



Work with all people of good will. Join resources with them, especially in the field of health, so as to bring about a world of justice and peace where true human development is fostered, and human dignity and rights are respected.

—MMM Constitutions 9:10

Dear friends,

For decades, the above quotation from our MMM Constitutions has been foundational for me and for many MMMs. The verbs, “work with,” “join resources,” “bring about,” “foster” and “respect,” all describe women of action, yes, but always in collaboration with others and with a thoughtfulness and depth needed before you are truly able to “foster” and “respect.” The words of our Constitutions are alive but never more so than in the year when MMM has our “Chapter.” It is our gathering every few years to elect new leadership from among us and set the direction of the Congregation for the next few years. It is happening from October 4–25 in Knock, Ireland, where 25 MMM sisters elected as our delegates, and our facilitators will be gathered to do this important work. So, dear friends, do pray for us. The work of healing has never been more needed in our world and so we trust our Loving God to show the way.

We are preparing for this Chapter with various ZOOM gathering describing our work across the 10 countries through video and PowerPoint presentations with time for clarification and questioning . . . all with the intention that each of us can contribute to the future planning for the Congregation. It is heartwarming and encouraging to see and hear of the wonderful work being done often in difficult situations. Please, do not forget how important you are to keep it going!

I am writing this letter to you at the time we are engaged in doing mission appeals in various parishes in the Dioceses of Portland, ME, Manchester, NH, Springfield, MA, Albany, NY, and Worcester, MA. Each year we apply and are invited to different dioceses, and we are so grateful for the opportunity to tell the MMM story and encourage one another in our faith and commitment to healing in our world. We met many of you reading this newsletter when we came to your parish!

In the spring newsletter the work of Elder Care in Uganda was highlighted and as I promised, in this newsletter we will highlight the work of Elder Care in Nangwa, Tanzania. A changing reality in African countries means elder adults may be left alone as family members have to seek a way to earn a living in another place. We are familiar with that here in the USA and a whole shift in the way we care for elders has taken place. . . . the same is happening in other countries but the reality of severe poverty makes it more difficult . . . and thus we are trying to respond.

As you know, each evening MMM communities gather to pray in our houses around the world. It is at that moment we remember all the intentions we received from you by postal mail, email, and phone. There is an energy, a trust, a moment of hope when we pray and make known to our Loving God what is heavy in our hearts. So, let us join together this fall to pray for peace in our world, for human hearts to change and be open to new ways of thinking about each other. That is our work as Christian men and women, and we thank you for joining in that commitment.

With deepest gratitude,



Sister Joanne

Sister Joanne Bierl, MMM
Mission Development Director

**Autumn photo by
Sr. Kathie Shea, MMM**

MEDICAL MISSIONARIES OF MARY

Mission Development Office
179 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02143-1515
www.mmmworldwide.org
www.facebook.com/medicalmissionariesofmaryusa

Autumn
Newsletter
2025

Stories of Our Elder Friends and Neighbors in Nangwa, Tanzania

The Medical Missionaries of Mary came to Nangwa in Hanang District, Manyara Region I Tanzania in 1985. Today, in 2025 our present ministries are as follows:

- **Outpatient Dispensary:** Provides lab, pharmacy, and ultrasound services.
- **RCH (Reproductive Child Health) Services:** Antenatal and child welfare clinics are held four days each week at the dispensary. This is a free service in collaboration with the government that provides vaccines and a fridge. We also go to six villages on a monthly basis. HPV vaccine is provided by the government for 14-year-old girls to prevent cancer of the cervix and we take part in Vitamin A and deworming campaigns, normally held twice a year.
- **Social/Economic/Pastoral Activities:** Donors have provided money for poor and handicapped children and widows. An income generating project for a group of widows to raise pigs has been started and the pig house is almost built. Malnourished children are given food supplements, and we have also helped TB patients with food. And now we are also committed to elder care our area.

In this newsletter the Sisters and staff in Nangwa want to express sincere appreciation to the people of goodwill who contribute to the care of the elderly in the village where the dispensary is located. This assistance is helping to improve the quality of life of the elderly here in Nangwa village as there are many needy ones especially as it is a rural setting with the majority being peasant farmers. Poor harvest due to the changing rainfall pattern is having a ripple effect on the locals and the elderly who are often dependent are even more affected by this. The elderly have a central place in our hearts and each one of them matters to us.

We have a group of poor destitute elders who benefit from food distribution and household items. Some of these have no surviving relatives, others have been abandoned by their adult children who cannot be traced. At this stage of their lives, they can no longer work or farm to get enough for their livelihood.

The food items include rice, beans, maize, sugar, flour, and cooking oil. Some are able to come to the dispensary to collect their items, while others are too fragile so we deliver



Food distribution

the supplies to their homes. We usually make Christmas/New Year special for them as we give quality gift items, ranging from mattresses, blankets, shoes, sets of cooking pots, as well as the usual food. They all converge on our dispensary for a party with delicious food and drinks to celebrate the feasts.

Apart from this special time of the year, the neediest ones are visited and helped with food items and other needs. All these elders are given free medical treatment and follow up visits to their homes to assess what more can be done to help them live better. All this is possible through the donation for Care of the Elderly. As one person is helped, the news spreads and others come, also hoping to benefit.

Here are some of the stories of our elders in Nangwa and their photos (which they have allowed us to use).

