



# MAKING A WORLD

*Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya*

# A DIFFERENCE AWAY

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MEDICAL MISSION SOCIETY

What do pastors, doctors, registered nurses, nurse practitioners, a research technologist, a former member of the Peace Corp, Red Cross volunteers, and a civil engineer have in common? Enough to form a team of deeply committed individuals to set out on medical mercy trips to two countries a world apart. Two such teams included members of Trinity, Traverse City who took their collective gifts, talents, skills, and passions and flew thousands of miles from home to medical facilities in Kenya and Guatemala to bring healing and the hope of Jesus Christ to many in areas where little if no affordable health care is available.

One million people live on Kibera, in Nairobi, Kenya. It is the second largest slum in Africa (the first being Soweto in South Africa). Kibera is the garbage dump where these profoundly poor people live off the offal (entrails and inter-

nal organs of butchered animals) and refuse delivered there every day. They have absolutely no health care. There is a government hospital, but getting there is almost impossible since they have to walk and the numbers waiting to be seen are great. Even if they do get there, they don't have the money to buy necessary medications. There are no emergency medical services for the masses and private hospitals are prohibitively expensive. There is no health insurance

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**"I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER THE MOTHER AND HER NINE YEAR OLD DAUGHTER WHO RECEIVED THE DIAGNOSIS OF HEART PROBLEMS DUE TO MALNUTRITION WITH NO REFERRAL TO ANOTHER CLINIC AS WE WOULD HAVE IN THE STATES. THAT EVENING, THE LITTLE GIRL WAS IN MY PRAYERS AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE."**

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and no prescription coverage. There are doctors, but you have to pay for their services. No money, no services!

Without proper medical attention, these people resort to their own health remedies through herbs and plants. Many with surgical needs, cancer, and cardiac and life-threatening conditions just die.

*Patients waiting to be seen at the Clinica Santa Cruz Amatitlán, Guatemala.*



In 2007, the team joined an LCMS World Relief and Human Care Mercy Medical team to bring medical services to those in great need. Together, they worked for four days at a new clinic, Luther Health Center, built at Springs of Life Lutheran Church with donations from around Synod. They were joined by nurses from Langata District Hospital (LDH). They joined hands with eight health care workers of LDH to diagnose and treat 843 men, women, and children. The hospital contributed ten different drugs, HIV test kits, deworming tablets, and immunizations for children. There were student nurses who voluntarily assisted and a tireless effort was made to inform the community of this camp. There is good news – there is very strong evidence that HIV/AIDS education is taking root. Out of the 364 people tested for HIV, 24 tested positive. And most importantly, the people listened to portions of the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, and Luke read in Swahili as they waited to be treated.

Tragically, the clinic and church at Kibera were burned in the rioting that followed the elections in Kenya in December 2007. Praise the Lord that reports state that the church has rebounded and is holding services in the burned out shell and plans are being made to rebuild!

Over 7,000 miles away and a few days later, another team led by Dr. Webb partnered with Evangelista Luterano Castillo Fuerte (A Mighty Fortress Lutheran Church) and spent nine days seeing over 350 patients in four clinics in Guatemala. The team brought 2,000 pairs of eyeglasses as well as other medical resources. Very few people in Guatemala have access to health care due to the poverty. Health care is available, but less than 1% of the population has any type of health insurance and even getting to any facility takes money. This trip was the inaugural journey to Clinica Santa Cruz by the Trinity, Traverse City group.

Their first stop was at Clinica Santa Cruz, which is an old resort home on beautiful, but polluted, Lake Amatitlán. It was donated to the church and is used as a medical facility.

The lake is used by the people for laundry, fishing, and swimming. Although a pump was added to aerate the water and kill the algae, it was here that the team saw the

## **TLC LATIN-AMERICAN MEDICAL MISSION SOCIETY (TLC LAMMS)**

*In tune with Matthew 4:23 and the Great Commission, Trinity, Traverse City is developing its own mission society aimed totally at medical missions as an additional Gospel outreach and arm of caring and curing. It is entitled “TLC Latin-American Medical Mission Society.”*

*Trinity’s initial focus is on the small, sustaining clinic (Clinica Santa Cruz) in Amatitlán near Guatemala City. The clinic needs medical staff five days a week. Currently, two native Guatemalan doctors are manning the clinic part-time. Funds are needed to train local doctors and nurses as well in order that the clinic might become self-sustaining and be managed totally by native personnel. This is one of many possible outreaches among the people of the Lutheran church in Guatemala.*

*Trinity is looking for churches and individuals to partner with them. If you are interested in becoming involved, please contact Rev. Charles Webb, MD at 231.499.2139 or [cwebb@charter.net](mailto:cwebb@charter.net).*

*Dr. Webb has been to Guatemala four times and to Nairobi twice. His teams inaugurated two clinics last year: the clinic at Amatitlán, Guatemala, and Luther Health Center at Springs of Life Lutheran Church at the dump, Kibera, in Nairobi, Kenya.*

*“I have come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly,” summarizes the love that Christ gave to those He served then and now. Christ’s caring and curing are the model for all Christians, especially those who serve Him with their medical skills.*

**SOLI DEO GLORIA!**



*Dr. Tim Hodge, Dr. Orozco and Dr. Charles Webb pictured in front of Lake Amatitlan*

sickest children. Two Guatemalan pediatricians work part-time at the clinic and, on that day, one of them followed up with a very sick six week old child and its 16 year-old mother. In the clinic, the team found that it was best to treat malnutrition and parasitic conditions whether there were complaints or not as it was so widespread. In one day, 62 patients were diagnosed and treated. The clinic itself had plumbing issues, so a major focus of the team on the first day was the water supply. By day two, water was flowing freely. Another challenge was to find translators. One member testified to a “God sighting” as they did find a woman in line who was an English teacher, and she stayed and translated the entire day.

Another stop along the way was Santiago Zamora, a small Mayan village near Antigua. The team traveled many miles over bumpy, rutted, and muddy roads until they finally came upon the church and school Iglesia Evangelista Luterana Redentor del Mundo (Redeemer of the World Lutheran Church). There once was a medical clinic here, but it had closed. It was summer break from school, but there was a session for children about six to eight years old, although it was hard to tell their ages due to malnutrition. Since part of the school was on break, the classrooms were available for painting and the sanctuary walls were also prepared for the 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary of its pastor

who was 70 years old and out digging a trench for a new classroom! The team also brought some childrens games and books and was able to spend some time teaching the children.

One team member from the Ann Arbor Area, Sandi Morgan, reflected, “I wonder at times if I am touching these people doing the job that I am doing, but once again I know that I am doing exactly what the Lord sent me to do, and I will do it gladly.”

Another team member, Brigitta Tiemann from Rochester, New York, remembers, “I will always remember the mother and her nine year old daughter who received the diagnosis of heart problems due to malnutrition with no referral to another clinic as we would have in the States. That evening, the little girl was in my prayers and will continue to be for the rest of my life.”

*Rev. Charles Webb, MD is a pastor turned emergency physician turned pastor-physician. He currently serves Trinity, Traverse City and became interested in medical missions years ago but re-kindled that desire on his 2004 trip to Guatemala. He was saddened and struck by the poverty of people and the great need and broken lives of these people, barely able to scratch out a living. Determined to help them by bringing not only medical services, but the Gospel of hope and salvation in Christ, he has spearheaded efforts towards Clinica Santa Cruz and is seeking partner congregations to expand its personnel base and hopefully help decrease the clinics cost. He has practiced medicine for 35 years.*

