

7/14/12 Saturday
Ready for Takeoff...

Our adventure began at the DM International Airport at 4am. This time the name really fit since we were bound for Malawi, a mere 17 hour flight from Washington D.C. Kaylin and her parents were the early arrivals. They were there at 3:45 when the team leader arrived. Kaylin also won the award for the largest backpack. Some were concerned that she was going to tip over. Our first order of business was a birthday celebration for Kenzie, who turned Sweet 16 today. What an awesome birthday gift – a trip to Africa! Unfortunately, Kenzie’s nephew was in tears because he thought he was going to Africa too! Kenzie’s mom and dad were our heroes since they brought nine of the 12 extra suitcases that we took with us filled with lots of goodies to leave at the various villages, churches, and nursery schools. Phil showed up as a John Wagner groupie thanks to his new buzz cut compliments of wife, Allie. Drew became “guitar man” as he volunteered to carry the guitar to Malawi that the Nielsen family donated. Pam got dinged on her second trip to Malawi at check-in. She had to give up some materials to meet the weight limit and had to give up a bag of liquids in her carry on bag. A new development that caused us some apprehension was the fact that our bags were checked all the way to Lilongwe. So that meant no luggage for our overnight in Johannesburg. Our team leader chose to view that as a positive way in that we may have an extra pair of clean underwear for the trip.

Due to a conversation Dennis and Robin had with the pilot, we were welcomed by him from the cockpit as we settled in for our short flight from Chicago to Dulles. He was a retired air force pilot who had made the inaugural flight into Ghana for the State Department. Hanna warned everyone that the toilets in the airport counted down prior to flushing, to be prepared!

In Dulles, preparation for VBS began with coloring of the fish for the Bible story about Jesus calling the fishermen to become followers. Two children, Theo and Olive, joined in the fun. They were traveling to Senegal where they live and ended up being seat mates with Robin on the flight.

As predicted, we saw others also traveling for mission trips. A United Methodist group from MO was going to Swaziland with the Heart for Africa program. The daughter was one member and has traveled to Haiti three times and wants to do mission-related work as her career. Another unintended consequence of participating in mission work as a young person.

Pam, as expected, is having mixed feelings about her year long commitment to Malawi. Now that all of her preparations for the trip are done, she’s ready but still amazed that she’s really doing this. All of us are really impressed by her commitment.

Most team members chose Five Guys for burgers and fries before leaving the U.S. Martha chose the healthier route of a salad from Pot Belly Salads and Sandwiches.

Martha intervened Dennis as carry on bags were weighed at the South African counter. The rule was one bag per person. Martha convinced the agent that Dennis' second bag was filled with "team stuff". The agent let him keep both bags with him.

Kelly Ngwira called while we were waiting to board to wish us a great trip and to remind us to dance and act joyful when we meet the children for VBS. We will miss having him with us as our guide in Malawi, but we're confident we'll meet someone new who will become a new dear friend.

Martha led us in a mini worship at the Dullus airport. The scripture recounted the story of Jesus calling the fishermen to the disciples and how important it is sometimes to become the first follower. Lindsey shared two experiences she has had in being the "first" to stand up and dance at youth events and how it felt to be the first. Martha reminded us that we are the "tweleve" called to be disciples on this trip.

As the team traveled by subway train from one terminal to the next in DC, one group feared other passengers might take offense at their discussion. Lindsey was "shushing" Kenzie because she was talking about Asians, Blacks, Whites, Koreans, and Africans. The passengers on the train represented those groups Kenzie was saying. Hanna said "It's okay, she's just talking about my family...my rainbow family."

The flight from DC to Senegal to Johannesburg was uneventful. We ate, watched movies, played games, read, listened to music and repeated those activities over and over for 17 hours. Drew summed it up best, "It is a long flight."

