

Hospitality, Generosity and Love in Tanzania

From Teulu Asaph, Spring 2024

Since 2009, the Diocese of St Asaph has been linked with the Diocese of Southwest Tanganyika in Tanzania. There have been numerous visits from groups and individuals both to the African country and from Tanzania to North Wales. In 2023, three groups from St Asaph visited various villages in South-West Tanganyika. In this edition of *Teulu Asaph*, we find out about the visit by the Revd Kate Tiltman and Canon Trish Owens. They were building on links between Offa Mission Area and the village of Amani.



"God has made you part of our family, joined us together as brothers and sisters"

These are the words that that Fr Dismas, the parish priest of Amani, welcomed us with on our first day back in the village on our second visit to the Diocese of Southwest Tanganyika.



Offa Mission Area's involvement with Amani in the diocese of Southwest Tanganyika began over four years ago when Hilary Murray came and spoke to Offa MA. Her talk inspired us to get involved in the work of the diocese in Tanzania. She had identified the village of Amani as one that we could make a useful link with.



Amani is a rural village where most of the inhabitants are employed as farmers, some owning their own land and others working for the larger farmers. There are a variety of shops, but the people are largely self-sufficient. They eat what they grow; maize, beans, cabbage, tomatoes, onions, avocados, watermelons, oranges and yams so it is a very healthy diet. The farmers also keep cows, pigs and chickens to provide meat for special occasions. The main cash crop is maize, we visited at the end of September as the maize was being harvested and saw the sacks of maize and the trucks taking the maize not needed by the family for sale.

One of the hills above the village stands out because of its distinctive shape. This is the iron mountain, so called because it is made of iron ore. The mountain is owned by the government and there are plans to develop the mining potential in the future. Also nearby is a closed gold mine that the government will not allow to redevelop as it would pollute the water supply to the village. There are small churches in both these localities that are part of Amani parish.

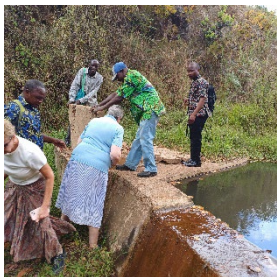


Four years ago, both Trish and I felt that it was important to visit the village to hear for ourselves the priorities that Amani identified. We were keen to give money where the local people felt it was needed and so, in August 2019, we travelled to Amani with open minds. When we arrived, we found a village that had clear priorities, and a church that was growing and vibrant. The priest in Amani, Fr Dismas, is a strong believer in a social gospel. He sees the church as a vital part of the community, helping the vulnerable and the needy. The church witnesses to the gospel in the good works it does for those living around it, as well as coming together for lively worship on Sundays and several times during the week. The building they currently meet in is too small to hold the congregation so they are building a bigger church.

The church is also self-sufficient. It owns a field that is planted with maize that is harvested and sold. It is also constructing a building for a maize mill and for the storage for maize and maize flour that is to be let out at a profit. Church members give generously each week, either in cash or in kind.

The Water Project

We were given to understand that the 2019 water supply was delivered from the river to about 26 standpipes in the village and was insufficient to meet the needs of the growing population. To supplement this, there was a proposal that the government would provide the engineering skills to install a pump and train local people in maintenance. However, the village had to provide the pipework, at an estimated cost of 1,000,000Tzs (just over £300). This amount is currently beyond their means.



As a Mission Area we were clear that an adequate and reliable supply of clean water was vital, and we decided that this was a project we could support. We hoped that this would deliver an adequate supply of safe water to the people of Amani.

Trish designed and organised the purchase of water bottles with an Amani logo on to sell to raise money for the water project. Together with donations we were able to send £400 to support the purchase of pipes.



Since our visit in 2019 the population of Amani has increased from about 4,500 to 6,000 so the need for water has also increased.

We met members of the Village Committee who thanked us for our contribution and spoke to us of the need for bigger pipes as the original pipes are too narrow to cope with the increased usage. The Committee had met with the villagers and they have asked for 5000 Tzs (about £1.60) from all the villagers to cover the cost of

the larger pipes. They plan to do as much as they can to improve the number of standpipes so that families have a water supply nearby.



We visited the river that provides water and the water tank that stores the water. We saw the pipes and could see that larger pipes would be helpful.

