

# HANDS ON DECK



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Hands at Work  
AFRICA



*“We are on a journey together as a team.” – Alicia Ralph (International Volunteer, Canada)*

## JOURNEYING WITH NIGERIA

Alicia Ralph – International Volunteer (CAN), RST Project Support

Alicia travelled to Nigeria with George to connect with the Service Centre team on the ground. The trip was the toughest Alicia has been on, but in a good way. Alicia says, “I was challenged emotionally, spiritually, and physically. My time in Nigeria really forced me to rely on God for strength. I had to surrender our whole time in Nigeria to God. Every day when I woke up and I said God, ‘I surrender’, and each time I did, He did the most amazing things. Time and time again He showed me that He was in control and had already prepared the way for us.” God used challenges as an opportunity for Alicia and George to invest deeply into each other’s personal lives and those of the Service Centre team. Alicia says, **“Through those times God said ‘this is my work, just take a breath and allow me to work through you.’”**

Nigeria is a country where God has clearly called us to be and He has a plan and purpose for each one of His children. Alicia says, “In Ilaje you walk into a child’s home and you see the evidence of brokenness and poverty, but then you walk into the school and you tangibly feel God’s presence. We so often talk about the Jesus we know and the Care Workers and teacher in Ilaje get it and are passing His love to the children.” The children have such incredible joy and hope. Life is breathed into the next generation of leaders at this Care Point in Ilaje making it a beacon of light for the entire community.

Three years ago, Alicia met Matthew and Ruth. On this trip she was reunited with them and got to visit their home and meet their mother and the rest of their family. Matthew and Ruth are thriving and both want to be doctors. Ruth sings in the choir and she has a smile that despite all the challenges she faces in her life, never fades. Alicia says, “I felt incredibly blessed that I got to connect with them again and be witness to the fact that they are cared for holistically by their teachers and Care Worker.”

We can attribute what is happening in Ilaje to the dedication of our Service Centre. Currently our existing administrator and bookkeeper have risen to the call to act as Coordinator and Field Coordinator after a loss of staff late last year. They are being asked to do things that are beyond what they have been trained to do but they are doing an incredible job. Alicia says, “We are on a journey together as a team and being able to be face-to-face with the team in Nigeria and dig deep with them is an answer to prayer.”



## CONTRIBUTORS

in this issue of Hands on Deck

Alicia Ralph  
George Snyman  
Kristi Swarbrick  
Michelle Tom  
Devon Van Hoffen

## FAMILY IN MALAWI

Michelle Tom – International Volunteer (US), Project Accountant/ Project Support (RST - Zambia)



Michelle travelled to Malawi with Levy for the opportunity to host her church's team from Christ Church in San Francisco (SF), USA. For the first time, Christ Church, Wellspring Church, and Grace Alameda Church from the SF Bay Area gathered together in Africa to support their community of Mcheneke, Malawi. Being the first time for Michelle to host a team, she prayed there would be unity within the group, and open hearts and eyes to find out what God had in store. Her prayers were answered better than she could have asked for.

Michelle was eager to return to Malawi, to not only see friends from the US but also to be with her brothers and sisters in the Dedza Service Center and Umodzi CBO in Mcheneke. The team spent four days in the community, learning children's stories and getting to know the Care Workers. Although their time was short, there was a great spirit of unity within the team as they were able to connect deeply with those in Mcheneke. Michelle had much joy as she could see relationships being formed and deepened between the team members from the US and the Care Workers. She is excited to find out what God has planned in the future for Christ Church, Wellspring, and Grace Alameda, as several members of the team are looking forward to returning with their families one day.

Michelle's expectations of her time in Malawi were exceeded, and she was a blessed to be there. She was reminded of God's grace in bringing people from around the world to serve together as family by uniting the international church with the local church. Michelle says, "God, you have brought me to this place to be with my brothers and sisters, and there is no place I would rather be."



71 Caregivers gathered together for a Relationship Group in Zimbabwe

## VISITING ZIMBABWE

Kristi Swarbrick – International Volunteer (CAN), RST Project Support

Kristi recently traveled to Zimbabwe with the RST where she had the opportunity to reconnect with the Service Centre team. Kristi stayed with Barbara (Bookkeeper) says, "I was grateful to get to know her on a deeper level. That time with Barbara was definitely one of my highlights."

