hard worker and has a steely determination to provide a better life for her family. She turns unfalteringly to God for all her needs and will tell anyone who cares to listen that “Mungu ni mwema” (God is good). She starts every conversation with “Bwana asifiwe” (Praise the Lord) and by His grace has been gifted with the skill that enable her to provide well for her family. Of course, life is still a struggle with such a big family but thanks to her work for Rehema, together with loans she has been given by the project over the years, she has managed to send her children to good schools and vocational training colleges. She has also bought land, built a small house and then a bigger house on the same piece of land.

Recently she managed to save enough money to buy the wooden cabinet in the photograph; she was so chuffed with the acquisition, something she had never imagined owning, that she wanted to acknowledge Rehema's role in making her dream become a reality and carved “Rehema” into the wood as a silent tribute to her employer. “Ni kwa neema ya Mungu” (It is by the grace of God”).

### A pastoral visit from Steve Burgess, CMS regional manager for Africa

(Some of you will remember his name as a link missionary in the past)

CMS was invited to attend the enthronement of the new archbishop of Tanzania, Revd Dr Maimbo Mndolwa. We were represented by Steve who took the time to visit mission partners based in Tanzania after the enthronement. The Rehema women were delighted to welcome him to the project and to Musoma and threw a party for him where they cooked, sang and prayed for him. They also “ran up” two beautiful new shirts as a gift for him.

### Nursery school at Nyambeshe – the old and the new

As you know I am chairperson of this nursery that has been running out of a small room at the back of the church. A while ago I asked Go MAD (who regularly have groups of volunteers in Musoma) if they would consider partnering with me to help build a nursery school in Nyambeshe. In June a large team of students from Northern Ireland came to Musoma and raised a significant amount of money for various projects. I was delighted to learn that they

had allocated money to the school building project. Not only that, but they also got stuck in and helped with the work while working alongside locals from Nyambeshe. The wonderful Northern Irish team were only in Musoma for two weeks but left enough money for local builders to carry on with the work and the building is currently at lintel height, which is so encouraging for this community as the closest school is a 40 minute walk away. The new building has two classrooms and a staffroom/office in the middle. An amazing answer to prayer and yet another example of God's unfailing provision.

### **Microloans for women to start small businesses**

We received a gift of TZS 4,000,000 (£1,334) from Anglican aid in Australia and started a micro loan finance initiative. Mother's Union and the leadership from the four regions within the diocese helped us find suitable candidates and in July we granted 40 small loans of 100,000 shillings each for women to start small businesses. (See the photograph in church that shows the first group of recipients.)

### **Safe house in Mugumu**

Mugumu in the Serengeti region is home to the diocesan safe house for girls escaping FGM (Female Genital Mutilation). They currently accommodate 45 girls but rely on donations to enable them to continue their good work. We had a sale of unsold Rehema stock and it was our privilege to gift them a couple of months supply of sanitary towels and lotions that they urgently needed, from the proceeds of the sale. I am looking into a much more cost effective solution which is supplying the girls with reusable towels as part of a menstrual health programme run by our friends at Go MAD.

### **Fundraiser in Nyankanga**

I recently attended a fundraiser to build a church in Nyankanga. It was a spirit filled and joyous occasion with many people gifting "things" rather than money. I donated 5 bags of cement while others contributed wood, sheet metal for roofing etc. Other donations such as green peppers were auctioned off to highest bidder.

Love

*Heather*

You can give online to Heather at: [churchmissionsociety.org/johnstone](http://churchmissionsociety.org/johnstone)

#### Contact

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### **Prayer and praise**

- Give thanks for all the customers who support us and pray that we will serve them well and reflect Christ in the work we do.
- Praise for the Rehema Project and its support for women like Mary
- Continue to pray that I might continue to manage my workload and my priorities and at the same time achieve a healthy work/life balance.
- Pray that the recipients of our microloans will repay them faithfully so that the programme can continue and many more women receive similar help to start small businesses and provide for their families.
- Pray for the school project in Nyambeshe and the new church build in Nyankanga.
- Pray for Bishop George and all the diocesan employees.