

# CLEAN WATER BRINGS LIFE



By **Liz Cuenin**  
Minister of Membership & Assimilation



I have a great story to share with you. It's the story of how the people of Dawson have been instrumental in the life changing work of a community in the Horn of Africa, and we didn't even know it. Let me explain.

In December of 2022, the International Mission Board (IMB) reached out for some last-minute volunteers to help with an educational conference held in Kenya for missionary families serving in Africa who homeschool their children. Four of us from Dawson were able to say "yes" and packed our bags for Kenya that March. That week I served in our makeshift nursery and helped care for four precious babies while their moms attended their conference. This is where I met Hannah.\*

As the week went on, Hannah was kind enough to share about her life in Africa, how she and her husband never anticipated being missionaries, and how the Lord had sustained them over the years as they raised their children in a very difficult location. Hannah lives in Eastern Africa, in an area known as the Horn of Africa, in one of the most "hard to reach with the Gospel" countries in the world. And I'm not exaggerating here. Research from Open Doors' 2024 World Watch List (an in-depth investigative report focusing on global Christian persecution) lists several countries within the Horn of Africa in their list of the world's 10 most dangerous places to be a Christian. The only reason Hannah and her family are allowed to live and work in their country is because her husband, Rick, is a medical doctor.

Two years later, I returned with a team of eight Dawson members to serve again at the educational conference for missionary families in Kenya. Before we left, I got an email from one of the moms asking if we'd have room in our luggage to bring some extra curriculum for her kids. I was happy to see that the email was from Hannah! We arranged to get together one evening to catch up with one another.

*\* For safety reasons, names of this family have been changed.*

When we arrived, it was wonderful to see each other and to see how much her kids had grown in the last couple of years. Then the strangest thing happened. Hannah grabbed both of my arms and said, "Liz! On behalf of my whole community please tell Dawson 'Thank you.' Dawson has been the biggest answer to our prayers this year." I was so confused (and must have looked it) because she continued by explaining that her husband wasn't at the conference that week. He was still tied up with the construction of the "sand dam." I laughed and said, "Well, you're welcome, I guess. But I have to be honest..."

## HANNAH AND HER TEAM ARE NOW ACCEPTED IN THEIR COMMUNITY IN A WAY THEY NEVER HAVE BEEN BEFORE.

I'm not even sure what a sand dam is, much less how Dawson is involved. And also, isn't your husband a doctor?"

Here's what I learned. Hannah's husband, Rick, was fed up watching his patients in the clinic suffer and even die from diseases related to unclean and/or lack of water. Water in this region can be incredibly scarce, and what is there is often polluted by waterborne diseases. Although not an architect, Rick used local resources and men to scout out and build a dam in the middle of the desert. Built on top of a dry riverbed, the dam is constructed to raise the water table, trapping sand and water during the rainy seasons to create a subsurface reservoir.

The sand then acts as a natural filter and provides year-round clean water that's protected from both evaporation and contamination. Hannah excitedly showed me pictures of their progress. It was amazing to see! But I told her that I still didn't understand how Dawson was involved. All she could tell me was that the money they received that allowed them enough funds to complete the project was "from Dawson."

When I returned from Kenya, I was excited to find Ben Hale and Kyle Bailey, our Missions Pastors, to relay what I had learned and figure out the rest of the story. The missing pieces of the puzzle were this: some unknown, generous Dawson members have faithfully given money to support some of our Dawson missionaries. These missionaries had the ability to use that money for special projects, specifically things that are above and beyond the funding that comes from The Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. This money was given to a Horn of Africa special projects fund. That fund was then used to send money to help fund the sand dam that Rick and Hannah so desperately wanted to see built. And now, with its recent completion and the return of fresh water to their community, Hannah and her team are now accepted in their community in a way they never have been before.

The Lord is always at work. He is moving in the hearts and lives of believers here at Dawson. It's evident in the ways our people serve and give generously. And the Lord is at work in remote villages in the Horn of Africa where the completion of a sand dam can be the very thing that provides a way for many to hear the name of Jesus, perhaps for the very first time.



**Liz Cuenin** serves as Dawson's Minister of Membership & Assimilation, where she gets to connect with both visitors and new members of the church. She loves teaching the Bible and has been a Women's Life Group leader since 2017.