

A NEW INITIATIVE - THE QUARTERLY LEGHO NEWSLETTER

Linda McGee, former Deputy Head of St John's Primary School, St John's parishioner, long term supporter of the St John's-Legho link and Twende Pamoja trustee, describes her visit to Legho in January and February 2018.

'From the window of our room in the parish house I can see my trainers sitting on top of the henhouse drying in the sun. The distinctive red earth of Legho village is beautiful to look at but difficult to clean from footwear so people generally remove their shoes before walking on the tiled floors of buildings like the parish house. House guests will often find their dusty shoes returned scrubbed clean and looking pristine: a gesture of kindness, welcome and respect which is the hallmark of Tanzanian culture.'

This year on our trip to Legho, Susan Christopher and I were hosted by Father Fulgence Sangawe, Parish Priest of Legho. On the afternoon of our arrival, Father was in the midst of organising a social gathering for those parishioners who had been involved in the lengthy preparations which led up to Legho becoming a fully-fledged parish last October. He is a man of unbounded energy who currently runs the parish single-handedly, saying four masses on a Sunday morning, taking communion to the sick in the afternoon and returning in time to hold a service of Benediction. He is helped in his parish duties by many committed and experienced parishioners as we witnessed when they began to arrive for their 'thank you party' as Fr Sangawe described it.

Staying at the Parish House was very convenient for us as it is only a 5 minute walk from the Primary School where we would be working. Our translators in the classes were Maria Mushi, the Head Teacher, and Triphonia Kisaka, wife of Seraphin Mbuya, the retired Head of Legho Primary. Both Triphonia and Seraphin made the journey some years ago to Scotland, staying in St John's Parish and visiting St John's Primary. They came together with teacher, Olympia Meney who is now also retired and finding more time to work on her 'Shamba' - the Swahili term for the small plot of land cultivated to provide food for the family and sometimes a little profit from the sale of coffee or bananas.

Triphonia, Seraphin and Olympia have over the years been very generous hosts to the many Scottish visitors, young and old, who have had the privilege of living in Legho for a time. Another house of great hospitality and warm welcomes is the home of Maria and Beda Kyara. Maria was one of the first people from the village to visit Edinburgh back in 1986. Since then, she and Beda have also shown strong support for the friendship with St John's, generously opening their house to the numerous individuals and groups visiting the community of Legho.

As we walked along the village paths we were regularly greeted by passers-by keen to hear news of past visitors to the village and asking us to convey greetings to 'all at St John's'. In return, Susan and I were able to send greetings to Legho Parish Community on behalf of Fr Jock and the Legho Renewal Group when Fr Sangawe invited us on to the altar to speak at Sunday Mass. Having had the invaluable help of a friend who translated this greeting for me, I managed to deliver it in Swahili, admittedly with a strong Scots accent !

An extract from the English text is shown below:

'.....Our Parish Priest, Fr Jock Dalrymple, has asked me to give warm greetings to Fr Sangawe and to all the parishioners of Legho Parish. He sends congratulations to all on becoming a Parish last October and he is very much looking forward to renewing and developing the friendship between our parishes in the coming months and years. Fr Jock has recently set up a new Legho steering group in St John's (with interest and informal support from our sister parish of St Mary Magdalene's). This group is tasked with looking at ways in which our long term friendship of over thirty years, can continue to grow and prosper.....'

Legho is a small rural village in the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro, struggling with the hardships that arise from poor roads, lack of investment in education, high levels of unemployment, subsistence farming and restricted access to healthcare on a scale we can barely imagine. However, the abiding impression is not one of discontent or sadness but rather of thankfulness, of co-operation and of a community which regularly seeks out causes for celebration in daily life. It is a place which grabs the heart and doesn't let go.'