If you would like to support the Water Project bottles can still be purchased for £3.00. Please contact Trish Owens at trishowens@cinw.org.uk

The Dispensary

The dispensary is the health care provision for the village. Mr Abdi is the village dispenser, a post that requires three years' training. The dispensary also delivers HIV/AIDS anti virals funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. There are large numbers of children born in a small delivery room with two beds, one for the woman in labour and one to rest on after the birth, often while the next woman is giving birth on the adjoining couch.



We met representatives of the local dispensary in 2019 and learned of their shortage of space and lack of equipment, especially screens, delivery kits and an incinerator for safe disposal of clinical waste. An incinerator for the safe disposal of clinical waste is of importance for the health and safety of the whole community.

On this visit we were shown the incinerator and assured that it was in use. The dispensary is hoping for government help to expand its facilities. The dispensary is also supported by the hospital in Milo. Dr Sandagila travels to Amani once a month with a portable ultrasound scan. Pregnant women queue to have an ultrasound session as well as others who want the advice of the doctor. With the exception of ante-natal care both the consultation and the medicine cost money, and not all patients can find the money needed for their drugs.

Schools

We visited four schools in Amani on both visits; two government primary schools, a secondary school, and the pre-school class of the proposed "St Asaph" church school.

Each school told us of problems with shortage of classroom space, lack of equipment, inadequate toilet facilities, too few textbooks and insufficient educational materials.



Visiting the two state-run primary schools again this year we heard about the problems with the kitchen in one. The roof is falling apart and there is problems during the rainy season. There is also nowhere for the children to eat their lunch during the rains. The children of both schools are also short of books and sports equipment. There is a football pitch but no footballs, so we have arranged for six footballs to be delivered from Njombe.



As in all the primary schools classes of 80 are common and 5 or 6 children share textbooks. Apparently there is no shortage of teachers graduating but few want to teach in the villages.

The government is helping with the building of new classrooms and toilets.

The church has built four new classrooms so far for the St Asaph school, which is an English medium school rather than teaching in Swahili like the state schools.

During our last visit we saw the provision of a Standard One classroom with a teacher. Teaching materials for St Asaph School were a matter of some urgency, because of the requirement to register children in December for the new school year, and we felt that Offa Mission Area could offer some financial support towards building materials.

This school is a project that Offa Mission Area is particularly keen to assist in. In this we also have the enthusiastic support of Rhosymedre County Primary School and St Mary's VA Church School in Ruabon. We feel that it would be ambitious, but worthwhile, to sponsor a teacher from Amani to visit our local schools to gain from their experience, and this is a plan we still feel is one that we would like to explore.

Today the St Asaph school is going well and has made good use of our contributions. There are now two teachers, 51 children and four new classrooms. The school is on track to register with the government as an English medium primary school. We found that the school takes orphans as well as those who can pay the fees and that the school provides two-meals a day for all the children.

We visited Mundindi secondary school again. It now has a new headteacher, but he was aware of the money for science equipment that we had donated and how this had made a difference to the science teaching in the school.



When we visited in 2019 the school had one science laboratory with no gas or running water. Today there are two laboratories with gas and gas taps and running water so the students can do practical work as well as theory. The overall results are now excellent, and the school draws young people from a wide area to study in Mundindi.

The Tuhongidze Group (the Thank you group)



The agricultural cooperative, Tuhongidze Amani, showed us their avocado harvest. The group is made up of 14 men and 16 women, all local landowners. The group started when some avocado trees were donated but there would be no immediate harvest and so income was needed until the trees could be harvested.

The group meet every Sunday afternoon to pay money into a common fund. Each member is asked to pay 10,000Tzs into the loans fund. This fund is available for the members to borrow for any purpose including for farm purchases and has to be repaid within 3 months. 1,000Tzs is paid into the social fund from which members can borrow if they are sick or in hospital.

Finally the group told us of their slowly-progressing activities to raise capital towards the purchase of a seed press. They informed us that this would allow local production of pure sunflower oil, without the transport and hire costs of using someone else's press 20km away. In addition to the sale of local oil, the residue from the oil production would provide feed for chickens, and there would be additional revenue from making the press available for others to use. The group still have to raise just over 28,000,000Tzs (about £7,000) to attain their goal. We felt that this was a worthwhile investment that the group were still keen to move forward with and that they had already raised over 4,000,000Tzs so far.