We were met at the airport by two vans from the Airport Game Lodge, our lodging for the night. We were surprised that one van had Christian music playing. The lodge was a new place for us and it's a keeper. Although it was dark, we did see the animals in the property before leaving after breakfast - variety of deer and ostrich, dogs and guinea hens. We had heaters in our rooms and used them as well as the down comforters on the beds. Kaylin was thankful for the orange socks from the SA flight. The door to the lodge reception area has a sign on it that said, "Door closed due to cold weather."

Our tough leader's last words before leaving Iowa were, "I'm not taking a jacket. It's never cold in Malawi." Not only was it cold in South Africa, the cool temperatures followed us to Malawi. He humbly bought a jacket before leaving the Lodge. Now, he has a nice souvenir with the Lodge logo on it and their slogan, "Where the wild is mild and the game is tame." Len continued to bring us up the road as he counted heads from members before venturing from one location to another. Phil led us in devotions, reminding us to "Love others because God first loved us." Each person

then shared where they saw God as we traveled from home to our first stop in Africa in Johannesburg.

Robin White

7/16/12 Monday

A glorious day for the "Partnership of Hope."

All 12 disciples arrived for breakfast at the Airport lodge at 7 AM, with high anticipation and much anxiety of what awaits us.

Morning temperature was 34°, with a wind chill of 28. (And everyone thinks Africa is hot?) Dennis did not bring a jacket, but this gave him the opportunity to purchase one from the Airport Lodge. Len's jacket was in his carry on, which became a free checked bag in Dulles Airport. But, a blanket from his room provided the warmth required.

All of the group reported getting some sleep, but with frequent times of waking up. Kaylin reported getting the best sleep. Dennis reported that in the night with the wind blowing, it sounded like rain, but after getting outside, it was determined that the wind was blowing the leaves, which gave the sound of rain.

Breakfast was very good, with toast, sausage, bacon, egg omelets, boiled eggs, cereal, fruit and yogurt. Kenzie improvised as the butter packets were very cold and hard, but after being in hot chocolate for a while, became very easy to spread on her toast.

Prior to breakfast, Robin found her suitcase in Drew and Len's room and then requested to use their bathroom. Just outside of the rooms was a game reserve, of which spring bok and ostriches were seen.

Left the Airport Lodge on schedule (7 AM) and had a good trip to the airport. Proceeded through check-in with no problem, leaving 45 minutes to shop at the various stores in the airport. Flight from Johannesburg to Lilongwe was very uneventful, with lunch being served. Choice of beef or chicken entrée were available. After getting all of our luggage which was all there (to some people's surprise) we were given a very warm Malawi welcome, by Copeland, Christopher, Pastor Rose and others. Our trusty bus driver (Chifundo) loaded our baggage in the recently purchased larger bus that was able to accommodate all 12 of us as well as our baggage. Most of the baggage went into a small trailer which he had attached. Christopher accompanied us as we traveled to Blantyre. We arrived at the Kabula Lodge at 6:15 pm. After getting checked into our room, off to Daniel and Moty's home for dinner. Upon arrival, we were warmly greeted by Daniel, Moty, Hugo, and Arnold. After a brief welcome by Hugo, dinner was served. After dinner, introductions were done by all. The evening ended with a prayer. It was around

9:30 pm when we returned to the Kabula Lodge where devotions were given by Pam and a recap of the day by all.

Tired, but still filled with anxiety of what lay ahead as tomorrow we head to Wilson Village.

A glorious day for the Partnership of Hope.
Len Pallas

7/19/12 Tuesday

Wilson Village

Nsange District

“Where there’s a Well, There’s a Way!”

Weather: Chillier than expected in the morning, but breakfast on the Lodge patio was lovely – the omelet delicious.

We departed from the Lodge at 8:30 am, stopped for water and fuel, and then headed to UM headquarters where we toured the beautiful new nursery school. Starting in September, there will be 80 children.

At the UM headquarters we were joined for our journey to Wilson Village by Conference Superintendent Daniel Mhone, his wife Moty, and the following: Hugo (office administrator), Christopher (our guide), Drepa, Francis and Andy.

