

Mission Happenings

A Different Kind of Power by Ben Hayes

Presidential elections can be a volatile time in any nation, but here in Africa they seem to particularly be cause for prayer and concern. Malawi has a rather peaceful history compared with other Africa nations, but all the same, many churches here have taken a night to pray together for the peace of this nation during this election month.

As a mission, we had a 24-hour time of prayer earlier this month for the same cause, and have continued weekly to pray for peace in this nation. Votes have been cast for the next president of Malawi, and the suspenseful waiting of the decision finds many Malawians uncertain, not least perhaps the young generation here who will make up the future of the nation. Many non-natives (us included) have received warnings about venturing into the city over the next few days. All of this can lend itself to a tunnel-vision view of what happens when **positions of power** in this world are being decided.

But something of [a different sort of power](#) happened this Friday evening that I was not expecting. We arrived home from a dinner with friends and drove by the church on campus that sits near our house. Beautiful songs coming from the church filled the air as we went inside to put the kids to bed, and then I remembered this was to be a night of prayer that the youth of the church had put on. I decided to join them for a while. The arrival of the cold season along with the rain dripping from the tree-covered, dimly lit walk to the church set the mood for what was about to happen. Whereas there had been loud singing while I was walking, silence had fallen on the 30 something young girls and boys I found inside as I entered the building. . . or what seemed like silence. As I walked from the back of the church the sound of a slow rumble seemed to fill the place. It was one of those moments where one tangibly feels the presence of God. Slowly, as if keeping in step with the rhythm the Spirit had set, the rumble began to grow as these youth simultaneously raised their voices crying out for God to move in this nation. It was the kind of picture you might imagine when you read Isaiah 62:6-7 - *"I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem. They will never be silent day or night. You who call on the name of the Lord give yourselves no rest and give Him no rest until He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth."*

I stood transfixed by this otherwise normal group of teenagers and for a brief moment caught a glimpse of what the future of the church would be like if this became the standard: people giving up their weekends, their sleep, refusing to let themselves rest or let God rest until He establishes His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Needless to say, I returned home with an exhilaration that only God can give, and with a greater desire to want to join in on this



work of God's watchmen, praying and waiting for God to move among us and ahead of us as we seek to follow Him. Sometimes it seems as if this is the only thing we can do that really matters.

So much beauty . . .

by B Shelburne

I was greeted in Malawi with bright, sunny days, not what I had expected in June on the edge of winter. The tropical beauty of the Mission grounds almost knocks you over when you walk out each day. Someone marveled that "Malawi can hold so much beauty and so much human need at the same time." I was invited to speak on Sunday morning at the local Mission congregation. They are starting an extended series of Sunday studies giving an overview of the Bible. My job was to give a brief introduction to the Bible. The local custom is to have two different lessons, "preaching" and "teaching." This may have originated from churches in Great Britain. Ben did the preaching and my part was the teaching. There were a number of responses as usually happens in their services. Those being restored to the church are quite specific about their sins. The service lasted three hours.

It can be chilly, windy and gray in June but so far the weather has been mild and beautiful. I sleep under a mosquito net and take anti-malarial meds. I had malaria more than once while we lived here but by God's grace have been able to avoid it during my return visits.

The four-hour daily staff training sessions have gone wonderfully well. Ten key staffers were chosen to participate. Many of them are relatively young but have been here long enough to get established and take on responsibility. I believe they are all very committed to their roles and to serving the Lord. Working with them is enjoyable.



Though every Mission has its struggles, Namikango has been richly blessed. Now it is about to enter a new phase, hopefully more fruitful than any before. We need to replace some crumbling facilities, with a view to better outreach and better service. But before laying new physical foundations, we needed to revisit our Mission base and confirm the spiritual foundations which have guided the Mission and must continue to guide it.

One of the best things about returning to Malawi is reconnecting with old friends. I am sad that most of the church leaders we taught and worked with 1961-1980 are long since gone. I especially enjoyed seeing a long-time friend, John Katete, whom I first met in 1961. He was in one of the first groups of students to go through our new Bible school. John

proved to be devout, wise and trustworthy and later became a key staff member at the Mission for many years. He retired just over 10 years ago but still has a keen interest in God's work at the Mission and was able to attend our first three sessions. I had a good visit with him. His son Symon is a pillar at the Mission today.

Another friend, Ann Thiesen, has been here a few days while doing studies with the women in several locations around the Mission. Ann is the widow of a well-known Malawi missionary - John Thiesen. Their son Mark served at Namikango for a number of years as well. Ann's relationship with the Malawian women is extraordinary and she loves being with them and they love her.