The New Church

On our 2019 visit we saw the progress being made in the building of the new church, under the direction of Fr Dismas, and observed that work had to stop when the supply of mortar was exhausted. The churches of Offa Mission Area were able to offer some financial support to enable building work to continue on the



new Anglican Church. Four years later the church is well on the way to being finished and is nearly ready for the roof to go on. The profit from the maize crop planted in the field owned by the church is earmarked to pay for the roof.

The Mothers' Union

The MU is a large and enthusiastic group of women. We met members of the Mothers' Union who expressed their hope of investing in a sewing machine and knitting machine to enable women to run a clothes-making and repair business. We enquired about acquiring sewing machines, and discovered that treadle sewing machines (that do not rely on electricity) are available new in Tanzania at a cost of about 280,000Tzs (just over £90).

On our previous visit we discussed the establishment of a micro-loan scheme for women, run by the Mothers' Union and were assured that there were women locally with the commitment and skills to set up and maintain this sort of programme. Offa MA gave an initial investment of £200 four years ago and it was interesting to hear how the loan scheme was being used.

This year we heard from MU members about a handicraft industry weaving shopping bags as plastic carrier bags are now banned in Tanzania. Another woman told us how a loan helped her to build a better house with a good roof and room for her children and space for guests to sleep. It also enabled her to start growing peas. The harvesting and sale of peas enabled her to repay the micro loan. Another woman obtained manure for her land and is now harvesting groundnuts.



The MU continue to pray for the women of Offa MA and they thank the MA for their fellowship and their support.

Fr Isaye

When Isaye was a young boy he was sent into the mountains herding cattle. He took a stick of sugar cane with him to give him energy. The beauty of the mountains made Isaye think of God and as he grew older he insisted on going to church rather than herding cattle. Isaye started preaching while he was still at school and as he grew up he came to the attention of Bishop Matthew who helped him through bible college in Milo and later ordination training in Uganda.



Isaye's father was an alcoholic who failed to support his wife and 3 children. In order to find the school fees for secondary school Isaye carried wood down the mountain for cash. Later he planted his own field of maize and beans that he harvested and sold to support himself through school and college.

Isaye is now the chaplain and RE teacher at the secondary school in Njombe. In August he married Evangelista and they live together in Njombe. Isaye accompanied us to Amani as interpreter and facilitator, and he joined in leading worship and parish activities while we were there.

Neema

When we visited Amani School we met a young girl, about 12 years of age, who suffered from eye problems. She lives with her mother and two younger brothers as her father has left the family to live with another woman. Trish suggested she visit the dispensary the next day. The eye specialist was visiting the day she went and prescribed eye drops to help with the infection. Neema may also need glasses but at 85,000Tzs (£28) a pair Emma's mother can't afford to buy them. Neema came to see Trish several times while we were in Amani and her eyes did appear to be getting better before we left.



Sabena

Sabena is an elderly woman who was living in a rundown house with a straw thatch roof that leaked during the rainy season. Sabena had 5 children of which 3 are still living but they do nothing for their mother. The church replaced the thatch roof with corrugated iron and built her a new kitchen. The church also provided her with a bed and mattress to make her more comfortable.

George

George is the parish evangelist and the village animal expert. He left school after his primary education and farmed his land. He married Monica and they have 3 sons, one of whom is a metal worker and the others are still at school. Later in life George went to secondary school to obtain the qualifications he needed to enter college to study animal husbandry. He also studied to be an evangelist and looks after the small church in Mundindi on a Sunday.

It was a great pleasure to meet again the friends we had made on our last visit, and to reinforce the links of fellowship between Offa Mission Area and the Parish of Amani. One of our ambitions is to return with a group of young people who can share for a few days in the life and worship of the people of the village, assist in their projects and experience their joy in worshipping God.



We may have felt that it was we who were the donors in the partnership, but we have found repeatedly, how much we receive from the people of Amani. They may not have much in terms of worldly goods, or enjoy the facilities we take for granted, but the hospitality, generosity and love they have shown us has been both humbling and enriching.

It is always a pleasure for us to tell people about our visits to Amani, and to share our photographs. If you would like us to speak to one of your church groups just let us know and we'll be there!

You can find out more about the links between the Diocese of St Asaph and Southwest Tanganyika Association at

<https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/faith-in-action/south-west-tanganyika/>