

Reading the signs of the times in a rapidly changing world, we shall be alert to new needs, opportunities and approaches always remembering that your whole life is dedicated to the fulfillment of Christ's healing mission that the world may have life and have it in all its fullness.

(MMM Constitutions 9.11,16)

Dear Friends,

These past few months in the MMM world have been full of good work, challenges, and new beginnings. This newsletter comes four times a year to give you, our friends and partners, an update on the life and work that MMM is doing in our various health projects around the world. As well we encourage you to keep up with our website (www.mmmworldwide.org) and the bi-monthly e-newsletters that come from our Communications Office in Ireland that we forward to those of you who have requested to receive them . . . all ways for you to know how your commitment to us is bearing fruit in the lives of many.

In this newsletter, we bring you the story of a beginning of a palliative/hospice care program in Uganda many years ago and where it has led to in the present moment . . . a story of faith and risk-taking of being "alert to new needs and approaches," which is bearing so much fruit today. It is a story of compassion for people coming to the end of their life who need support, care, comfort, and a friend to help them on the journey home.

As well, we want you to know about Global Sisters Report, which is an independent, nonprofit source of news and information about Catholic sisters and the critical issues facing the people they serve. A project of National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company; their network of journalists report about their lives and works, and sisters write commentary from their perspective, Global Sisters Report is funded by grants from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Foundation. Our MMM sisters have written for Global Sisters Report and most recently have been the subject of three stories. These are part of the series, Hope Amid Turmoil: Sisters in Conflict Areas.

Our Sisters in Abuja, Nigeria, have told the story of their work in the internally displaced persons camp (IDP) outside of Abuja where so many people who have suffered at the hands of Boko Haram have found refuge having left all they have ever known. The second story is about our Sisters working in Niger state in northern Nigeria who have been severely affected by the violent activities of heavily armed bandits and local gangs who finally attacked our clinic and home. They have had to close the clinic and leave but are finding creative ways to do mobile clinics so that they do not abandon the people in this challenging time.

Finally, Sr. Prisca Ovat, MMM, writes about the work of MMM in Kenya where she, as a Nigerian, and Sr. Liana de Jesus, a Brazilian, have left their own countries to plant themselves among the people of Kenya . . . and they have blossomed. Sr. Prisca writes of her own struggle as she became emotionally and physically drained working in the palliative care unit and listening to the stories of so many people. She sought help and found her path, her resilience to continue to work with these families. She also writes about Sr. Liana who uses her skills in Kibera, the largest slum in Nairobi, to help young single mothers find a way to make a living and keep them safe from human traffickers. She has earned their trust over time and is making such a difference in their lives. These are a few of the updates from MMM this fall. Please pray for these wonderful women who are doing their best to be faithful to our charism of healing. We cannot do it without you!

Gratefully,



Sister Joanne Bierl, MMM
MDO Director

**Fall Leaves by
Sr. Marcia Wiley of the
Grey Nuns of Montréal**

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Fall
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The Story of Kitovu Mobile—Then and Now—A Story of Compassion and Connection

It was in 1955 that MMM began a presence in Uganda, and we tell you one story among so many from the rich history there . . . a story of “being alert to new needs” always keeping in mind the call to heal. Kitovu hospital was and is a large regional hospital initially owned by MMM and out of that presence grew **Kitovu Mobile (kitovumobile.com)**, which initially was a response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in 1987 that devastated Uganda. It was a huge project which helped thousands of individuals and families. When the Bannabikira Sisters (www.bannabikirasisters.org) took over the hospital in 96/97, Kitovu Mobile remained in the hands of MMM and found a new location in Masaka town.

Sr. Carla Simmons, MMM, began working in Kitovu Mobile in 2000 after three years working in the hospital as surgeon with Sr. Maura Lynch, MMM. Her interest in palliative care was born in the inner city of Detroit working with drug addicted patients in the hospice program of SE Michigan Hospice Care. Sr. Carla was the first doctor to work in Kitovu Mobile as the program had been staffed by skilled and experienced nurses, so there was an adjustment to be made but she