The drive to Wilson Village was very scenic and included a stop at Kamuzu View, overlooking the Shire River valley. Our descent down the curvy road was exciting! After crossing the Shire by the Kamuzu Bridge (Kamuzu was the 1st president of Malawi), we entered sugar can plantation country.

At one point we came to a detour off the paved road due to road repairs. The dirt entry back to the highway was so steep that our trusty driver, Chifundo, said, “I’m not sure I can make it up the hill.” Luckily we did. Little did we know on Tuesday that this was just the beginning of our “off road” experience.

We arrived at Wilson Village at approximately 12:45, where we were greeted by woman and children running along side the bus, singing and clapping. “Asungos,” they cried (“white people”) with great joy.

All of us were very moved by this greeting. We were welcomed as we left the bus by circuit pastor, Hester Nbuzi. Wilson Village is one of five churches on his circuit.

We were then led to a shady area for the “program” led by Pastor Mhone and the Wilson Village pastor. Approximately 80-100 adults and children were present. The children were kept in good order by a woman, perhaps their teacher, with a bamboo cane (a very effective tool!).

The program was lengthy and included much signing. The women of Wilson Village do a distinctive dance in 2's or 4's which involves quick rhythmic movements and clapping, and appears almost like competition. Our Malawian hosts said this was a dance native to that region, reflecting "the old ways".

Our program was amplified with a small portable system from Dennis' brother-in-law and included:

- Welcome, thanks fro the borehole and prayer by the pastor.
- A message by Rev. Mhone on Jesus as the living water.
- Singing by the youth choir
- A drama by two village women showing how the past lack of clean water led to conflict
- A youth drama/dance showing the unhealthy living conditions caused by unclean water led to problems for the youth
- Speeches by the lay leaders and three Chiefs (including Chief Wilson)
- Introductions by the team and presentation of gifts

We then processed to the borehole for dedication. This borehole, funded by our congregation, is 39 meters deep (132 feet). The village sang as we traveled. The plaque, naming our church's Partnership of Hope and quoting John 4 (Jesus as the living water) was attached to the borehole. I (Martha) was given the pastoral honor of speaking words of dedication and pumping the waters until they overflowed the bucket. Rev. Mhone then led a group prayer.

We then returned to their small brick church where the children lined up to receive heart stickers from the team, some multiple times. Kenzie was so swarmed by the kids that she surrendered her pack of stickers.

We were fed a meal of rice, tomato sauce and chicken by the church. We viewed their unclean well, which has heavy logs covering the opening to the well.

Before leaving the village, Drew and other youth "released" a few Frisbees to the kids. Joyful chaos followed.

Our ride back to Blantyre was very quick and included much teasing about eating "mice on a stick," a common practice for poor Malawian children. Our comments – "Tastes just like chicken." Watch for signs for KFM (Kentucky Fried Mice).

Back in Blantyre, we did not have mice for dinner, but instead enjoyed great pizza and gelato. We closed our day with devotions and celebration of the many "God-sightings" of the day.

Martha Ward

7/18/12 Wednesday

Woke up this morning and then fell back asleep for 15 minutes, then got up. Breakfast was the same as yesterday, so I only ate toast. Then returned to my room to pack up all my things and get ready to leave the Kiboko Lodge.

Before we got on the bus Allie and Kenzie were talking about the value of Kwacha to a dollar. Kenzie thought maybe it was 1/62 and Allie thought 1/700. The actual rate was 1/277. Then we got on the bus and Allie was looking through the children picture Bible and came across the story of the man with floating ax and the frog.

I sat next to Christopher and we had a great talk about hobbies, education, driving, and much more.

We then picked up the pastor, his wife and 3-month-old baby boy from Blantyre. We then headed out into the first village to see the nursery school. We were greeted with warm welcome of song and dance by mainly women and children. We then watched them sing some more songs and after the chiefs and pastor spoke a couple words. Next each of us stood up and introduced ourselves. During that time children of the nursery school ages 1-5 years stood up and recited things like alphabet, days of week, and months of the year. Also some children stood up and introduced themselves.

