

“Here I Am, Send Me”

We celebrate World Mission Sunday on October 17/18 as we support the missionary life of the Church and renew our own missionary identity. This year, we celebrate mission universally, globally and locally in our own country. Two missionaries are highlighted below who have responded to, “Here I am, send me.” They are both from our area serving in mission dioceses supported by mission collections: Liz Mach, a lay Maryknoll missionary who served in East Africa and Father Steve Pawelk, a Glenmary priest serving in the Appalachian region of the Diocese of Knoxville.

Liz Mach, Returned from Musoma, Tanzania



This World Mission Sunday is a wonderful opportunity to recognize the contributions and service of Liz Mach as she has returned from 43 years of mission, her career ending in Musoma, Tanzania coordinating health education and social services for the Diocese of Musoma, Tanzania.

Liz, a trained nurse with a masters degree in public health, had a wide variety of encounters as a missionary. She served in village clinics and hospitals, taught in health centers, delivered babies in refugee camps and had seen firsthand the devastating effects of gender-based violence, including child marriages, trafficking and female genital mutilation (FGM). These issues led her to Jipe Moyo, a shelter for young women escaping forms of gender-based violence. Here girls find refuge, and mental and physical healing. Liz, also was teaching and leading community healing and prevention programs through clinics, shelters and rescue camps.

Her challenge now - how to re-define “home” as she returns to Pine City.

Father Pawelk joined Glenmary in 1984 and was ordained in 1989. He was sent to the Diocese of Knoxville in 2011 to help grow the diocese and build parishes where possible in poor, struggling areas. He established Catholic communities in two Appalachian counties: Grainger and Union. Father Pawelk mentioned that people say, “Go see those Catholics, they help everybody,” he said, “That’s not a bad way to be known in town.”*

Most recently Father Pawelk has been very involved with immigration issues as they effect his Latino and immigrant communities. “After the Raid” is a Netflix documentary about the immigration situation facing his communities.

Father Steve will be co-directing the novitiate for Glenmary Home Missioners.

Father Steve Pawelk, Diocese of Knoxville



*From an interview with Catholic Spirit, Sept 25