When we hear someone's story, we are reminded of our shared humanity. We are reminded that we are not alone in our struggles, and that there is strength in vulnerability.

- A woman, Mama J, came to the dispensary with a breast lump which she has noticed for months. She had no children and lives with her niece who is unable to take her to the hospital, as she has seven children to care for. Mama J is now being helped to go to a referral hospital to access mammogram and surgery.
- Mama E is a 70-year-old woman who lived in a mud house that had eroded from rain and lack of maintenance leaving only sticks and a roof. Mama E cares for her mentally challenged adult son all by herself. She depends on the food distribution, as well as the little she can harvest from her small garden. During one of our visits to her house, she expressed her fears of being attacked by her son who had been violent in the past. She expressed an urgent need for decent accommodation where she could have a room with a secure door.

Mama E's house was the most deplorable in her neighborhood and there seemed to be very little hope of any change for the better. We wrote a proposal to request a fund for this urgent project, and it was with so much joy that we received a contribution to the construction of a better dwelling-place. Even though Mama E desired a new home, it was difficult to get it started because she worried about the effect/change the new building will bring to her life and that of her son. She seemed to be used to what she had always known and lived in. It took several visits and explanations to get her to consent fully.

Mama E's compound became busy with loads of sand and stones and cement and bricks. This compound that was



Mama E's old house



Mama E's finished house

of no appeal to any passerby became a place where people would stop to admire the progress in the building. As the work began, Mama E joined in to play her part, carefully guarding the sand and other building materials from theft. She stood with the construction workers every step of the way, watching as each brick was placed on another.

Today Mama E's house has been completed, and she is still stunned in grateful amazement.

Mama E called in at the dispensary some weeks ago, sick and upset. She was examined and treated and returned to her home feeling better and happier. Like most of the elderly, especially those who feel lonely, she also needs care and frequent visits.

During one home visit, we found Mama E sleeping on the floor. She was ill and had not eaten because she had lost her appetite. We had brought some food items, including milk and sugar. She had made a corn porridge but had not taken it. She was happy to see us and after we had listened to her, she said, "Your visit has lifted my heart and now I can eat."

- Baba C, is a 76-year-old man whose daughter had abandoned him and cannot be traced. He earns a few cents by selling sugar cane from his little hut. He had been helped in the past with renovation of his little house and the purchase of a wheelchair. He phones in from time to time about his different needs. He also benefits from the food distribution and we visit him when he's sick to provide medication and food. The photo below is of Sr. Maria visiting him on his birthday and presented him with a gift.
- Mama L is a 72-year-old woman with diabetes who often travels to a distant pharmacy to get her glucose level and blood pressure checked. We encouraged her to start accessing care at our dispensary for her routine check-ups—where lab tests and medication would be paid for by the funds we received for care of the elderly.
- Mama M and her mother are beneficiaries from the periodic food distribution. Mama M suffers from epilepsy and is on a daily prescription medication, which she comes

to collect once every two weeks free of charge. We also support her with food items, soap, and some spending money. She lives with her mother because her husband died and her sons have gone to live very far away.

- Mr. N has a deformed ankle and uses a crutch that he received from the dispensary and has helped with his mobility. But some weeks ago, he showed us his crutch was falling apart. Unfortunately, we did not have the type he needed, but we were able to repair it. Plans are under way to get him a new walking stick from the nearest supplier—four hours away by car.
- Mr. S is an elderly man who is mentally disturbed and often comes to the convent and dispensary when he is in need of food and drink.

Some months ago he came with a dog bite wound on his leg asking for help with anti-rabies vaccine

In his words he said "I am afraid. Somebody told me I may die if I don't get treatment." He was reassured and taken to the district hospital where he got all five doses of anti-rabies vaccine, which are very expensive in this part of the world. On the last day of his treatment he said, "One day, when I get to heaven, I will surely remember to help you too."

Stories of various kinds abound, of the ways in which we have been empowered to help our elder friends living in Nangwa. At the demise of any of these elders under our care, we also ensure that we visit the family, offering consolation as well as a token to support the burial. The families are always grateful as they feel that their loved ones are remembered, loved, and respected even at their death. Our work of reaching out to these elderly in their extreme need would never have been possible without the help from our generous donors and we welcome the opportunity to say thank you to each of you.

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, because by it I see everything else."

—C.S. Lewis



Sr. Theresa Adewole on a home visit



Sr. Maria Borda on a home visit



Christmas gathering with our elder friends and neighbors in Nangwa, Tanzania

BEQUESTS: Gifts That Keep on Giving

You will bequeath your love and the institutions you care about to receive a portion of your estate when you are gone. Please consider the MMs as you prepare your will. If you already have a will, contact your attorney about adding a codicil (amendment). The Medical Missionaries of Mary, Inc. (legal name) is a tax-exempt entity in accordance with section 501(c) (3) of the IRS Code.

For more information please contact:

MEDICAL MISSIONARIES OF MARY

MEDICAL MISSIONARIES *of* MARY



MMM

your bequest will ensure that those you love and the institutions you care about receive a portion of your estate when you are gone. Please consider the MMs as you prepare your will. If you already have a will, contact your attorney about adding a codicil (amendments). The Medical Missionaries of Mary, Inc. (legal name) is a tax exempt entity in accordance with section 501(c) (3) of the IRS code.

For more information please contact:
Sister Joanne Bierl, MM
179 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02143-1515
Tel: 857-523-9983

