

In the Beginning

In 1999 a group of pastors from the Greater Milwaukee Synod of the ELCA traveled to Tanzania to meet with pastors of the Meru Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. While there, a coffee farmer asked a visiting Milwaukee pastor a simple question, "We grow coffee, you drink coffee, would you buy your coffee from us?" With an answer of "Yes!", the pastors returned to Milwaukee determined to make it happen.

In 2001 the first shipment of 8200 pounds of coffee beans were imported from Tanzania to be roasted. By the next year 20 coffee farmers had joined the Mt. Meru cooperative and exported nine tons of coffee to Milwaukee.

Now over 2000 small coffee farmers sell to Mt. Meru Coffee Project and by receiving fair prices have increased their annual income from less than \$375 to over \$600. This allows them to support their families, send their children to school, access health care, sustain and improve their farms, receive training in improved growing methods, obtain superior plants, and support their local cooperatives, villages, and churches.