

“Rejoice in the Lord always!
I will say it again: Rejoice! For the Lord is near.”

Phil 4:4-5

Christmas 2026

Christmas Greetings from St. Nicholaus and Review of the Year 2026

Dear Friends and Supporters of St. Nicholaus,

As 2026 draws to a close, I would like to share with you how our children have been doing throughout the year.

The Beginning of the Year Means the Beginning of a New School Year

As every year, the new school year in Tanzania began in January. This also meant that many things had to be reorganized at St. Nicholaus. Which children would move from kindergarten to school? Who would finish school or start vocational training? Which children would attend a nearby school, who would travel by bus, and who would need to be taken to school in the morning and picked up again in the afternoon? And who would attend boarding school? The start of a new school year always brings many changes and presents our management team with quite a few organizational challenges.

Another important question is which of our young people have now reached adulthood and are ready to leave St. Nicholaus. Those with disabilities continue to live on our premises. In January, Christoph, Benson and Elliot moved into the adult living area. We currently have 37 children and eight young adults living with us.



I am often asked how the young adults who have already left St. Nicholaus are getting on. They are now in their early twenties and are building their own professional and family lives. They keep in touch with each other through a WhatsApp group, and they also regularly send me messages and photos.

Matungwa sometimes calls me. During a video call, he showed me his workplace at a factory producing flooring materials. Joseph is training to become a tour guide and has already had the opportunity to visit several national parks. Kaijage is married and has a one-and-a-half-year-old son. Alongside his job, he is building a small house on the property of his late grandmother. Ellieth is the mother of a little girl and lives with her husband in Bukoba.

Stefanie Köster • stefanie.koester@nikolaushaus.com

Magdalena is studying in Dar es Salaam. Nazalius is studying photography and video production in Dodoma. He has already produced a very professional video about St. Nicholaus. Joas and Sebastian are also both employed and keep in regular contact with us. Erik plays professional football in Dar es Salaam, while Dotto is training to become an electrician.

It is wonderful to see how differently their lives are developing and to know that, even after leaving St. Nicholaus they continue to feel connected to their home here



15 Years of St. Nicholaus – A Reason to Celebrate!

One of the very special highlights of the year was our big anniversary celebration in May. In September 2011, we moved into St. Nicholaus with ten children and three caregivers. The first few weeks were quite hectic: we were lacking many household items and furnishings, daily routines still had to be established, and responsibilities gradually had to be assigned.



Today, 15 years later, we look back with deep gratitude. A total of 67 children have found a home with us. What began with three caregivers has grown into a team of 40 staff members, and two additional houses have been built alongside our original home.

When we see how much life and growth have become possible over these years, we are continually amazed by all that God has given us.

Many guests joined us for the anniversary celebration, including our former children. After a festive Mass, everyone enjoyed a meal together, speeches were given, and our children delighted everyone with songs and dances.

You can find photos and a video of this special day on our website:
https://www.nikolaushaus.com/aktuelles/15-jahre-nikolaushaus/

Special Experiences and Many Helping Hands

From mid-May to mid-June, I spent four weeks at St. Nicholaus. Since it was the school holidays, I was able to spend plenty of time with all the children, including those who normally attend boarding schools.

As every year, I also went on a trip to Kigoma, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, with a group of children and one caregiver. We stay in a simple holiday house and take care of our own meals. The highlight for the children is swimming in the lake every day – both in the morning and in the afternoon. Everyone really enjoys this time away together!





Stefanie Köster • stefanie.koester@nikolaushaus.com



Our former intern Verena and her partner also came to visit and gave us a helping hand. Together, they tidied up our special needs kindergarten, sorted through the toys and rearranged everything. The kindergarten now looks as good as new. We are grateful for all their hard work!

Visits, Community and Support

We are always happy to welcome visitors and groups from the surrounding area. These include church groups, staff from Bukoba Airport and the local radio station. The visitors bring generous donations of essential supplies such as flour, rice, sugar, soap, school materials and sweets for the children. These gifts help us save quite a bit on our weekly shopping. The cost of fuel and everyday living expenses has risen significantly in Tanzania. Our expenses continue to increase, even though we still need the same quantities as before. This makes us all the more grateful for every contribution. It is wonderful to know that St. Nicholaus is also valued and supported by the local community. Every visit and every donation reminds us that we are not alone in this work.



In August, Saidi came to live with us. His mother had died when he was born, and his father had raised him on his own. We had known both of them for many years through our weekly Saturday clinic for families with children with disabilities. When Saidi's father was tragically killed in an accident, there was no one else in the family who could take in the now 17-year-old boy. Because of his severe physical and intellectual disabilities, Saidi will need lifelong support and care. We are deeply saddened by the loss of his father, but all the more grateful that Saidi has found a new home with us.



A joyful occasion took place in November: seven of our young people received the Sacrament of Confirmation. It was a special day for them and for all of us!



Looking Ahead to the Coming Weeks

Due to the heavy rainfall expected in connection with the El Niño weather phenomenon, the Tanzanian government decided to end the school year earlier than usual. As a result, all school children have been on holiday since mid-November. The new school year will begin in early January.

I will be travelling to St. Nicholaus for three weeks in January to accompany the start of the new school year and take care of the many organizational matters that need attention on site. One small disappointment is that, this year, I will not be able to celebrate Christmas

Stefanie Köster • stefanie.koester@nikolaushaus.com

with the children as I usually do. But I am all the more looking forward to spending time with them in January. I will be joined by three new volunteers and two members of our German association and board.

Thank You for Being Part of Our Journey!

As we look back on 15 years of life at St. Nicholaus, our hearts are filled with gratitude. The many challenges of everyday life would be impossible to manage without your faithful support. Thanks to you, we can offer the children a loving home, security and opportunities for a better future. This means more to us than words can express. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for standing by our side!



We have also created a new calendar for 2027. If you would like a copy, please feel free to get in touch with me.

We wish you and your families a blessed Christmas and a happy start to the New Year. May God accompany you, bless you with good health and fill you with hope and confidence for the year ahead.

Asante sana, heri ya Krismasi na Mwaka Mpya!

Stefanie Köster, the leadership team,

caregivers, and children

If you want to donate to us from the US, we advise you to contact

Bukoba Friends Foundation Secretary: friendsofbukoba@gmail.com

The Bukoba Friends Foundation supports St. Nicholaus Children's Center.

Stay Connected!

A few volunteers and I regularly update our website and share news and photos on Instagram and Facebook. We would love for you to stop by and see what is happening at St. Nicholaus. It's worth a visit!

🌐 www.nikolaushaus.com
📸 Instagram
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