

DOWN^{TO}EARTH

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Receiving What I Came to Give - A Journey of blessing in Tanzania

Carol Campbell is a Canadian mother and grandmother whose childhood dream of visiting Africa became reality when she joined a seven-member team from Canada supporting Emmanuel International's work in Tanzania. Eager to understand the lives of women and families there, she returned home deeply moved by the faith, friendship and shared bonds she encountered.



The Canadian team received a warm welcome

"I'm putting together a trip to Tanzania late this summer, Carol. There will be other older ladies coming along, and I think you should join us." When Richard McGowan said those words, I knew something unexpected had opened before me. Africa had lived in my imagination since I was a little girl, but now the invitation was real. I wondered whether the trip would be too much physically, financially, or emotionally, so I messaged my children. I am blessed to

be able to count on their wisdom when I have a big decision to make. They cheered me on, and with their encouragement I began to look forward to learning more and making plans.

As the weeks passed, my anticipation grew. I wanted to arrive with something simple in my hands that could express friendship before words were even possible. My young friend Capri made more than 100 bracelets for me to share, and I packed them carefully, hoping they

would open small moments of connection with the women and children we would meet.

On the morning of August 29, 2026, our team of seven boarded our first flight on Ethiopian Airlines to Addis Ababa. Even the place names stirred my excitement, but my deepest hope was to meet and know the people of Tanzania. On the flight from Addis Ababa to Mwanza, I looked down expecting the neat rows of homes and lawns I knew from North America. Instead, I saw small houses scattered below and sunlight flashing from tin roofs. That first glimpse helped prepare my heart for what we would experience.

Because of delays, we arrived late in Mwanza, where Joel Newby was waiting for us. Soon we were settled into our comfortable Airbnb, tucked behind mosquito netting with the windows open and fans turning. The EI team had planned carefully so that each day would help us understand more of daily life in Tanzania. I felt both challenged and drawn to make a small difference with each person I met.

One of our first visits was to Lake Victoria Bible College. It was the beginning of the semester, and as our bus pulled up beside the auditorium, the students' songs of praise and worship seemed to lift the roof. It was an awesome privilege to join them and their principal Exauld Lilsulie in worship. Denis Charron, one of our team members, shared from God's word and led in prayer. We toured the grounds and the

new building, including rooms for married couples to live in while attending classes. From that beautiful property I had my first glimpse of Lake Victoria, the great



Carol with Principal Exauld Lilsulie

freshwater lake I had been eager to see.

On the way back to our accommodation we stopped at the lake. I quickly slipped off my sandals and stepped into the water with Judith. When I came out, Patrick, a young Tanzanian man who works with EI, sat me on a rock and carefully washed the sand from my elderly feet before helping me into my clean sandals. I had gone hoping to bless others, yet there I was, receiving such tender care. It was humbling, and it became one of the moments that stayed with me throughout the visit.

That same theme continued as I began meeting women and children in the days that followed. Time and time again, I had the joy of slipping one of Capri's bracelets from my wrist onto the wrist of a woman or older girl, followed by a warm hug and a



Friendship

blessing. Those small exchanges became some of the dearest moments of the trip, reminding me that friendship can begin with a gesture as simple as an open hand.

As a team, we then prepared for a morning with the children at Mto wa Baraka Nyang'homanho, which I was told means River of Blessing. When the children arrived, some were wide-eyed and eager to make friends, while others were quieter as they took us in. They enjoyed the colouring pages and new pencil crayons, taking real care with their

pictures. I loved photographing them and then showing them the images; that brought the biggest



bracelets proudly worn

grins. I had also prepared little kits of coloured beads and cord so each child could make a salvation bracelet. It made me happy to see them creating something they could take home.

From there, our visits took us into the schools, where I watched students with their teachers and saw more of everyday life. I especially remember Laura's class of high school girls at Bulabela Secondary

School. We learned that the girls are not allowed to grow their hair, keeping their heads uniform along with their clothing. They were polite and curious about our visit, but when Laura walked into the classroom, their faces lit up. She greeted them in Swahili, and they responded with warmth and confidence. As a mother and grandmother, I found that beautiful. Around that time, we also met Esther and others who showed us templates used to cut fabric for washable sanitary napkins. Before each girl received her bag, another teacher animatedly explained how to wash and dry them discreetly. It was practical, respectful, and full of care.

As the days unfolded, one image kept returning to me: clotheslines. Whether in a large city like Dar es Salaam or near a tiny country home, women everywhere were caring for their families through ordinary acts like washing and drying clothes. One of my personal

objectives for the trip had been to understand women whose lifestyles looked so different from mine, yet I kept seeing what we shared.



Girls received their sanitary bags

Mothers and grandmothers everywhere long to nurture, provide for, and love their families. The basics are the same. Now that I am back in Canada, I know I will think of the women of Tanzania whenever I hang clothes or bedding on my own line at the cottage.



Children enjoying their colouring sheets and crayons

By Sunday morning, those encounters had prepared my heart for worship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We took the Mkomnozy Ferry to visit the dear ones at Katunguru, loading up with local people and our vehicle, full of anticipation. When our bus stopped down the road from the church, the most joyous group met us with palm branches and songs of welcome. I will never forget worshipping God together and celebrating His love. Watching the young men dance, I thought of how King David must have looked when he danced before the Lord.

When I returned home, I carried all of those moments with me, they have given me a clearer sense of purpose and a

renewed perspective on God's sovereignty, guidance, and protection. I feel more aware of His presence in daily life and more confident in my actions and thoughts. God is my Daddy, the One who has lifted me into His arms. Colours seem brighter, focus feels sharper, and my heart is changed by seeing God at work in Tanzania.

Those African brothers and sisters are close to my heart now. I want to continue encouraging and supporting them from here, and I will always be thankful for the people, places, and moments God gave me on this journey.

My daughter asked me yesterday, "Would you go back?" God willing, yes, I will.

SAVE THE DATE



Emmanuel International UK
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6TH MARCH 2027



**ST JOHN'S CHURCH,
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