



Bethesda Shighatini



February 2009
Bethesda Lutheran Church
Ames, Iowa

Holy Hospitality: Is Bethesda Ready?

Meet Our Visitors

Ester Mvungi

Ester Aminiel Mvungi was born in Shighatini and will celebrate her 52nd birthday on Easter Sunday! She is a subsistence farmer growing corn and various garden crops, and owns two heifers. Her husband is no longer living but she has four adult children: daughter Ernestine, 37; and sons Chedieli, 31, Eliemeza, 28, and Joseph, 22.

Ester is very active in the Shighatini Lutheran parish. She serves as worship coordinator and hosts neighborhood worship services in her home. She sings and dances in the choir and is a women's ministry leader, helping to plan Binta Mama events, also blanket sewing and weaving activities for women. She has worked with Bethesda Tanzania Ministry's agriculture team on their dairy, poultry and corn projects. Ester graduated from Shighatini Primary School in 1970.

Martha Msuya

Martha Peter Msuya, 46, also was born in Shighatini where she has lived all her life. Her husband, Peter, operates a duka (general store) in Shighatini. They have three adult children: daughter Wema, 28; and sons Imanuel, 20, and Patrick, 17.

Martha also is a subsistence farmer, raising corn and various crops and owns a heifer. Her stepfather, William is head of the Shighatini village council. Martha also has been very involved in the Shighatini Lutheran parish, serving as women's ministry and Binta Mama leader, teaching classes on blanket sewing, clothes sewing and weaving, and working with the agriculture team. She graduated from the Shighatini Primary School in 1979.



The season of Advent is past, but not the spirit of preparation. Women from Bethesda and Shighatini are getting ready for a visit that promises to strengthen the partnership and faith of these two congregations in ways that only God can imagine.

Pending approval of their U.S. Visa, Ester Mvungi and Martha Msuya will be our guests in Ames from March 25 to April 14. They will join us for Holy Week and Easter celebrations, but more importantly experience life with Bethesda women as we care for our families, serve our community, educate our children, work at our jobs and everything else in our daily lives.

The visit is organized by the Bethesda Women's Ministries Planning Team. This group has worked with Shighatini women in many ways through the years, including financial support for four Binta Mama (Child/Mother) conferences to learn more about HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution, the environment, health, youth counseling and Bible study. They also have encouraged them in their work as leaders in their church and community, and provided a means to participate in other Bethesda-Shighatini ventures, such as making yogurt for local markets and sewing uniforms for schoolchildren.

The Visit

The planning team wants Ester and Martha to experience the life and lifestyle of a variety of Bethesda women, giving them an opportunity to see and do as much as possible during their 20 days with us. The goal is to build a personal relationship with Ester and Martha .

The planning team invites you to suggest and/or schedule an activity with our guests. Please contact a planning team member with your ideas. Here are some to get you started:

Be a church activity host. Help Ester and Martha experience life at Bethesda.

- Take them to a church service and explain what is happening
- Attend a women ministries or youth event, or Sunday School
- Take them to choir practice, or to set up for communion
- Help serve coffee and rolls during fellowship
- Work in the clothing room, food pantry or blanket sewing
- Go to a Bible study, council or board meeting
- Visit Beloit, Bethany Life Communities, Bethesda Preschool, Riverside Bible camp

Be a home or community host. Help Ester and Martha experience life in Ames.

- Bake cookies, lefse or some other traditional food
- Plan a coffee or gathering for lunch or dinner
- Visit a school or day care center
- Take them grocery or clothes shopping
- Visit an Iowa farm, especially to meet women farmers
- Tour sites in Ames, central Iowa and Des Moines
- Ask them to shadow you at work: What do we do during the day (or night)?

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Getting Ready—

Calendars and schedules aside, we also need to prepare our hearts for this visit. Reflections from Carolyn Ahlstrom, who leads the Women's Ministries Planning Team:

Ester and Heather Anderson



*How can we prepare ourselves for this "visit of a lifetime" for two women from Africa?
How can we appreciate their courage, how can we anticipate their questions?
Will we be sensitive to their real needs, fears or questions they don't even know how to ask?
Will we recognize the gift they are to us? How can we make this visit a gift to our community, at Bethesda and beyond?*

Ester and Martha (front right, in white) pose with members of the Agriculture Committee. Pastor Randy is in the back row.



We can make this expenditure and sacrifice of money for their visit "worth every penny" by focusing on the blessings of God's abundance, and the miracles of transportation and communication that make this trip possible.

This is no ordinary visit. I wonder if Ester and Martha hesitated when they were selected for this visit, like Mary could have reacted when she learned she was going to give birth to Jesus. Ester and Martha easily could have said, "I'm afraid to leave Shighatini." We weren't afraid to invite them, and now it's our turn to offer the hospitality.

Ester and Martha



Martha

