Dear Friends,

Many warm greetings from Tanzania.

It often amazes me to reflect on the number of friends and co-workers that Linda and I have been blessed with during our year of ministry and service in Tanzania. And it is an honor to share with you some of our new passion for responding to the rising epidemic of cancer across Africa.

Through the years our calling has been to try to be sensitive to and respond to the health needs of the people who are our neighbors and community in Tanzania. This has given us many opportunities to serve in many spheres – Mark in health care and Linda in serving the needs of women, widows, and orphans.

Our early work was in community health among the Maasai. But the overwhelming need for hospital care drew us into the development of Selian Lutheran Hospital and later into leading the development of the Arusha Lutheran Medical Centre.

In the eighties and nineties, HIV and AIDS became the dominant health issues to which we tried to respond. One of the only responses at first, was to simply care for the sick as they were dying slowly in their homes. This seemingly brought us naturally into hospice and palliative care where we began some of the first hospice work in Tanzania and across Africa.

How amazing it has been to experience how one desire to serve brings one to the awareness of so many other needs. Hospice brought us into contact not only with those suffering from AIDS but very rapidly into contact with a growing number of patients with cancers.

In Africa, so many of the cancers are infectious in origins with hepatitis viruses, human papillomavirus, and the HIV virus itself. Africa is entering into the very heart of a roaring epidemic of cancer. It is an epidemic arising in the face sadly lacking service for prevention, treatment, or even palliative care. Now it is this great need which has captures our passion and demands all the creativeness and determination that have arisen in our years of caring for the poor and marginalized.

Wonderfully, there are others with whom we share this passion. Together, a group of passionate and determined men and women have joined together to respond. The Foundation for Cancer Care in Tanzania seeks to address the lack of services for some 12 million people in northern Tanzania. Joining in a partnership with the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center, FCCT is committed to helping to establish the first cancer care center in northern Tanzania. Together we are committed to developing facilities, training staff, providing equipment, and providing modern and holistic cancer care for the community we serve.

Our friends and colleagues in FCCT and at KCMC have now honored Linda and me greatly by placing our names on the first fruits of these efforts – the KCMC Cancer Care Center Infusion Unit. We are deeply moved to know that our passion and desire to serve is to be remembered and noted by all who pass through these doors of hope, especially as so many have joined hands to respond.

FCCT is planning a reception to announce this honor on 4th of August in Minneapolis when Linda and I will be briefly back in the US. We would be truly honored as well by having you join us for this evening and to make a contribution to Cancer Care in Tanzania as part of this recognition ceremony.

Your presence and support will make this a truly, truly memorable and appreciated reunion of all of us who share this passion to make a difference in the lives of others.

Blessings,

Mark and Linda