

EQUIPPING STUDENTS IN TANZANIA TO SUCCEED

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MATTHEW 1:18-25 | EMMANUEL, GOD WITH US

This season of Advent concludes with the well-known story of the conversation between the angel and Joseph. It ends with the beautiful declaration by the angel to name the child Emmanuel, which means “God with us.”

Up until this point in history, God had been talked about, prayed to and worshipped, but not held or touched or sat with. In the birth of Jesus, God becomes tangible — flesh and blood, skin and bone, muscle and tissue. God, who was always thought to have been or experienced from a distance, or contained in a temple, becomes real in a way that no one thought possible before. God was now with God’s people and present in their lives.

Maria Tinda is present nearly every day for her students at Isede Primary School in southwestern Tanzania. More than a teacher, she takes care of the children and prepares them for their futures. One of the many challenges that Maria and her fellow teachers must deal with is students who do not have the necessary supplies for school. When students do not have supplies, not only are they ill equipped to learn when they are present, but there is also a greater tendency for them to be absent, which stunts and prevents their learning even more. The distance between teacher and students grows in so many ways.

In February of 2022, each of the 161 students in Maria’s school received a School Kit, assembled with love by Lutheran congregations across the country. On the surface, the kit is simple — pens, pencils, paper, scissors, crayons, a ruler and an eraser — all in an easy-to-carry bag. But for the students, having such supplies has profound effects. Being equipped translates to better engagement and learning when they are in the classroom, and greater classroom attendance overall.



Maria Tinda’s students are succeeding in Tanzania because of your generosity.

In a preschool classroom just a couple hours down the road, parents rejoiced as their young children received the gift of a School Kit. Surrounding the students, parents danced as they sang a song about “Neema ya Yesu,” which in Swahili means, “the grace of Jesus.” Thanks to the love of so many generous Lutheran congregations, the love of Jesus became real for these families through something as simple and tangible as a box of crayons and a ruler.

With the season of Christmas at our doorstep, how might the love your congregation has to give remind your neighbors that the grace and love of Jesus is present, real and tangible?

1. **How do you experience God in tangible ways in your life?**
2. **How does your congregation make the love of Jesus real for your neighbors — near or far?**
3. **What makes you feel far from God? What brings God close?**



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