



Jerry's Report



Looking back at one year in Malawi

Linda and I came to Malawi one year ago this month (October). This is not the first time for me to live in Malawi. I first came here in 1964 with brother James Orten and, as soon as we were able to look the work over, I returned to the U. S. and returned with my wife and children. We lived in Blantyre (in the Southern Province), until December of 1966. The work at that time involved about 100 congregations. Now, reportedly, they number in the thousands in the Southern and Central Provinces.

However, the work spread slowly into the Northern Province, and when we arrived here there were 60-70 congregations. We had no base of operation, so a small city called Mzuzu was chosen. A house was rented, furniture, car and new pickup were purchased. We were soon able to go to work, with the help of a lot of good brethren in the background.

It took a few weeks to get everything to work properly, due to faulty wiring in the house. Then some bigger problems arose, such as Linda getting burned from a pressure cooker, and our being so far from a good medical center. But the Lord was with us, and she was treated successfully locally. This was followed by six robbers coming onto the property with two AK47 rifles in an attempt to overpower and rob us, but they failed to enter the house. Again, the Lord pro-

tectioned us, and they were driven off the property. Finally, after a bumpy beginning, things leveled out and we have had a successful season of studies. Compared to those in the Southern Province, they are very small. Attendance has averaged between 10 and 25. But this is a relatively new work and all the congregations up in the Province are small. However, as far as growth is concerned, there has been at least a 10% increase in the number of congregations. I have preached at a number of these new congregations. This number may seem small, but if there had been a 1000 congregations to begin with, the growth would look pretty significant.

This month has involved an immense amount of travel (1000s of miles). We are going into the far reaches of the work now, all the way from the Central Province south, to Zambia west, Lake Malawi east, and tomorrow, Lord willing, we are supposed to go north to the very tip of Malawi that borders Tanzania. This trip alone will cover some 600 miles. When we return, we are then to go the other direction for a study next week, over two hundred miles to the south east. After that, the study season will be over. The rainy season is beginning and during that

time we will visit various congregations, and prepare lessons and have them printed for next year, the good Lord willing.

To all of you brethren, we are sending our thanks for your words of encouragement, prayers and assistance in doing this work.



Doug's Report



October arrived along with an unwelcomed guest--the heat. It is the hottest month of the year. As one sits in the sweltering, tropical heat there is the consolation that the cool and refreshing rains of November will soon arrive. The morning sessions of the studies were usually bearable but by the afternoon sessions one felt that he was sitting in a sauna.

I conducted four preacher studies this month. Normally I do three a month but this time I did four. These studies were located within two hours driving time from Blantyre. They were well attended with the largest consisting of eighty men and the smallest consisting of about thirty.

An interesting event happened at one of the studies that I would like to share with you. During one of the morning sessions I was discussing with the brethren the role of women in the church and I had pointed out that women could not lead prayers in the church assembly or in public places. I noticed

several of the men perking up and paying closer attention. During the question and answer session one of the brethren asked me if it is right to put flowers on graves. I thought it was a strange question, but then I sometimes get a lot of strange questions. One thing I have learned here is that an apparently innocent question is not always so innocent. I answered his question and then proceeded on to other questions. In the afternoon session we study the book of James. We had talked about the dangers of the tongue from chapter three and also the problems of fighting and slandering among brethren from chapter four. Again I noticed brethren perking up and shaking their heads in agreement.

During the question session a brother stood



up and said that he was guilty of not working with some of the other preachers. Then others

began to stand up and make similar confessions of bitterness and infighting. So we had prayer on the spot and it appears these brethren are united again and working together.

On our return trip home that afternoon I asked Davidson about the question concerning laying flowers on graves. I knew there was something underneath the surface on that one. He told me that at public funerals the denominations allow a woman to bring flowers to the grave and then lead the assembled group in prayer. Unfortunately, some of our churches have borrowed this denominational practice. I asked him if the preachers had understood our study concerning women and their role in the church. He said they had understood and this would help them with their disagreements. There had been serious disagreements among these brethren over this issue.

The thing that excited me the most about this incident was seeing the power of God's word touch the hearts of good men and make them see the need for correcting their ways. I am a firm believer in contextual Bible study. If one makes a systematic study of each book in the Bible he will find the answer for all of his needs and how to deal with problems. I know that "chapter studies" are boring to some people, but one can be introduced to a variety of helpful subjects that way. There are so many helpful and timely teachings in the book of James.

I have two more studies scheduled in November and then will conclude for the rainy season. Once again, I want to thank brethren everywhere for their prayers and support of this work. May God bless you.

DEBBIE'S EXPERIENCE

When visitors come to Malawi, it is not to spend a night or two, but most often a week or two. We love having them and have a guest room in our house which adequately accommodates most visitors, but when we have more than one couple, we must do a little shuffling. We decided to convert the storage room for publications into a guest room. The room is attached to the laundry room and the tool storage room. It is separate from the house and connected by a patio. All windows and doors have bars and gates and the patio is gated as well so we feel it will be just as safe to stay in



as the house. But there was no bathroom. At night a guest would have to go through two locked gates and three locked doors to get to the bathroom inside the house. So we divided the laundry room in half,

making a smaller laundry and the new bathroom. We now have a new guest room and bath thanks to a sweet family back home and their generous donation to that project. It was a project made easy by two very professional Malawians who completed the work in two weeks and two days. It has taken another week to get all the finishing touches completed. Now we are ready for guests. We are looking forward to having the Cutter, Davis and Permenter families for Thanksgiving.

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