

June 2007

Bethesda Lutheran Church  
Ames, Iowa



# Bethesda Shighatini



## The Women of Shighatini and Bethesda: *One Faith*

*At first glance, you might only see their careworn faces.  
When you see images of Africa women, it's easy  
to believe that they carry the worries of the world.*

**Marginalized women.** It seems especially true in Tanzania. Every day, women in the Shighatini Parish and throughout Tanzania live with inequality, inadequacies and unequal access to education and healthcare. They carry forward the hopes for their families while dealing with heavy burdens. More than 80 percent of the parish's women are predominantly engaged in peasant-level economic activities. They're marginalized. The hardships of domestic life they endure, including survival during an HIV/AIDS epidemic, are ones that most Americans have a difficult time even imagining.

**But take a closer look.** There's more you can see in these women's faces — hope, great faith and a tremendous capacity to learn. Shighatini women are strong, with a solid underlying faith in God's will for their empowerment. Bethesda is working to empower the women of Shighatini and help them meet the challenges of the future.

**Shighatini women  
carry water and grain,  
wash in streams,  
prepare meals,  
care for animals,  
sew quilts...**



### **Women taking command.**

The Bethesda Shighatini committee working on women's issues has provided significant support for programs that have been initiated in the Pare Diocese for Tanzanian women. These programs are helping to educate Shighatini women, as well as help them grow in their spiritual journey and effectively participate in their own development.

### **The goals are:**

- Empowerment as Christian women
- Inspiration from studying scriptures and praying together
- Finding direction for meeting the challenges of their lives
- Providing leadership that's desperately needed by their children, families, church and country



**In short**, it's about providing what Shighatini women need to take command of their resources and determine what fits their needs for the future. Some examples of Bethesda's support include:

- The Bethesda BLCW completed financial support for the first Binta Mama (Child/Mother) Conference in Shighatini. More than 75 women have attended Binta Mama conferences and learned more about HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution, the environment, health, youth counseling and Bible study.
- The Bethesda committee — Carolyn Ahlstrom, Ginny Anderson, Willa Holger and Randi Peters — has completed financial support to send two Shighatini women to a Pare Diocese women's leadership conference in June 2007. Also, an overwhelming response has been received from the Cluster (women of the ELCA area congregations) in response to Bethesda's encouragement to support the June conference.



**Listen to the women.** Why is it important? Listen to the words of Bethesda women — Carolyn, Ginny, Willa and Randi — helping to lead these efforts: "We're passionate about the project because helping women translates into helping families and community. Our involvement has deepened our faith. We pray for the women of Shighatini daily." The challenges remain great. There are cultural and language differences. How do you best share a common vision between two congregations on two continents? And financial need is always a given.

Bethesda, through the Bethesda BLCW, has completely financed two Shighatini Women's Conferences. Several Bethesda members have participated in the conferences.



**Binta Mama (Child/Mother) Conference in Shighatini**

**A song says it all.** The songs of Tanzania offer a glimpse into women's issues. One song, "Imani Moja (One Faith)," speaks to the common vision and the call from God central to this effort. The title is based on a tune from the Pare Mountains of Tanzania, with lyrics by Denny Rehder and arrangement by Kathy Bowermaster—

*Oh, Lord! Please hear our prayer, for people here and everywhere.  
We celebrate Imani Moja, we share one faith, one hope, one love.  
As Christ has taught us through his word,  
"Share my love throughout the earth."  
So we sing Imani Moja, one faith, one hope, one love, one God.*

*We come to you this day, each in our native tongue to pray.  
We call upon Imani Moja, to show each other that we care.  
Our gifts are offered in your name, whether given or received  
And we sing Imani Moja, one faith, one hope, one love, one God.*



**Learn more.** Contact —  
Ginny Anderson, 233-2051 or ceanders@iastate.edu  
Carolyn Ahlstrom, 388-4051 or rcahlst@iowatelecom.net  
Willa Holger, 292-4466 or wholger@msn.com