

Alex's 2nd Journey to Africa

“Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, that you did for me.”
(Matthew 25:40)

On the 3rd of September 2012 three of us left Athens; Petros - the dentist, Bianca – an international law student, and I. We traveled through Istanbul on Turkish Airlines with a stop in Rwanda, and arrived in Kampala, Uganda at 3:00 AM. After dealing with suitcases and visas it was 4:00 AM, and a taxi was waiting to drive us the 4½ hours to the Tanzania border. At the border we got our visas, and Yanni (a young Greek man) was waiting for us. We then drove another 1½ hours to Bukoba. I wasn't tired even after traveling all night. I was just anxious to see the brothers and sisters with a big smile, and hugging them and seeing the hope they have that we'll bring comfort for their medical problems.

About 6:00 PM the medical team arrived from the USA. Dr. Curly teamed with Alex G. organized the team of 18. Most of them were from Project Africa Global Inc., a non-profit organization in Los Angeles that Dr. Curly and her husband Reggie (a pharmacist) belong to. We met in the Archdiocese home and they provided dinner for us. His Eminence thanked us for the sacrifice we made to come and help the people. They suffer from all kinds of disease (malaria, worms, back pain, etc.). They have no water, no electricity, no sanitation, and only enough food for a day. I saw a woman washing clothes in a dirty creek. The water was brown. And children drink from the rain water from the dirty creeks. We left to stay in three different places, two houses and a hotel.

At 8:00 AM the minibus picked us up for the ten minute drive to the clinic. Four years ago a group of Greek doctors from Kedas (a non-profit organization in Greece), built a hospital. But they did not have permanent employees (doctors, nurses, etc.), and the government closed the hospital. Maria and Felice (long term OCMC missionaries), and Yanni, reopened the hospital as a clinic. It is very impressive. They hired 15 local people (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, cleaning staff, etc.), and started to see patients. This time they charged the people a small amount of money for the visit and medicine. Because, before when doctors visited the hospital everything was free, and the people would take the medicine and sell it to the pharmacist in Bukoba. Maria (a young, energetic, beautiful lady) and Yanni, when he's in Tanzania, oversee the clinic.

This time in the medical group we had Dr. MJ Reed, a general surgeon, and a surgical nurse Linda (both beautiful ladies with big hearts). They went to the hospital operated by the government and performed surgeries like hernia repair, mass excision and resection, colostomy, and exploratory laparotomy. The middle of the week, immigration came and tried to take money from us (\$400 each) for their pockets. We lost a day because they did not allow us to work, but his Eminence called the headquarters and found out it was illegal and straightened out the problems forever.

Reggie and I spent almost three days going through all the medicines and inventoried everything and stored them in the pharmacy. We gave the list to Angela (the computer expert), and she put everything in the computer along with all the patients health history. The next time they visit the clinic they'll have the medical histories, even in Tanzania. The technology is ahead thanks to Yanni who organizes and has control of everything.

Saturday we did outreach at Kobushwa, where St. Paul's sister church is located. We set up the clinic in the priest's home. There were a lot of people waiting to shake hands and hug us. About 1:00 it started raining for an hour, and many people left. That was not a good day for them, but we saw all the people who stayed. Monday we traveled to Kazinga, where Rose Marie and James Towle donated the money to build the St. Barbara Church. It is beautiful on top of the hill. About 250-300 people greeted us, and waited to see the doctors. It was the longest day of the trip (15 hours). We saw 145 people, and then had to stop because there was no electricity and everyone was exhausted. Broke my heart to see people waiting for 5-6 hours and we couldn't see them. Of course the kids were waiting for candy. I had a lot, and I had an incredible experience seeing how happy they were for just one candy. Everyday for lunch we had peanut butter and jelly, and bananas. For dinner rice, french fries, mashed potatoes, chicken wings, and sometimes beef that was tough to chew, and bananas and fried bananas.

The truck for the drilling rig has arrived in Tanzania. The Archbishop is waiting for the government permits they need in order to use the truck. And, they should be able to start drilling wells soon.

I'd like to share the following observations. This is a place to ask for help and to give help. For two weeks I felt physically, mentally, and spiritually very strong. I saw first hand how making the decision of living simple could change someone else's life. This project is not finished, each well will cost \$3000-\$5000. I hope and pray that with the grace of God, and your prayers and help we will continue to support the project. Water is critical to health, social, and economic development for nearly 900 million people. What inspires me is the dignity of human life. God created all of us equal. The children in Tanzania need love, they are my inspiration. I hope they will be an inspiration for you. Please help us help them. God bless you.

In His Service,

Alex Haimanis



Mission Tanzania

An outreach ministry of Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church