

## PARTNERPLAN

# Gary Brough - Malawi February 2025

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Dear Friends

We put a lot of stock in the turning of the calendar to a fresh new year. As January closes, it doesn't feel so new anymore. In reality, the dust and detritus seem similar to that of 2024. It seems we think much of the potential of our future selves to do more and better. But, alas, the 1 January 2025 Gary is not "new" compared to the 31 December 2024.

Yet we overlook the fantastic promise that:  
"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness." – Lamentations 3:22

I might have come stumbling into 2025 and falling short of my expectations for this year, but my Heavenly Father who goes before me is loving and faithful. A fresh, daily provision of His mercy – I don't have to wait another year, month or even a week.

Familiar challenges have followed Malawi into 2025. The fuel crisis, while less acute right now, has rumbled on for four months now with no definitive end in sight. Prices continue to rise, and maize, the staple food, is over K60,000 per 50kg bag – about two-thirds the minimum wage worker's salary (though formal employment is not the norm). After a brush with Cyclone Chido in December, irregular rains threaten food production. Sadly, there is nothing new here.

As Malawi welcomed 2025, there were many "prophets" advertising crossover services and declaring that 2025 would be the year of financial, educational, professional and relational breakthroughs. Does God withhold his goodness, apportioning it by calendar or fiscal year?

People often remark about the strength of people's faith and church communities in Malawi despite the hardships. But, perhaps it is because of such difficulties that stronger faith is forged. Without the veil of economic security, new mercies and daily bread have a more literal meaning for people. Mine is the generation of climate anxiety and perma-crisis — the persistent feeling that disaster looms and stability is fleeting. The psalmist reminds us that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1).

2025 is an election year, and while the polls aren't until September, the political rumblings are already being felt. Worldwide politics continue to be shaken up. Many in Malawi welcome Trump's return and even see the aid cuts as a push toward self-sufficiency and a step away from external control.

In a time when the ground beneath us seems ever-shifting, we are called not to place our hope in external stability but in the unchanging character of God. His provision may not always come in

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economic windfalls or immediate relief, but His mercies—daily, steadfast, and sufficient—sustain us through each challenge.

This gives fresh impetus to the work of the church. January has been taken up in meetings and at my desk, looking at familiar plans and budgets with the same perennial funding challenges. We'll recruit the second cohort of the Emerging Leaders Programme. This time, we will train local facilitators in Malawi and run satellite training sessions in Zambia and Zimbabwe. What a privilege to work with new and upcoming leaders as they seek to represent Christ in their institutions, communities and countries. Similarly, significant is the construction of the new Post Graduate Centre at Zomba Theological University, which has restarted at pace following a generous grant in December.

A third tree nursery got up and running at the end of 2024, this time in Ekwendeni. We were able to allocate small grants to local congregations to support rural tree-planting efforts. These are both thanks to the support of the Church of Scotland Guild and Stamp Appeal. In addition to meeting the practical needs of communities, these projects also encourage a holistic and grassroots response from the church, not relying on centralised offices or large-scale funding. We plan to develop that further this year by writing and launching a local resource mobilisation handbook for congregations.

As a family, we have returned to our familiar day-to-day routines after a restful festive break. We acquired a tent last year and enjoyed camping through the thunderstorms near Livingstonia – brewing coffee while looking down on the lake. The girls are back to school -Eilidh's penultimate primary school term – and Jacqueline has returned to her online bookkeeping studies. After 6 years in Malawi, and with another year and a half in this current assignment, it feels like the future is rushing towards us. But thankfully, it will come with fresh mercies, too!

The hardships of Malawi—and the world—are not unknown to Him. He does not measure out His goodness according to our calendars or withhold His mercies until we feel deserving of them. Instead, He meets us each morning with grace enough for the day ahead, calling us not just to endure, but to trust, seek, and find Him in the midst of it all.

I hope that is your experience too, each new day.

Every blessing,

Gary, Jacqueline, Eilidh, Morven and Caitlin



Passion fruit season is here!

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Camping in Livingstonia



Christmas morning at home in Mzuzu