A trip to Tanzania

For many years the British Province has maintained and developed a close partnership with the Moravian Church in Western Tanzania (MCWT). This has involved the sharing of personnel and financial assistance in support of the Church’s work in their part of East Africa. Among those people who have spent time there are Sr Dorothy Morton, Br Richard Ingham and Dr Keelv, the founder of the Sikonge Hospital and Leprosarium.

MCWT is a full Unity Province with its work beginning in 1897. Today there are 120,000 members spanning 79 congregations and 261 outstations, and these are served by 110 ordained ministers, including four sisters. In addition, MCWT supervises the five Mission Areas of Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda and South Central Tanzania.

The MCWT Provincial Board comprises 16 members, with three members making up an Executive Committee. The Executive Committee has the responsibility of the day to day management of the Province. Br Ezekiel Yona is the Chair, and he is supported by a Vice Chair, and Br Richard Lwai who holds the office of General Secretary. You may remember that Br Yona was consecrated Bishop in 2018, and so will step down as Chair at their Synod in 2021.

The Executive Committee welcomed Sr Roberta Hoey and Br David Howarth and gave a very informative presentation on their work. They were pleased to highlight the composition of the Province, the main areas of social work (hospitals and schools) and the developments in the five Mission Areas. A number of these Mission Areas have been adapted from other denominations, and there is a desire to provide Moravian education and support the creation of Church Governance.

Our visit was a good opportunity for both Provincial Boards to share their hopes for the future, and one that the MCWT are keen to develop a Provincial owned farm in the Tabarwa region. The rehabilitation Centre continues to grow from strength to strength, developing prosthetics for both leprosy and non-leprosy patients.

Our annual commitment to MCWT is primarily a block grant to the Province and grants to Sikonge Hospital. Over the years various requests for project grants have been received, including a £12,000 grant for renovation of the medical dispensary in Tabarwa.

It is usual for a visit such as this to the host Province to take their guests on a brief tour of congregations and their work. Our visit was no exception. In addition to obtaining a feel for the needs of the local congregations, we were shown the work being carried out at the Sikonge Hospital and Leprosarium.

The Leprosarium at Sikonge was founded in 1923 by the British missionary, Dr Keelv, and since then has extended its care beyond those specific patients. Other services provided are maternity (up to 20 deliveries per day in two labour rooms), pre-operating care, HIV/AIDS, and emergency and elective surgery. While there is still a need for the care of leprosy patients, due to advancements in preventative measures and treatment, there are currently only six long-term patients in Sikonge. The Rehabilitation Centre continues to grow from strength to strength, developing prosthetics for both leprosy and non-leprosy patients.