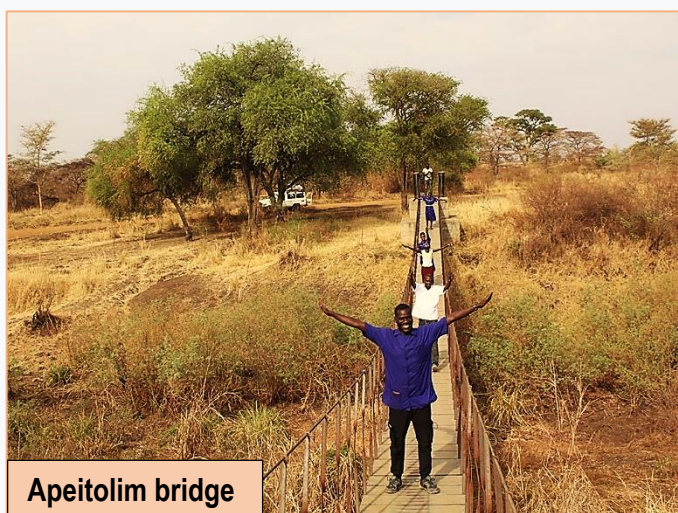


**On Christmas day
we celebrate the coming of God.
Let's walk towards each other
and keep contact,
throughout the New Year 2024**

Dear confreres, relatives, friends, and benefactors,

Once again, I am sitting in front of a blank page and trying to find a thematic introduction to this year's Christmas letter. There have been so many events throughout this year and I actually wanted to write in between and say thank you for all the support we have received here. Christmas is and remains a good opportunity to build contacts - to pass over the contact bridge.



Apeitolim bridge

You have forgotten a birthday during the year and don't want to let the contact completely fade: Write a Christmas greeting. You haven't managed to get in touch all year: Write a Christmas greeting. You don't really know how to rekindle the connection that was broken a while ago: Write a Christmas greeting. Christmas is an opportune moment, to try to get closer again with a card with a beautiful motif or an inspiring text.

My thoughts were similar after receiving a greeting card, coming to me literally out of the blue last Christmas. A companion from earlier days, the contact between us had vanished at some point in everyday life. Then the pleasant surprise - after which it wasn't difficult to pick up and take the next steps. What was Christmas here? Definitely, a bridge from yesterday to tomorrow.

For some, Christmas is also a motivation to try again with God and to build a bridge in prayer from everyday life to the origin and goal of my life.



**Prayer – bridge to God
at Matany Hill**

After a tiring day at work, I frequently experience fatigue and a desire to avoid additional commitments, preferring rest. However, our community schedule designates evening prayer at 7 p.m. Despite the weariness, I discover renewed strength and energy, along with fresh ideas, in the quiet chapel or during adoration. Consequently, prayer isn't merely an obligation but serves as a wellspring of strength for me.

At the beginning of this year, we started building a neonatal unit which will also have six places for intensive care. This is financed by the Irish Embassy through CUAMM.



Neonatal Unit

In February we were pleased by the visit of Marga and Dr Michael Köllinger, with whom we are very close friends. They support us in many ways, be it in prayer or by providing information to friends about Matany, such as at a special presentation in Amberg in November this year.

Gudrun Marat from Graz was with us in March and October. With the "Light and Life" project, she, her friends and donors support particularly the scope of our children's department. The training of young people is also part of the support. She has been here several times and everyone is happy when she is around. Many come to share their stories with her because of her inherently empathetic nature.

At Easter, my sister Margit and friends Marita, Marianne, and Johann visited us. They have supported us in numerous ways over many years and their support made a remarkable contribution to our service here. The long-awaited container, which Johann and

his team had loaded with lots of relief goods, most notably a tractor and a septic tank, unfortunately, arrived after they had left.

Dr. Sally Graham, who promoted the training of traditional midwives in Matany in the 90s and who also taught at our nursing training school during short visits over the years, was with us over Easter to once again experience “the spirit of Matany” at the age of 87 years.

In June the Ambassador of the Republic of Ireland visited Matany to inspect the status of the new neonatal unit.

In our parish of Matany, there was a change in mid-June. We bid farewell to our Parish Priest, Fr. Denis Olok and welcomed Fr. Isaac Izakare, both Comboni Missionaries. Father Isaac was already here in Matany as a theology student and as a deacon and swiftly settled in here.

A week later there was another farewell to the long-serving Medical Superintendent Dr. John Bosco Nsubuga (Dr JB). We gave him a well-deserved big sendoff party. His proficiency, authenticity, and approachable nature gained him popularity here and the people’s impressions were evident in the many performances during the party, dedicated to appreciating him. Surely, it is understandable that after all these years he wished to be with his family and that explains why he has taken a new commitment near Kampala.



Farewell of Dr JB, next Fr Isaac, Dr Deus, Dr Emanuela, ...

Dr Deusdedit Kateregga, his successor, is no stranger to us, as he has been in Matany since 2013 as a young doctor. He then specialized as a gynaecologist and obstetrician and returned to Matany in 2021. He loves the remoteness of Matany with its diverse expectations. Our medical team, working well together, will continue to manage the high volume of work, together with the nursing team and other staff.

Dr Friedrich Ullrich, who has been advising us on Medical Technology for many years, came to Matany in July to deliver a new ultrasound machine. The installation was carried out by Valentin Bauer, who came specifically from Umkirch in the Black Forest. Dr Friedrich and our team installed the new compressor for the oxygen system and performed various technical support services.

For about two years now, the hospital's financial security has been constantly at risk, and only the trust in God's providence helped to continue. By the middle of the year, while the future was very uncertain, I also shared this with Dr. Emanuela who has been volunteering with us for many years. While on vacation in Italy, she shared our impediment with Don Mario, a childhood friend and priest of her late husband, Prof. Dr. Bonini, who also worked brilliantly here for several years before his death. A few weeks later we received a large donation from Don Mario. In August, Don Mario died. His donation has helped us keep going over the last few months. Soon we will have to fear again and continue to trust in God's mediating help. Just a few days ago a benefactor who has been supporting us for many years informed us that she will send a bigger donation in memory of her deceased parents.



In mid-August there was an unprecedented celebration in Matany: a traditional Karimojong wedding of an Italian doctor couple. Ricardo was here a few years ago as a young doctor for his specialization, and his now young wife Giada was here the months before the wedding. It was a picture-perfect celebration that we will never forget.

This brings us back to the topic of this year's Christmas letter. Matany - a contact bridge for Ricardo and Giada - but also for so many of different backgrounds, nationalities, ethnic groups, faiths, etc. Undoubtedly, I am also grateful that we at Matany Hospital are connected to all of you and that I/we are happy to keep in touch with this letter. It should be a sign of our gratitude and appreciation for all the good help we receive from you in various forms.

At Christmas, we are invited again to seek contact with each other and thereby express that the person we have written to is important and valuable to us. Often, we can't even figure out why a contact has broken off or the reason changed completely. It is important to make it known that we are thinking about each other.

God never stopped seeking contact with us humans and became one of us. Let us let each other feel that God's love can be experienced through our actions in the world.

From the bottom of my heart, I wish that you will continue to seek contact with God and our neighbours.

Yours Br. Günther and Team