



*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.”*

*Luke 2:14*

**Christmas 2025**

## **Christmas Greetings from St. Nicholas and Review of the Year 2025**

Dear Friends and Supporters of St. Nicholas!

An eventful year is drawing to a close, we take this moment to pause, look back, and say **THANK YOU**



from the bottom of our hearts! Thank you for your continued support, your prayers, and your generous financial and moral contributions. Without you, life at St. Nicholas in its current form would not be possible.

Once again this year, I was able to spend time at St. Nicholas both at the beginning of the year and again in July and August. I am always happy when former children, now young adults, stay in touch and visit us. A year ago, Kaijage introduced us to his fiancée; since then, he and his wife, as well as Elliot and her husband, have become parents. During my July visit,

I had the joy of meeting my first two “grandchildren,” Beatrice and Aetius! A circle closes, and a new generation begins to grow.

### **A New Home for Adults**

A major milestone this year was the move of our first four young adults into the new house that we named St. Stephen. Safura, Zawadi, Steven, and Anthony now enjoy living in their own space – quiet and slightly removed from the noise and bustle of the children’s home, yet still on the same grounds.

According to their abilities, they each take on regular tasks: Anthony helps on the property, Safura is still attending school, Zawadi assists wherever she is needed, and Steven provides stability with his calm nature. Asimwe, who has been working with us as a care assistant for several years, is also part of this new chapter. In the summer, the house was blessed with a small inauguration ceremony. In the coming years, more young adults with disabilities who age out of the children's home will move in.



### **Our Children – Our Responsibility Grows**

The Youth Welfare Office in Bukoba continues to bring children to us, often those with disabilities. We remain the only facility in the region that takes them in. This year, we welcomed four new children: Lilly and Agnes are both around eight years old and are cognitively impaired. We do not know anything about their backgrounds, but now they have found a new home with us.

Dativa (11) is thriving in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and little Prince (1½), who needs lots of closeness, is lovingly supported by our caregivers - as are all the children entrusted to us! At present, 42 children live at St. Nicholas.





Two of our now-grown children have successfully transitioned into independence. Elliot has moved out and begun her own family, and Erick, having finished school, now lives and works in town.



## **Community, Joy, and Growth**

A highlight of the year was once again our holiday camp at Lake Tanganyika in Kigoma. That means swimming in the lake every day, lots of playing, cooking together, and of course, going into town to eat French fries! For many children, it is the most joyful moment of the year. The teenagers already take on responsibilities as assistant caregivers.



During the June holidays, two special courses took place at St. Nicholas: a self-defense course for the girls and a puberty and education course for the boys. Both programs were enthusiastically received and showed how important such topics are for our young people's development.

## **Gratitude and Hope**

Towards the end of the year, we experienced painful reminders of life's fragility. In late October, protests surrounding the presidential elections escalated into the most serious unrest since the country's independence. The government shut down the internet nationwide for six days. Communication was severely limited, banks and public offices remained closed, and major cities faced curfews. Many lives were lost. We were deeply relieved that St. Nicholas, located in a rural area far from the cities, remained safe. I was able to reach the team by phone and was grateful to learn that everyone was unharmed. Since then, the political situation has calmed again.

On 4 November 2025, a serious car accident occurred involving Clemence and Sister Celestina from the



leadership team, as well as Anthony and my daughter Aisha. All four had very special guardian angels watching over them. Anthony was initially in critical condition but was discharged from the hospital after only a few days. All suffered concussions, whiplash injuries, and bruising, but thankfully none sustained lasting harm. I was able to travel to St. Nicholas immediately to provide support onsite and to bring my daughter home safely.

Hardly back in Germany, I received the heartbreaking news that little Elisabeth had passed away suddenly. Ten-year-old Elisabeth was severely physically impaired. When she arrived two years ago, she was undernourished and very weak. It had been a joy to witness her blossoming and to see her big smiles. Her sudden death deeply saddens us, yet we are comforted knowing she experienced two years of love, dignity, and quality of life in our care.



As I reflect on 2025, I see a year filled with challenges, yet also overflowing with blessings. St. Nicholas has grown: in people, in responsibilities, and in heart. Thanks to your support, children and adults with and without disabilities can live, learn, laugh, and love together in dignity.

As every year, we have printed a calendar that portrays our children. Please let me know if you would like to have a calendar and I will send you one.



I will again spend Christmas and New Year at St. Nicholas.

We are wishing you and your families a blessed and peace-filled Advent and Christmas Season, God's abundant blessings and good health for the New Year

2026,

Stefanie Köster, the leadership team,  
caregivers, and children