was welcomed, and her palliative care experience was a gift to the program. It was a huge program that included HIV/AIDS home care, farm schools, a counseling program, and an orphan support program with about thirty staff. A shift came in 2002–2003 with an introduction of ARVs (anti-retroviral drugs). Many of the patients were stable and doing well but the reality of cancer and the need for terminal care emerged. All forms of cancer were present, and it was clear that many patients could not access expensive treatment and needed help with palliative and hospice care. With **Hospice Africa Uganda–Hospice Africa** already up and running, the access to pain medication had already been established in Uganda which was a huge help. So Sr. Carla took over responsibility for this part of the project with the support and encouragement of Sr. Ursula Sharpe, MMM, who was the director then and now our present Congregational Leader. Nurses were needed. Rose Nabantazi, who was bright and committed, was hired and she became much loved by all. Rose and her husband Damien had four children, Carla, Cathy, Deus, Clare. After having her fourth child, it was found Rose had uterine cancer. After surgery, and all forms of treatment, she was declared cancer free. She was able to do her degree in Nursing and took over as director when Sr. Carla was reassigned. In 2005, Nancy Hinds, an MMM Associate, a dear friend with a long history of collaborating with us met with Sr. Carla in East Africa. Nancy connected with her at that time as she was doing Hospice/AIDS work, having founded Hinds Hospice in Fresno, CA. After that meeting, Nancy talked with the Foundation of Hospices for Sub-Sahara Africa to



Sisters Nancy Ong'era (Kenya) and Florence Njoku (Nigeria) keeping up their spirits as they try to keep alive our healing ministry in an area of northern Nigeria where bandits and local gangs roam freely.



Both hospice teams gathered at Kitovu Mobile in Uganda.



Rose Nabatanzi and Sr. Carla on a home visit with a patient in the program of Kitovu Mobile.

see if partnering with Hinds Hospice could be a means of supporting Kitovu. Hinds Hospice began fundraising, and money was sent through FHSSA. Hinds Hospice also sent medical publications, books, and medical supplies. This connection continued for years.

In 2008, Hinds Hospice offered an International Conference entitled “Hospice and Palliative Care in Developing Countries.” Sr. Carla was invited to Fresno, CA, to speak of the work of the Medical Missionaries of Mary in Kitovu. It was profound. More interest was generated after that, and the connection developed. The years progressed, and FHSSA became Global Partners in Care. Nancy kept in close touch with Carla over the years. She was able to visit Kitovu in 2015 and developed a close relationship with Rose Nabatanzi who followed Sr. Carla as Director of the Program. In 2013, MMM handed over the programs of Kitovu Mobile to the staff who were well prepared to carry it forward. A social worker from Hinds Hospice went to Kitovu in 2016 and did grief work with the orphans and the women. Rose meticulously orchestrated the visit for her to do the work. Rose’s cancer returned and Hinds Hospice continued support for Kitovu through Rose’s illness and death. Teams from Hinds Hospice were scheduled to visit but COVID made it impossible. So, unfortunately, the Hinds team never got to meet Rose who succumbed to cancer in 2021. May she rest in peace.

This year, in April 2023, the Ubuntu Team from Hinds Hospice went to Uganda to visit Kitovu and two other hospices with **Hospice Africa Uganda**. The team consisted of a Physician, RN, Social Worker, Chaplain, Volunteer, and CEO. Life changed for all on the Hinds Team.



The Ubuntu Team of Hinds Hospice raising funds for Kitovu Mobile and other hospices in Uganda.

They loved meeting the Kitovu team and marveled at the work they are doing in the community as well as providing Hospice and Palliative care to 4,130 patients this past year. Upon recommendation of the CEO, the Board of Directors voted to support the work in Kitovu Mobile in perpetuity. Other nurses who are retired and their friends have all committed to supporting Rose’s four children with school fees. Carla, the oldest, is being helped to do her nursing degree. Deus is in the Seminary, and Cathy and Clare are still in secondary school. Going forward the plan is to Zoom every month and respond to what they feel is important to them. The Social Worker from Hinds Hospice did a presentation on Compassion Fatigue for them. It is beautiful to see the interconnectedness and healing work.

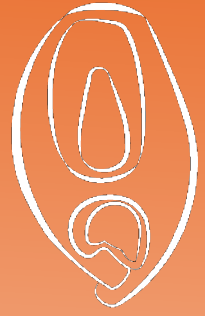
This is a story of a seed that was planted so many years ago, which has blossomed into something profoundly beautiful. There is not one of you reading this who has not experienced the demands of illness, the struggle of caregiving, and the pain of loss and the grief that is part of it. We are so grateful that programs we take for granted in the USA are now present to some of those whose resources are very limited. Thank you, Ursula, Carla, Nancy, Rose, and all the staff for nurturing this gift and inviting so many to share in the blossoming!



Nancy Hinds, AMMM, and Sr. Carla Simmons, MMM, meeting over their shared love of palliative care/hospice ministry.



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