

# Nonprofit's trip to Africa an effort to create opportunities for village

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Posted: Thursday, July 7, 2011 12:00 am

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The Rev. Sandra McKinney of Unity Christ Center plans to travel more than 8,200 miles in January from Eau Claire to Uru, Tanzania.

Inside the lobby of her church at 1808 Folsom St., two pins connected by a red string mark the locations of the Wisconsin city and the African village.

The trip will be McKinney's first to Africa, but the 69-year-old won't be going for pleasure. Instead, she's hoping to make a difference in the lives of the village's residents.

"When you hear about something like this, there is something that happens inside of you," said McKinney of the efforts of It Can Be Done!, a nonprofit educational and charitable organization creating awareness and sustainable solutions for clean water, health, education and economic opportunities in Tanzania.

## Can-do attitude

The Rev. Sandra McKinney of Unity Christ Center in Eau Claire is heading to Uru, Tanzania, in eastern Africa in January for a mission trip through It Can Be Done!, a nonprofit organization focusing its attention on clean water access in part of Tanzania, along with a newly formed women's initiative.

In January 2009, Poppy Moelter, a friend of Unity Christ Center, traveled to Tanzania to climb Mount Kilimanjaro - the highest mountain in Africa and the tallest freestanding mountain in the world - to raise funds for the organization to build wells in Tanzanian villages that lacked clean water.

Some members of Unity, which is known for its efforts to support social justice, supported her through prayer, and they are doing the same for McKinney, who will depart for Tanzania - located on Africa's eastern coast below Kenya - on Jan. 25.

Several others locally are considering making the trip, McKinney said.

"People here know about the struggles there, and their efforts (so far) have brought a level of hope to these people," said Barbara Joye, president of It Can Be Done!, noting help is always needed.

"Some people might think, 'When there is a need at home, why go overseas?' " she said. "We truly are part of a global community. If we really believe that in the global community, there is no difference in our back yard or halfway around the world."

While she is ready to roll up her sleeves once she arrives there, McKinney won't be taking part in another trek up the mountain.

"I'm a seamstress - not a mountain climber," she said during an interview at Unity, chuckling.

On a more serious note, she expects to use her skill to teach women and children.

"But I'll do whatever I can do while I'm there," she said.

Before her departure, McKinney and the member of her church will get a firsthand account of It Can Be Done! efforts in Tanzania. Alphonse Ngowi, the Tanzanian water project manager, and his wife, Eva, the founder of the Acorn Women's Cooperative Movement, will be coming to the United States in September to address groups, including church congregations and private gatherings, to raise awareness and generate support for both efforts. Their visit will include a stop in Eau Claire.

The same month, Unity Christ Center will celebrate the 15-year anniversary of its building, which includes an outdoor garden for services, baptisms and weddings.

"We just kept getting these connections (between Unity and Tanzania), and this is God's work," said McKinney, who also sees her trip abroad as a special way to celebrate her 70th birthday on Aug. 4.

Unity got its start in Eau Claire 26 years ago in a woman's basement, she said. Then it moved to the Northern Hall and then a storefront on Clairemont Avenue. Under the leadership of its first minister, Kathryn Brenson, who arrived in 1995, Unity built its current building.

## To Help

It Can Be Done! is a nonprofit educational and charitable organization founded in 2006 to create awareness and sustainable solutions for clean water, health, education and economic opportunities in Tanzania, Africa.

For more information on It Can Be Done!, including volunteer opportunities, go to [itcanbedoneafrica.org](http://itcanbedoneafrica.org).

- The Rev. Sandra McKinney of Unity Christ Center is raising funds for the nonprofit It Can Be Done!, which is doing mission work in Uru, Tanzania. McKinney is traveling there in January 2012. To contribute, send donations to Unity Christ Center, 1808 Folsom St., Eau Claire, WI 54703.

## If You Go

Unity Christ Center, 1808 Folsom St., is holding the following events on Sunday, Sept. 11, to celebrate the 15th anniversary of its building and the visit of Alphonse and Eva Ngowi from Uru, Tanzania, a village in Africa:

- 10 a.m., service with Alphonse and Eva Ngowi.
- 11:30 a.m., potluck.
- 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., Global Community Circle facilitated by Barbara Joye, president of It Can Be Done!, a nonprofit doing mission work in Tanzania.

Everyone from the Chippewa Valley is welcome to come and learn more about supporting this global mission in Tanzania.

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