

## Reflections from Pastor Sharon

### Grounding it in Prayer: A Congregational Prayer Discipline

When Bishop Jolly was serving as the bishop of the Northeast Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, he felt called to build a Lutheran secondary school on the top of a beautiful hill in the Usambara mountains. Even though Bishop Jolly believed that God put this idea on his heart, he realized that it was important to have this affirmed by the community.

He invited the whole diocese to join in a period of discernment. He asked everyone, young and old, to pray about the potential project for an entire year. He asked them to pray for direction and clarity of purpose. As the entire diocese began to pray, an interesting thing happened. People didn't just pray in their churches and in their homes. Instead, they felt compelled to pray at the potential build site. On a daily and weekly basis, groups of disciples walked up the mountain to pray, and were inspired to collect rocks along the way.

Over time, the pile of rocks grew, and without realizing it, they created a visual representation of their prayers which only increased their commitment and fervor. By the completion of their prayer period, there were enough rocks to build the first building for the school campus!

I had the pleasure of hearing this story directly from Bishop Jolly when we visited his home back in 2001. I was so inspired that I have used this prayerful discernment in each congregation I have served since that time. I also have used this commitment to prayerful decision-making in my own life.

As we begin our new relationship together, I would like to invite you to join me in an intentional commitment to prayer. In order to frame this commitment, I am encouraging us to set November and December 2020 as our time of prayerful discernment. This kind of prayer can help us to celebrate the past, identify the gifts of our present community, and dream about the future God has planned for us. It can also unify our congregation in a common vision centered on God's call and direction.

### Join our Prayer Process: Beginning November 1, 2020.

**Prayer Reminder:** Please set your watch or phone alarm for 12:30pm daily. This represents the Great Commandment found in Mark 12:30-31. ***..you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.***

When your alarm rings each day, please stop for a moment and say a prayer that God would guide St. Peter forward with a clear unified mission. If you are not alone, take this opportunity to share with your friend the reason you are stopping for prayer and invite them to take that moment of prayer with you if they desire. Part of the joy and power is that we will all be praying at the same time wherever we may be!