In Sakubva, Kristi was encouraged by the interaction she saw between the children and Care Workers. One example was when she returned with some Care Workers to the Care Point after doing Home Visits. As they stepped through the gate, several children turned around and started running at full speed towards the Care Workers she was walking with and they threw their arms around each other. These Care Workers and children have a special relationship, not a one-way relationship. Kristi says, "I came away feeling very encouraged."

Kristi stayed the night in Pimai with Martha, a Care Worker. As Martha was preparing the meal, they sat in the cookhouse alongside Martha's husband, her mother-

in-law and their three children talking. Kristi was conscious of feeling like she wanted to learn more about Martha, but knew it was not an appropriate time to ask her about her personal challenges. Coming away from that experience, Kristi shared, "I was more focused on hearing her story and I think that robbed me. I realised I need to release the whole situation to God and just be and allow God to direct the night." They spent time around the fire singing worship songs and praying for one another. Kristi was later told that Martha's husband doesn't normally leave the bedroom but in this instance he came out and was interacting and engaging. Martha and her mother-in-law shared the next morning that they were very encouraged to see him engaged.

Kristi shared, "There is a danger in defining a Holy Home Visit as a success only when a story is shared. That doesn't mean the Home Visit is Holy." Kristi's understanding grew about Holy Home Visits, knowing God works in ways that may be unbeknownst to us, and in ways that are meaningful to those involved.

## NURSES FOR AFRICA IN MALAWI

Devon Van Hoffen – International Volunteer (CAN), RST Project Support

Recently, Devon had the privilege of returning to Malawi to support Morgan Malster (Int'l Volunteer, CAN) in hosting the Nurses for Africa team. The Nurses for Africa teams are unique. Nurses come prepared to offer clinic days in remote communities that would otherwise have no access to a clinic, as many are long distances away. The team also has the privilege of spending time with the Care Workers and children in those communities.

A vital part of the nurses program is walking with our Care Workers and going on Holy Home Visits in addition to hosting clinic days. On this Malawi team, the nurses were deeply impacted by these visits. Devon shared, "I was hugely encouraged spending time with the nurses. At the final debrief while sharing their highlights, not one said a clinic day, but all said that spending time with the Care Workers and children was a highlight."

This trip reminded Devon that when we release our own expectations, we allow God to do amazing things in our midst. This team of nurses was able to fully embrace the work of God in our communities. Devon says, "At the start of the trip, we shared about what the nurses faith lives looked like, and many of them expressed they didn't have much of a faith life or weren't sure where they stood with God. But God did amazing things, and by the end of the trip, the nurses shared they had felt God during the trip. I was hugely blessed and encouraged by being a part of their journeys."

## MALAWI CHURCH MOBILISATION

George Snyman – Co-Founder of Hands at Work, South Africa

"When three churches are brought together and respect each other in humility, there will be an anointing over the churches like never before. They will be anointed under the Father. Can you imagine what God will do? I am painting this picture so we can understand how important Church Mobilisation is. The church is Jesus' body and when we challenge them, we are a prophetic voice to them, waking them out of their sleep to be actively involved." - George

George recently spent time in Malawi mobilising churches from the USA and Malawi, expecting God's deeds to be shown. Three church leaders from San Francisco, USA, three from local churches connected to Community Based Organisations in Malawi, as well as three leaders from prominent churches in Lilongwe, Malawi's capital city, gathered together with George, Levy, and Royie. The purpose of this gathering was to equip the international church and the local (community) church, also bringing together the church on

the hill (those from Lilongwe) and teaching them to work as one body in Christ, challenging the leaders in what is happening in the poorest communities throughout Malawi.

These three kinds of churches are all very different, causing the need to build a unified relationship and develop understanding. When George, Levy, and Royie interviewed the church leaders about their churches, the leaders discovered they did not know what kinds of problems the other churches were facing. The leaders in Malawi were surprised to hear of the problems churches were facing in the US, but in listening to one another's struggles, they began to appreciate and respect each other.

A breakthrough came to the Lilongwe church leaders on a Holy Home Visit. God opened their eyes to see the poverty and vulnerability in communities on their doorstep which they had never before seen. With a new understanding of their position in the global body of Christ, and the need for care in surrounding communities, they are now better equipped to work together with international and local churches to fulfill their Biblical mandate to serve the most vulnerable.