Soon after the teacher Monica came over and introduced herself. She had one daughter that was two and half years old. She showed so much joy and happiness that made me think I would feel so much better if I had that much joy all the time. Also made me think how much better this world would be if we all even showed half as much joy as everyone in that village. Monica and I exchanged numbers and she shared her dream of coming to America. I let her know that if she had a chance to let me know so I could show her my daily life and introduce her to my family.

Next the people of the village presented us with gifts. They made us hats and brooms. Then we presented our gifts to them. We presented them with some Frisbees and I felt so over joyed teaching them how to play and seeing how happy they were to play a new game.

Then it was time for us to leave and I really didn't want to. I was not able to say good-bye to Monica. However I hope that was left open so I see her and her daughter again. She really touched my heart and inspired me more to get into education. She had been so successful with her students.

We then visited the second village and were welcomed in song and dance. Then the pastor, chief and lay leader spoke. Next we gave our introductions. Not as many people were there to greet us because they thought we would arrive later in the day and they were all in their homes. The teacher said she taught around 100 students. They had no building for either church nor school so we met under a tree much like they do.

They then expressed their joy and excitement by giving us a gift of a chicken. The chicken was a live one and accepted by Dennis on behalf of all of us.

They then sang and danced as we made our way back to the bus. I was a little freaked out by the live chicken on the bus with us.

However we then approached the third village and kids came running towards the bus. We got a little stuck at some point because we were not on roads, but with our amazing bus driver we always made it out well in the end. We then followed children up to the village. Also on way I was sure the bus would tip on its side. Kids greeted us in song, guiding our bus to the village. Once we got off the bus I greeted many people all with smiles on their faces.

As we entered the church they built next to what seemed to be an older church that fell down. All that was left standing was one wall that the door was front of church. When we sat down the pastor, lay leader, and chief introduced themselves and expressed their concerns and needs for food and clean water. After that the choir sang two songs for us. Their music and dancing was beautiful.

Next we were presented with gifts. We received multiple hats that were hand made and said 2012. Also we were presented with a bowl of soybeans and a bag of tomatoes. Hand made brooms and a mat were also given to us. Chickens were the final gift. We were given two. One accepted by Len and other by Drew. Those chickens were a huge gift and sacrifice from them to us. Even if we all kinda giggled and not sure what to make of it. It was their best chickens and biggest ones for us. As they give up what food they had even though they had a hunger crisis themselves. Again we returned to the bus as they sang and danced. They even chased after our bus as we left the village. We then headed back to our next hotel, the Hippo View Lodge. After dropping off the pastor and his wife and child, we had about a half hour to settle in and get ready for dinner. The view is very beautiful. One of the hippos chose to come up on the grass and roamed around. Allie made a comment, "Where's the mother hippo to protect her baby?" I then replied "right behind you." And she jumped thinking I was serious.

Then we made our way to the restaurant at the hotel. The service was very, very slow but I ate plain rice and tried some chicken fried rice.

We then finished up with where we saw God today and Allie's devotion.

Kaylin Lloyd

7/19/12 Thursday

Early in the morning we awoke at the Hippo View Lodge in Balaka. Most of us woke up to cold showers on a chilly morning. After finishing our omelets we went down to the dock and met Dixon and James. Dixon was in charge of the Boat Safari and he and Chifundo sent us on our way up the river. James guided our pontoon boat skillfully up the river, showing us several families of hippos. We even came across several herds of elephants, some waterboks, monkeys, and fish eagles. On our way back we passed a fish market, but we did not want to upset the locals so we didn't take any pictures of them while we passed by. We concluded the boat safari slightly over two hours after it began.

