



# Salt Malawi

A Christian project saving lives in Malawi

## Newsletter

July 2018

It has been a long time since we last sent out a newsletter (December 2017). We apologise for the delay. As you will see from this report these last 6 months have seen great change. It has been a period of some difficulties, and the next year promises to be another very challenging one for the poor of this nation. Yet there is much to be thankful for and we hope that in reading this letter you may feel encouraged as well as challenged in your prayerful support of the work in Malawi.

Julian writes - In December we reported on the increase of opposition that we had encountered upon our return to Malawi after our 7 month break in the UK. That trouble continues. If anything it has increased in the subsequent months. One of our co-workers in the Village of Light has experienced open persecution by a group of idolaters from one village, as well as from another group from another village who claim to be a church, preaching law and the so-called gospel of prosperity, and yet knowing nothing of the grace of God, the new birth or life in the Spirit.

We have faced personal attacks from unexpected sources. Two of our dogs were poisoned (only to make immediate and miraculous recovery after prayer) and another has recently been attacked and suffered a 9-inch long wound that was more than 1/2 inch deep - probably from a machete. One of our leaders in the area has been chased away from his home by relatives who have been attacking him using witchcraft. Another church member was attacked physically by a relative who tried to kill her last week. And so it goes on . . . Three months ago one leader from Lilongwe, on his journey back home after meeting with us, was asked by a friend to give up his seat on a mini bus for the last leg of that journey. Travelling the same route a little later our leader was shocked to see that that very minibus had overturned and his friend, sitting in the seat that should have been his, had been killed in the accident. But for the grace of God . . . . .

We know that the Christian warrior fights against the flesh, the devil and the world. Sadly, during our time in the UK last year one of our

key leaders in Dedza fell into serious sin. He has left us of his own accord and only now is the nature of that sin becoming clear to all. We pray for his repentance and eventual restoration.

Last year's rains were very poor across the nation. In the bread baskets of the central region the maize harvest has been much lower than normal. Everyone we speak to anticipates much suffering later in the year. As an example we harvested less than a half of what we received the previous year. This is the third time in the last four years that we have experienced lower than usual rainfall. Whether or not the rain pattern is affected by the degradation in the environment (the significant deforestation comes to mind immediately) is beyond our ability to understand but possibly there is a link. Whatever the reason the result is going to be greater trouble for the poor who have no resources to help them through the difficult times ahead. We bought in maize to store from last year's harvest and have some means of helping the church around the country to meet this year's challenge.



Maize being treated before storage on the farm

We have also funded our churches in Lilongwe buying maize last month for the same purpose.



Church gathering at a waterhole for baptisms

On the other hand, there is much good news too. The new churches within Lilongwe and Dedza upon which we reported in December continue to grow, and within the last 2 months we have witnessed the baptism of nearly 40 adults from these two groups in rivers within their villages.



A woman from Madziamanga being baptised

Neither of these communities have had churches in their village before. However, not all the members of the new churches are new to “church” life. One man recently stood in a

meeting I was leading to testify that he has been in “church” all his life but had never before experienced the Holy Spirit, nor understood what he was doing. Another woman who was baptised recently reports that she can’t help crying for her family and neighbours because of how lost they are without Christ. We’ve seen her crying in times of worship. It’s very unsettling to our own comfort to see how distraught she is. How much do we dread the coming judgement, or weep for our unsaved relatives?

The church nationwide for which we care has experienced wonderful growth in the past 2 years. We looked after 13 churches in 2016, working in just 3 districts of the country; today there are 32 churches, working in 8 different districts. More encouraging yet, most of the work that has led to the recent expansion has been done entirely by our Malawian brothers. This is the fulfilment of the vision for the work that Caroline and I have been carrying for years. Pray with us that this would not be the end of the growth of the kingdom in those areas, but just the beginning. Each new village church represents a new community exposed to the gospel of the Kingdom of God, to the love, grace and sanctifying work of Jesus through His Spirit. We are very thankful.

Since our last newsletter Cameron has retired from the work, having served with us in Dedza for 9 years). Separately we want to announce that Roger and Helen are back in England, having completed a year of working for the church. We want to thank all three of them for the positive things that they brought to the life of the church in Malawi over the respective periods of their service, and to pray for the Lord to continue to lead them and bless them as they move into new areas of work in the future.

*Julian & Caroline*



As the work develops and matures Julian and Caroline need to step back and allow the local teams to take on the day to day work as much as possible. Nonetheless there remains the key work of training these teams. Their strategy has been to train the key men and women using a two-pronged approach: a monthly gathering in the local area to pray, teach and provide practical training for the work that they will face; followed by a biannual regional conference where the leaders can meet leaders from other districts and have a time of fellowship, vision setting and teaching. Since the last letter they have held 3 such conferences in Dedza and in Kasungu (the latter district is to the north of Lilongwe).



Leaders from Dedza and Nsanje meeting at the new conference centre



Training local church leaders in central Dedza

Another important part of the vision for the church has been the gradual handing over of responsibility to the Malawian leadership team. Despite the challenges of the last 12 months we are delighted to report that there have been significant developments in this area too. The core of the leadership is a group of trustees. Julian has been taking a back role in the meetings of the trustees for some time, but has this year stepped down from that team. Now there are 5 trustees, who have been selected from the 4 districts where the church has been active for some time. They include John and Chiyembekezo from Dedza and Biliat from Lilongwe. Julian has been impressed by this new team of trustees. They will undoubtedly need much prayer support as they come to grips with the challenges of the task - particularly they will need wisdom, grace and patience.

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