



# Stephen Hatch

Link Letter no. 16 | November 2023

Contact details:  
mapi314@live.co.uk



**Location:** Tanzania



**What I do:** Working as a maths and IT teacher and chaplain at St John's Seminary.

Dear friends,

Thank you for your ongoing support for me as I work in Tanzania.

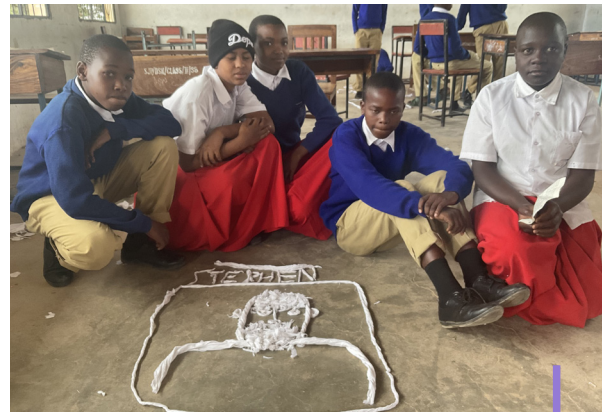
I'm sorry that I have not been able to send you an update for a long time. Over the last 12 months difficult circumstances have arisen in Kilimatinde that are beyond the control of either me or CMS. During this time I've been having conversations with CMS and they've supported me in planning to leave Kilimatinde. When I return to the UK for my scheduled home leave in December, I will work with CMS to look for a new placement.

As it has been so long since I wrote to you, let me share some snapshots of the last year here at St John's:

There is normally very little at school that signifies when Christmas is approaching (we are normally closed for our summer holiday), but because of the census, we were open until 22 December in 2022. I decided to turn the school into a giant advent calendar! I hid some chocolate every day, with the instruction that pupils had to show it to me uneaten, or I would stop hiding it. Strangely all but one was found by a girl, and one was never found (and therefore enjoyed by me in January).

I also managed to arrange a nativity, in both English and Swahili. As there was no time around exams to rehearse, I made one that I could narrate, created 70 labels for different characters and told the participating students that when I called their label they should come up, take their prop (paper and cardboard served me well here) and act out whatever I said. This did include gold that would have been twice my weight (if the box was full) and so needed at least 4 wise men to carry, and the two-year-old son of one of the cooks who had to be found from where he was playing and looked suitably surprised when a group of people arrived and gave him gifts.

At the start of this year the previous chaplain, David Lubalisho, invited me to a service in his home village. David had just finished studying in Uganda, he wanted a thanksgiving service and his daughter Fiona was also going to be baptised. I agreed to go and David mentioned that he would tell the local minister, because maybe he would want me to be involved – David would let me know. I hadn't heard anything by the morning, but thought I should bring my clerical gear just in case. As soon as I saw David he asked if I had brought them, followed by "Good, the priest has told me you are involved." An hour later, five minutes before the service started, I was told that I was doing the baptisms! There were three infants being baptised.



*The winners of a competition to make the best picture of the teacher from toilet roll!*

**Support Stephen Hatch:**  
[churchmissionsociety.org/hatch](https://churchmissionsociety.org/hatch)

**With Jesus  
With each other  
To the edges**



I had only the first part of the service to very quickly work out what I had to say in Swahili and practice. It all went fine, only the last one cried, and I have now baptised more babies in Swahili than in English. It was nice, although quite surprising that the first baby I baptised was that of a friend I have known for nine years. I do feel sorry though for the other families who had a strange man they have never met baptising their children.

In previous years the Bible school students have helped to prepare any secondary pupils for confirmation that wanted the chance. Last year that didn't work because of the census and changes to the timetable. So I invited those who were interested to meet with me and prepared them twice: in English (so I was satisfied they were ready) and in Swahili (so they were ready to make their promises). Then the Bishop suggested that they should be confirmed in English, so (after a bit more practice) that's what we did, and the five pupils we confirmed are (possibly) the only Tanzanians to have done so in English.

Construction has recently finished on a new dining hall for the primary school, which will also be used by the secondary school and Bible school for meals (once ovens have been installed) and chapel services have also moved there.

Sometimes here it seems that progress has been slow and that nothing has changed for a long time, but now that I am preparing to leave, I have been thinking of what has changed over the last decade since I arrived.

We have doubled the number of classrooms at the secondary school (from four to eight). There are new bathrooms in both the girls and boys dormitories. There is an entire primary school with seven classrooms (and two for nursery) with an administration block etc that I remember starting on a veranda outside the headmaster's house. There is a new dormitory for the Bible School. There are water pipes across the school going to different buildings, rather than one standpipe at the school entrance. We have received over 25 laptops from various kind donations, and expanded our vocational course from level 1 to level 2. We have started installing solar panels and a school well.

As a teacher it is always difficult to move on. Whenever you leave, there are always younger pupils that are being left behind. Somehow it feels as if I am abandoning them, even though no one can stay in one place forever. The school was running for many years before I arrived, and now 10 years later, I need to trust that the leadership team will keep it going into the future.

**Please pray:**

- ▶ for me as I am handing over duties and preparing to leave
- ▶ for the school as they try to find teachers to replace me
- ▶ for me and the team at CMS as we begin the discerning process to find a new placement, a new community where I can serve.

Thank you so much for your support on my journey this far. I look forward to meeting you all again, hopefully in the New Year when I start visiting the churches who support me (after a much-needed break and the Christmas period). I pray that you will continue to support me during this time of uncertainty and change, and as I step into the next chapter in mission.

Blessings,  
Stephen



*Photos from top to bottom: Baptising baby Fiona; Pupils at their confirmation ceremony... and celebrating afterwards.*



**Going further with Church Mission Society**

**Jesus never gives up. Neither should we.** We live in a fractured, hurting world.

It can be tempting to give up: on hope, on people, on the idea that things can ever change. Yet, Jesus invites us to follow him on a journey to the edges.

Find out more at [churchmissionsociety.org/nevergiveup](http://churchmissionsociety.org/nevergiveup)

Please note that opinions expressed in link letters are those of mission partners, not necessarily of Church Mission Society.

If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email [supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org](mailto:supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org) or call 01865 787400. Church Mission Society is a mission community acknowledged by the Church of England. Registered Company No. 6985330 and Registered Charity No. 1131655 (England and Wales) and SC047163 (Scotland).