Before we left Balaka on our way to Lilongwe, we met up again with the pastor who led us the day before when we visited Muima, Ngagale, and Namondwe. Two of the three chickens that we received as welcoming gifts were regifted to the pastor for him to take home. From there we drove to Dedza to visit the Dedza Pottery place. All of us shopped around and viewed the various show rooms. Most of us came away with an item or two, but it appears that Pam and Martha have a weakness for pottery, as they both came away with armloads and boxes of their new purchases. From Dedza we continued on to Lilongwe.

When we arrived in Lilongwe, we settled in to the Kiboku Lodge. After a quick briefing we ventured down to the market where we all earned some valuable experience. We discussed later on the day of negotiating and bartering. As it turns out, we each experienced the market in widely different ways. Some loved it, some never want to go back, but we all had several stories to share and a much lighter pocket afterward. Martha appears to be the new negotiating master. She proved to her teacher, Len, that she was quite formidable on her own.

We went to dinner after the market, bartering seemed to work up our appetite. Chifundo drove us to Mama Mia's for some Malawian/Italian food. There were several engaging conversations, ranging from the fundamentals of macroeconomics, to the new Malawian president, to free enterprise.

We concluded our night with devotions by Martha. Her challenging question for the evening was "What would it take to make this world a peaceful place?" There were many profound and thoughtful answers, and it was great to learn what each person thinks about what it would take.

And on a last note to our day, we found out that Len had been using a secret weapon for a bargaining tool. His words were something along the lines of, "Oh no, I gotta go, I have a date. I have to go to my date." This is apparently convinced a vendor or two to lower their prices.

Drew Sherman

7/20/12 Friday

Today we woke up and ate breakfast. Most of us had the continental breakfast but some of us got pancakes. After we got done eating breakfast, Kenzie, Pam and I went to go see if her key chains that we ordered the night before were there. Much to my surprise, they were there. After we got back from the market Kenzie, Drew, Dennis and I went to the grocery store. There we got water and snacks. On our way back, a man told us that we needed to get to a safe place because there were demonstrations across the streets. So we walked quickly back to the bus. When we got back, the bus was loaded up so we got in and headed out to go to Lake Malawi.

After several hours, we arrived at Sunrise Beach. There we played soccer on the beach. We also played Frisbee and walked on the beach. After doing all of that fun stuff we ate. The food was set up in a buffet style. We all got lots of good food. Martha decided to get oxen liver and Lindsey decided she wanted to try some of it...She took a bite, gave us a funny look and said, "It tastes like...dog food!"

After lunch, we all walked over to the restroom before we left and we noticed that there was a shooting in Aroura, Colorado in a Batman movie and 14 people were killed. We were all shocked! After that we all got back in the bus and headed down the road for several more hours of driving on bumpy roads! We went over some very scary bridges and very bumpy roads!

Several hours later, we got to the lodge that we were staying. Copland and Robert were there to greet us. After we got all of our bags out and finished our greeting, we ate dinner. It was very good except for the grilled bananas. Then after we ate, we had journal, devotions and where we saw God. After that it was time to go to bed so we all went back to our rooms and did whatever we do when we go back to our rooms. After that, we went to sleep. We all had a great day!

Hanna Hinze

7/21/12 Saturday

This entry actually starts on Friday when Phil and Allie were able to Facetime with her mom. It was so great to see a face from home.

In the morning we awoke to a challenge operating the showers. Martha notified Robert who quickly remedied the situation. Once he had done so, Robert notified all the rooms – or attempted to. Hanna and Kenzie refused to answer the call. At the main house we received one of the best and certainly the most timely breakfasts of the trip so far.

We had group pictures for the ladies in the group. They were all wearing the skirts that had been presented to us at the airport. The women of the tailoring school seemed excited to see their work on display.

Copland's wife Jane opened the graduation ceremony and served as the emcee. Daniel followed with a devotion on the topic of Impact. Daniel told the story of Tabitha, who was a great woman in the early church who did many things for the poor. When she died she was greatly mourned. People wished that she could be brought back to life so she could continue her work.

