



Heather Johnstone

Link Letter no. 31 | November 2025

Contact details:

hfjohnstone@gmail.com



Location: Tanzania



What I do: Helping to empower the most disadvantaged women and children in Mara through the Rehema Project.



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life to release their God-given potential

Dear friends,

Two praiseworthy stories from Rehema

Two young girls, Mariam (9) and Christina (8) always come and visit me at Rehema when their grandmother is attending choir practice at the cathedral (next door). It's very exciting and they chatter away, draw pictures and "hang out". Their mother died a few years ago and their father abandoned them, leaving their grandmother to fend for them. During one of their visits, our cook, Mode, asked me if Mariam was sick. I told her that I didn't know but didn't think so. Mode later asked the same question to her grandmother, as just by looking at her she suspected the girl either had sickle cell anaemia or HIV/AIDS. The grandmother confirmed that Mariam did indeed have sickle cell anaemia but confessed that she hadn't taken her for her monthly check up for several months because she had no money for transport to get to the hospital, never mind the treatment or prescribed medicine. The monthly cost is about TSH 40,000 (£13). We told her we would be more than happy to support her with these costs through our Assistance Programme as it is so important for Mariam and her future. She was so relieved and grateful.

Praise/prayer point: Thanks be to God for aligning us with this family, enabling them to get this much needed treatment for Mariam. Pray for her as she fights this terrible disease.

Someone you will have heard me mention before is Kenneth, who was named after my late father. Kenneth broke his arm in November last year. The treatment he received was very poor and the arm never healed properly. I saw him some months ago and noticed he was protecting his left arm and doing everything with the good arm. His mother told me the bone had never set properly, and he was favouring his right arm as it was painful to use the left one. I told her if he continued to use only the right arm that would create future problems due to muscle wastage etc. The problem could not be ignored, and I thought medical intervention was needed. She consulted a specialist doctor at the government hospital and corrective surgery was recommended.

Praise/prayer point: We give thanks for the generous donations received to cover the cost of Kenneth's surgery and after-care. Praise God that the 2.5-hour operation was a success. Continue to pray for Kenneth's rehabilitation.

More catering opportunities

Following on from the huge challenge and responsibility of cooking for the former president of Tanzania and his fellow dignitaries, we have been expanding our catering services.



Mariam and Christina

Support Heather Johnstone:
churchmissionsociety.org/johnstone

With Jesus
With each other
To the edges



Not that long ago we catered breakfast, lunch and dinner for a group of ordinands for one week, and for 320 people including special guests Jono Vink and Tim Swan from Australia at the ordination service on the Sunday.

More recently we catered for 205 people at ACT Mara Pre & Primary School's graduation service. The team did brilliantly and the parents attending the service declared that it was the best buffet they'd ever had and many of them were so impressed they asked for our business cards. So hopefully that will lead to more catering assignments.

Praise/prayer point: Give thanks for the fantastic group of hard-working Rehema women and for this great opportunity to shine.

VIP visitors

Jono Vink's visit

It was a great privilege and joy to have Jono Vink visit. It was the first time we'd seen him since he and the family left their service as missionaries in the Diocese of Mara in June 2016. There was a time for sadness as he remembered his beloved wife, Amy, who passed away earlier in the year. But also a time for great joy as he celebrated everything they had achieved as co-founders of Rehema. There was a time for prayer and thanksgiving as we celebrated all they had achieved in Mara.

My brother Craig's visit

We were also privileged to have my brother visit with his partner, Tracy. Craig has wanted to visit for some time but didn't simply want to fly in and out and visit for a week or two. He wanted an authentic overland African adventure.

He and Tracy drove 9,000km from Cape Town in South Africa to Musoma, Mara, to visit me and see the Rehema Project first-hand.

We went to visit the children at the nursery school at Nyambeshi, which was very joyous. All the children were treated to an ice lolly, as Craig has a fridge/freezer in his SUV. As there is no electricity in Nyambeshi, this was a very rare and well-received treat indeed.

While in Nyambeshi we also went to visit the granddaughter of Cesi, who is named Xandra after our late mother. We shared a meal of rice and beans and got to know the lovely "Xandu" who, coincidentally, seems to have the same gentle temperament as our dear departed mum.

The Rehema women pulled all the stops out and held a special celebration to honour these extremely honoured guests. Craig and Tracy were blown away by the generosity of the women and the fantastic hospitality they received. Theirs really was the Africa trip of a lifetime; they took three months, visited 10 countries and put 22,000 km on the clock, but their highlight was the time spent in Musoma. They are still talking about their amazing visit to Mara.

Praise/prayer point: Praise the Lord and give thanks for his protection over Craig and Tracy on their epic safari.

A big thank you to my friends and supporters, for your encouragement, financial and prayerful support, and love throughout the year 2025.

I wish you peace, goodwill and happiness at Christmas, and always.

Mungu akuwabariki,

Heather



Photos from top to bottom: With Kenneth and his mum; welcoming Jono Vink; ice lollies at nursery school; with the whole Rehema team



Empowering people pushed to the edges of life

It builds my faith when I hear stories from other CMS partners working with people pushed to the edges of life. I hope that you're inspired as you read about Elise and Jon in Thailand who are working to keep families together and children out of care. And about Makol in South Sudan whose life got dramatically saved during a peace rally. You can read their stories, and others, at churchmissionsociety.org/empower