

PARTNERPLAN

Gary Brough - Malawi December 2023

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Dear Friends,

It has been 10 years since my first visit to Malawi, and now five years of living here. So much has become familiar to us and stepping off the plane after travel feels very much like coming home again.

Malawi has seen some amazing progress over this period – life expectancy has grown, and infant mortality has improved. Economic growth has been a bigger challenge and has led to some difficult decisions in recent months. The currency was devalued by around 44% last month, without warning. Imagine waking up and learning the little money you had in your bank or hidden away at home had lost its value overnight. In the days that followed staple foods, fuel electricity, water, fertiliser and building materials jumped in price. However basic wages have remained unchanged – and all this in the face of inflation at around 30%.

Malawians are vibrant and resilient people. No statistic can capture that, and no economic fact can diminish that. However, these have been a heavy few weeks at the end of a heavy few years for Malawi economically.

While there have been political wrangling's and some public demonstrations the general response has been to dust oneself off and keep going. What is the alternative?

On the work front we must do the same. We were able to expedite some funding for the tree planting programme and soon Livingstonia Synod will be fully up and running as the third tree nursery with things in the pipeline for Zambia Synod to follow soon after. It is hoped that, in time, the nurseries will be a self-sustaining means to combat deforestation, develop further businesses around agroforestry and generate income for the church at the same time.

There are global financial issues at play too and that means that external funding is becoming increasingly scarce. This has been a trend throughout my time visiting and working in Malawi, but we've seen it accelerate in the last two or three years.

It was with this in mind, that we focused on planning for sustainable growth when we met together with the Emerging Leaders Programme in November. Once again, I was so encouraged by the positive relationships within the group and how encouraging they are to one another. Coming from across Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe and meeting like they are old friends.

Our discussions looked at leadership of projects and organisations. Considering vision, strategy and planning and how they fit together while looking mostly at the book of Nehemiah. We took a visit to some agricultural projects for inspiration on how small projects can grow into big enterprises with careful planning and management. We met in Mzuzu this time so we were able to host the group for a barbecue at our house during the week.

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And so, 2023 is drawing to a close. Looking ahead 2024, the tree nurseries are at an exciting stage of their growth, next year the Church of Central Africa will celebrate 100 years, Malawi will mark 60 years of independence, we plan to host a national women's research conference and building work should get underway for a new Postgraduate Studies Centre at Zomba Theological University. God willing, we will host the Moderator of the Church of Scotland and later in the year (September/October) we will visit Scotland on Furlough.

Time hasn't stood still at home either. In recent weeks Morven has turned six and Eilidh ten. Caitlin is very much finding her voice, and now that she's steady on her feet likes nothing more than to be out in the garden.

Prayers for a blessed Christmas and peaceful New Year from our family to yours.

Gary, Jacqueline, Eilidh, Morven and Caitlin x

Emerging Leaders Programme



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Tree Planting Efforts at Blantyre Synod and the General Assembly Office



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Birthdays, School Shows and Family Time