The graduates presented us with a few songs before Alice, the tailoring class captain and program coordinator, introduced her fellow graduates. The graduation ceremonies paused briefly to allow Copland's daughter Elvin to sing Phil a birthday song.

Copeland spoke of his vision for the tailoring school and for the empowerment of women. He shared a story of farmers in Germany who struggled to get profits until they banded together to share equipment. Copeland hoped that the women would band together in the same way and be successful. Copeland also invited the people to buy their clothes from the school instead of from town and informed us that we could place our order and he would have a container shipped every six months.

A government official spoke to the excellent work of the tailoring school and informed us that it is accredited by his organization called TEVET, which regulates the skilled trades in Malawi.

After the tailoring students presented a short drama, Robin gave an inspiring speech to the tailoring students and even managed to keep herself together for most of it. Robin presented the graduation certificates and gifts. We then had time to shop and socialize and the shop was nearly sold out. Moty gave the closing address and Daniel concluded the event with a prayer. Robin was interviewed.

We spent time taking pictures while we waited for the graduation banquet. Robert's staff provided an excellent banquet for us.

After a quick huddle we made our way to (several) markets to shop for the cooking demonstration, as well as a "shopping mall" where we purchased fabric.

At the end of the day, Len gave sandwich making lessons and presented a missing spoon that made its way back home after a year away.

After devotions and journal, we had birthday cake to celebrate Phil's birthday.

Phillip Sherman

7/22/12 Sunday

We started out our day with another wonderful breakfast of eggs, fries and toast. We then loaded up and made the short drive to the church.

Bible study started around 9:00 am with a few opening songs. We then read our verses which were in Matthew 6: 9-13. This was the Lord's Prayer. Copland asked several from our group to make general comments on the verses. He then wrote 4 discussion points on the chalkboard. We ended up discussing point #1 (Our Father) for 30 minutes. We were then told we would all need to come back next year to finish the other points.

Next, we had group introductions. We each stood up and Allie even spoke "My name is Allie" in Chichewa. This was met with laughs and clapping.

After our introductions, a group from Pennsylvania was introduced. There was about 10 people from that group who worked on a medical team, a VBS team, or a solar power team. They were even brave enough to sing a song in Chichewa and English for the whole church.

Then, the new tailoring school students were presented to the congregation. Dennis and Robin gave an inspirational impromptu speech.

The church worship service began at 11:10 am. Announcements were given. We then moved into offering time. We all discovered that offering are given much differently in Africa, as it is full of loud singing, dancing and great joy. After offering was complete, people were given time to give testimony. 3 were given, including Hastings (who was grateful for his wife's graduation), Copeland's brother (who praised God he was now a full member and would be pastoring the Bethal circuit) and a woman who was blessed with a healthy baby after 8 years of trying.

There was more singing from the praise team, followed by a translation. Martha was asked to provide us all with a message. She preached on Jesus calming a storm. Her sermon touched everyone, especially her story of feeling God with her during an attack at church. We ended the service with a long echo prayer. We were able to socialize outside and take pictures with the tailoring school students.

After worship, ½ of the group stayed at Copeland and Jane's home to sort food and gather gifts. The other ½ went back to the lodge to pick up cold food items. We then went to the market to finish shopping.

The tailoring school students presented Dennis and Robin with a heart basket . We presented them with gifts as well.

The cooking exchange then began. Our Malawi friends prepared Nsima, okra, small fish, chicken, yams, toasted bananas, fresh bananas, cabbage, futari (sweet potato with ground nuts) and bonongwe (vegetables). We prepared smores, hot dogs in

buns, scotcheroos, fruit salad, pound cake (crumble) grilled cheese, PBJ, PB bananas and lunch meat sandwiches, lemonade, sweet potatoes and pancakes.

We all worked together to get things made. Even the men were eager to help in any way possible. There was so much joy, laughter and love around. Dennis later described the event as a “family reunion on steroids”.

As the even closed, we circled up to present a few special gifts. Dennis and Robin were able to present their sons Jonathon and Noel with laptops, clothes and school supplies. Everyone was given a bookmark with the Wesley Covenant Prayer.