Student/Spouse Week and Course Completions

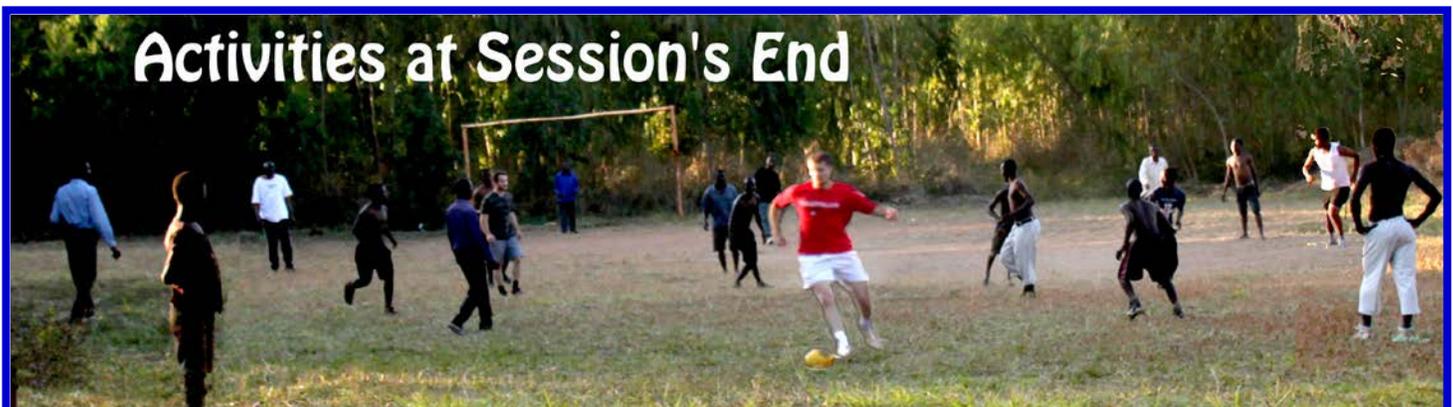
by Ryan Hayes

This week was quite special. Aside from having Uncle B. here, the wives and children of the students of Namikango Bible School joined their husbands/fathers for one week on campus. This wonderful time allows the wives to see and be a part of the daily lives of their husbands while in class. The wives in Malawian culture take almost all the responsibility for care of the family, which leaves them being very busy most of the time. Life and culture here also leaves little time for husband and wife to spend time together, reflecting on their relationship. So the one week here allows the wives time off without cooking or doing other home care. For a while someone else does the chores and gives the couples time for unity building.

Such times as this allows for us to offer additional classes

and seminars that relate to families and to the wives in particular. Through this we are able to continue affirming and empowering them: from Discovery Bible Studies to health and family education to HIV Aids prevention to business skills and topping it all off with some fun and games with netball and soccer games! It was a wonderful week of interaction, learning, and laughing.

The week ended with the mini-graduation of the students from their first few classes. These are small but significant celebrations that seek to further encourage the students to see the lasting results of their classes and how they benefit their families and communities. The students then returned home with their families and will rejoin the campus soon for the next set of classes.





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Kindles and Departure Gifts

As a reward for the two weeks of diligent study and for the staff's completing all of the assigned readings before Brother Shelburne



arrived, He provided each office staff member with the gift of an Amazon Kindle Reader. It is hard to explain how grateful each of us are for such a gift as this – we are deeply grateful! We have already begun discussing how we might use these Kindles to create deeper discussion and study, especially on certain topics that we may read together. The amount of potential this gift has as a tool for growth for us together as a staff is incredible. This will allow staff to read material we may want to send them whether they have electricity in their homes or not, wherever they may be, in the city, or deep in the village. They will also have access to many books, Bibles and commentaries that they might otherwise not be capable of purchasing. Fantastic!

A Special Gift for the Teacher

The Namikango staff provided Uncle B with a departure gift of a special 50th Anniversary Bible, celebrating Malawi's independence.

These Bibles are unique in their limited nature while also providing a reminder of the role that God has seen fit for Namikango to play in the distribution and teaching from the Chichewa translation of Scripture.

We are thankful for Brother Bisani obtaining this special and limited edition Bible. He is a member of the Malawi Bible Society.

Ryan Hayes



A Special Bible commemorating Malawi Independence is given to Brother Shelburne