



Newsletter

November 2018

Welcome to our latest newsletter giving a report from our work within Malawi. We hope that you will find there to be much to encourage you in this report, but also find much to focus your prayers. We are in the midst of a challenging time in several ways as you will see, but we can also testify to the fact that God is good and we marvel at the fact that however difficult our circumstances we can turn to Him for help.



As many of you reading this letter will already know we returned to England in mid-September. This visit has been forced upon us by circumstances relating to our work permit, yet also offers us the wonderful opportunity to spend time with our family. News at home in England is good with Tom and Naomi rejoicing in the birth of Hannah in May of this year. We thank God for Hannah (left) and have greatly enjoyed meeting her and spending time with both of our grandchildren in this trip.

We felt the need to be away from Malawi because the government has failed to renew our work permit which expired in April. No reason has been given for this odd decision. Immigration are on record as having recommended approval but the minister of home affairs has discretion to do as she wishes, and after 16 years of work she decided that enough was enough. Apparently she has treated many missionaries in the same way. We experienced some difficulty in travelling without up to date papers and recognised the wisdom of waiting at home for a new permit to be issued (hopefully) in response to our appeal. Even today there is no news on whether a new permit will be granted or not. In the event that this position becomes permanent we should be able to return to Malawi as visitors, but this would be a different way of working. We ask for your continued prayers for this situation.

Earlier in the year, acting in agreement with our fellow leaders, we appointed a new group of trustees to lead the work in Malawi. We have men from each of the main regions within which we work acting as a team to lead the churches across the nation. They are good, faithful men who love the Lord, who live sacrificially and are inspirational among their fellow Malawians. As we returned to the UK we felt confident at leaving the work in their hands.

Sadly, on the night of 16th November we received the shocking news of the sudden and unexpected death of the chairman of this group, a lovely gentle man with the name of Chiyembekezo (in Chichewa this name means "hope"). John says that he had not been sick, but that evening had gone to hospital complaining of problems with his throat and died whilst waiting for attention.



Chiyembekezo working with maize

Chiyembekezo was a very good friend, a true brother in faith, a man with whom we have shared our lives for over 8 years. He leaves his wife and 3 children the youngest of whom is about 7 years old. Needless to say Chiyembekezo will be greatly missed. His leaving us means that there is likely to be a huge gap in the work. Please pray for the team left behind that they will find their solace in the Lord, and will rise up to cover the work that Chiyembekezo was doing.

Jesus taught that unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds (John 12:24). Firstly, He was talking about the importance of His own upcoming death, but we have seen the application of this verse to the lives of all of us as His followers. We take comfort too in the fact that the resurrection of Jesus marks His victory over death. He promised that he who believes in Jesus will live, even though he may die. One “day” we feel sure that we will meet Chiyembekezo again.

When we were back in England last year we shared how the group of churches that we care for had grown rapidly over the previous 12 months. This process has continued, due in no small part to the hard work, prayer and commitment of our team of leaders in Malawi. Men like John and Chiyembekezo in Dedza, Biliat and Josiah in Lilongwe, Josephy and Innocent in Kasungu and Aaroni and Samwell in Nsanje.



Leaders from Kasungu

Today we have 43 churches and church plants within these regions. A growth of more than 300% in the past 24 months. It goes without saying that most of this new work is young, and the new church leaders need much prayer, as well as teaching, to sustain what has begun and to allow that new life to lead to yet more areas becoming exposed to the good news of Jesus Christ.

Please pray that:

1. People will hear and understand the gospel that offers new life and hope,
2. There might be true faith but also true repentance causing people to really cast off the darkness,
3. New leaders will emerge to serve their communities faithfully, who can understand what they have been taught and are able to teach others, and
4. For God's protection against physical and spiritual attack to cover both the new leaders and also the church members.



Leaders from the Nasanje churches

We praise God that despite the challenges of the last year there is much to give thanks for. For the third time in the past four years the country faces a season of intense hunger after yet another difficult harvest. The rains of January and February were particularly poor this year. Once again we have been able to acquire a large amount of food that we are distributing to the churches in the various areas. We remember John and Chiyembekezo who have worked hard in the last month to find the extra that we needed. We thank you too for giving the help that will mean that the people who are the church are able to face the hunger knowing that there is some food for them, and that they are cared for by you.

Zikomo kwambili (Thank you very much).

Julian & Caroline

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