We went back to the lodge for a quick unpacking and rest stop. We were then off to eat. On our way, we discovered Kenzie’s ability to speak fluent Pig Latin. We discussed the languages “spoken” on the trip and decided on 7. Only 1 (English) was actually understood!

We ate at an Indian/Malawian/pizza restaurant called A1. We enjoyed the company of Copeland’s entire family. After our meal, we were all able to read a comic Martha deemed “unfit for pastoral viewing” thanks to Christopher. Seeing faces of those reading it was hilarious.

After dinner, we dropped Copeland’s family off and met in the common room for a meeting/devotions. Lindsey gave a wonderful devotion on being the light and highlighted the differences between this trip and a traditional mission trip. Basically, she said everything was different. We shared our “God sightings”, which included many things.

Our night ended with a mystery. While we found most of our individual laundry items beautifully washed and returned to the correct room, Pam announced that she was missing 3 parts of underwear. No one had these missing pairs and were forced to wait for morning to see if they would be found.

God blessed us all with overwhelming feelings of love and family today. We were sad we would be leaving the next day.

Allie Sherman

7/23/12 Monday

Copeland joined us on another clear morning, accompanied by his associate and another friend. A short night’s rest and the shower quit. A quick call to the office had it flowing and hot. We had our final breakfast at Liwonde Lodge and said good-byes to Robert and his staff. We packed clothing that the team wanted to leave. We also cleared the mystery of the missing items of clothing – the key is to read the directions posted in our room. Left 9:15-9:30.

After loading the bus and trailer we stopped at the tailoring school. Even though the new class just started in June, the students had already completed their notebooks and several projects on display on the wall. The students were singing at the cutting table on the front porch of the school. The 2 rooms of the school have no electricity (no lights), so all use treadle machines. The students sit close together at the machines. A camera does not capture neither the conditions nor the hope and excitement present in the school. The only patterns are those posted on the wall.

We have a list of needed items. There are plans to expand the school. Alice helped Lione with the instructions now that Alice has graduated from Africa University (economics).

Friends and relatives were helping wash all the dishes from the night before. Leaving Copeland's home and the tailoring school, we passed Jane's primary school. The group agreed to practice our songs for bible school during the bus ride. However, most people slept! We dropped off Copeland and his friends. There was a strike at Mzuzu University – a sit-in by the teachers for higher pay.

At one police check point, they noticed the expired sticker on the bus. Chifundo promised to pay in Blantyre.

The road to Mchinji slowly changed from mountains to more open ground; from mostly cattle to goats and cattle. Many homes in the north were built of wood, and we met more trucks loaded with wood from Tanzania. Residents are still cutting trees from the countryside. There is a replanting program. The army was performing drills at the edge of the road.

Along the highway are steep, rock banks with hand and foot holds. Our bus even struggled to climb the hills of the Viphia Plateau. Passed "Elephant Rock" a stone mountain.

Phil and Allie had a chance to tell Drew "I told you so" because he had not brought a neck pillow.

We passed the original lumber mill for the area.

There was one sign for a sharp curve – "dead slow". Vendors were selling charcoal, potatoes, round bags of something.

Per Chifundo, bus fare from Mzuzu to Mchinji is 3500 – 4000 MK.

We passed through a market area, called Jenda Trading Area, in which some homes are in both Malawi and Zambia – E.G., the living room may be in Malawi and bedroom in Zambia. The area is also the border between the northern and central districts.

We encountered branches across our lane of the highway. Half a mile further was a large truck stalled on a curve in our lane.

The vendors pay daily for their space – whether it's inside or outside. At the roadside market, the vendors either sleep with their goods or pack them all up.

The goats may roam freely, but groups of children watch the small cattle herds.

At our first gas stop (1 pm), Hanna won the beauty contest! Allie provided the TP for the group.

Vendors were selling quarry stone the further south we went. It's used for foundations for the buildings. They are also selling sugar cane. We made a quick Chifundo stop for two donkeys on the road.

A quarter mile of new trees were protected by woven baskets – probably Bhrugum (rubber) trees. Also, two guys were riding in the trunk of a silver Toyota – with a bike!

We arrived at Kwindu Lodge at 2:55 pm. The lodge is a collection of cute chalets, some single, some bi-attached. We had to rearrange sleeping assignments – moving beds to double up, etc. Len kicked Drew out – into Phil and Allie's room. Light bulbs are dim; we must turn on the hot water tank a half hour before we shower. No laundry facilities. "Clara" is at our service, and "Nancy" is in the kitchen. The roofs are all thatched. All over Malawi you have to switch on the electrical outlets.

We met in the restaurant for devotions and journal time while waiting for dinner. Theme was: generosity is giving more than you can; pride is taking less than what you need. A discussion of generosity followed. We then sat around the table and discussed plans for Bible school.

Those of us ordering rice received our meals first. Len observed that some people in Malawi don't even have food on the table-like the five who ordered chips with their chicken. Christopher offered prayers for the meal and to close our meeting time.

We adjourned to Phil and Allie's room for prep work-cutting yarn, punching plates, placing prizes in bags, and the four teams role playing the Bible story.

After we returned to our rooms, we discovered no one had received towels yet. Christopher asked Clara once, who said "No, not tonight. They are still wet." He asked again and received three wet towels, one per room, so Martha hung ours up to dry by morning.

Pam Heilskov

7/24/12 Tuesday
Farm Visit / Bible school

Today we all woke up and gathered for breakfast 7. When we were done eating we loaded the bus and headed for Peoples supermarket to buy sandwich items for lunch. We parked the bus at the store and Dennis and Christopher walked to the bank to exchange more money.

While they did that, the rest of us walked to the market to buy bananas for Bible school. The guy's face who was running the banana stand was so hilarious and excited when we told him that we would like 200 bananas. We bought them and headed back to the van, only to find a shoe store being set up right where we were parked. Apparently, they wanted us to see everything they had.

We left the store around 8:45 and as we were driving, we were all rearranging things in the van so we could fit 11 more people! We needed to pick up the pastor of the farm and 10 others.

We arrived at the farm at 9:30 and we did our introduction and found out that Chifundo and Christopher are from Iowa! Then all the kids were split into four groups and we started Bible school. We had planned for only 25 kids in a group but ended up with more than 40 per group!

In our separate groups, we all taught the kids about the fishers of men story and to follow Jesus. We did jump ropes and Frisbees with the children and also had them decorate a plate necklace with crayons and stickers. After that we handed out bananas for snack and we thought we had plenty left over, but actually we ran out! Kids just kept coming from everywhere, even after we had started!

We ended with each group doing follow the leader back into one group so we could sing some songs. We sang "Jesus loves you" in Chichewa, then we had the kids put their handprints on a long piece of paper. Some of the kids were a little scared because they had no idea what they were putting their hands in. We had the ending prayer and ending talk by Martha and the pastor of the farm.

Our group sat and talked with Lester and ate sandwiches at 12:30. Then Lester took us on a little tour of the farm. We saw the borehole, brickmaking, potato and maize fields, and we all tried their strawberries and cassava root. After that we took a tour of Lester's house and we got to see the room that Pam will be staying in for the next year. I noticed that Rose, Lester's wife, had an Iowa flag hanging in her living room. That was pretty cool.

When we all said goodbye we loaded the van back up and headed out at 4:00. Everybody including the same 11 people. We dropped them back off where we picked them up, then got back to our lodge around 4:50 and had dinner at 5.

After dinner we had devotions and where we saw God. Then we all went to bed and around 9:00 the power went out. Us four girls had glow sticks so we went outside and took pictures of us waving them around. That was very cool.

Today was a lot of fun and I'm glad we get to go back to the farm tomorrow!!

Kenzie Doran