

# Malawi Journal

## June 26 – July 9, 2016

June 28, 2016

The team was at the Des Moines airport at 9:30-9:45. Check in went very smoothly, as well as going through security. The flight to Atlanta was very uneventful. Our checked baggage we will not see until Johannesburg.

Lots of time at the airport, which was spent fixing lunch, getting better acquainted with each other as well as a lot of walking the terminal.

Then we had the “short” flight from Atlanta to JNB. Just 1 meal was served along with a snack due to a strike of the food workers in JNB.

Upon arrival at JNB, customs and picking up the luggage went smooth.

Going to meet our van at the bus terminal, going through the airport was an experience, as we encountered folks wanting to come for our baggage.

The van was waiting, and all was well. The rooms at Europrime looked good, but just lacking heat. After a short time, the team left for dinner, a short walk of a block, to where there was pizza. After a light dinner of pizza, back to Europrime, where all rooms had heat except Pastor Scott and Bess. They then moved to a deluxe suite with heat.

Praise the Lord for a great 2 days.

Len Pallas

Captain's log- Malawi date: 27-6-16      Scott Hibben

Boy was it great to get a good night's sleep after a hot shower! Breakfast was a feast, along with the girls' net ball team from East Cape. Something like basketball, but not really. Off to the airport, without a hitch, soon we are in the air with a good hot lunch (Chicken)! Arrived at Lilongwe and we stand in lines in immigration for an extended time – but get through with no problems. Then its find our luggage. Whoever designed the airport and the system of support/operation could have used some help. Traffic flows, support systems, luggage carousel “in a corner”, the organization of people all was less than “operational” – but still no problems – we got through. Then we go out to the lobby to meet our new Malawi friends- David, Copeland and church friends, Noel. They greet us, wheel all the luggage to the waiting van and trailer. There's a science to loading everything up, there's room for all. Now it's into Lilongwe.

A bunch of crazy drivers – driving on the **WRONG SIDE** of the road. People walking all over – selling items on the side of the road – congregating- who knows what.

Somewhere I read that Malawi has one of the youngest populations anywhere. Median age is 16.7, and what we see bears that out. Noel and I visited about this and the potential problems that this will pose for Malawi – a large population of (un) under educated young people, with few good jobs and no sense of a positive hope-filled future – leads to unrest and turbulence thus explaining much of the current in our world today. Malawi seems to be the heart of this.

We got to our hotel- passing large group of people at road side/ make shift markets handing out their wares for people to see and buy. Food, clothing, thin-bear tires – you name it. Once in the hotel we go to the Shop Rite grocery store to get our supplies. Other than name brands, it's really like the stores in the US. The one exception – the woman who puts down the plastic wrapped meat on the checkout counter – smearing blood all over it. Evidently, the meat was butchered just that day and not refrigerated. The checkout clerk has a rag with her. Evidently this is a common occurrence, because she just wiped over the blood with the rag, ready for our grocery items.

In the evening we head out to Bethel UMC, traveling the last 20-30 minutes on a washboard road through residential areas. Little shops/stands line the road, with people gathering around as it gets dark. We arrive at the church- in the dark, but as we make our way into the mud-brick and plaster building we are greeted with spirited and inspiring African singing. For a half hour or so its singing and clapping – then introduction by Pastor Chao – then we introduce ourselves too.

Pastor follows with a full sermon – done as Noel interprets. Finally food is brought in – pot after pot after pot after pot, placed on the stage, all prepared by Pastor Chao’s wife. Just the sheer amount of food and its required preparations are overwhelming, and of course as their guests – we go first. I’m not certain what all I was eating, but it was filling and good. After supper, we go around visiting. Some know English – some do not – not that stops us from “visiting”. After a while I go outside and “visit” with some men who are outside. One man who cannot speak English “communicated” with me about the bore hole well out back – and we each pump the well as we wash each other’s hands – pumping the well for each other in almost a sacramental way. A holy moment. Then it’s back inside for more visiting. Finally it’s time to leave (after 10).

The streets are much quieter now. Thank goodness Chiffundo is driving. A full day, ready for a hot shower and rest.

28 June 2016

Kay Oliver

It's a beautiful, sunny day. After a lovely breakfast, we load up and drive to our next hotel a short distance away. On the way, we observe red bricks stacked up & baking in the sun. They will be used to build houses, churches and other buildings. We also notice piles of discarded broken bricks. Porous bricks are not very strong. The red brick reflects the red soil from which they came.

We are on our way to Chamanazo to dedicate a recently dug borehole. As our van approaches, the villagers dance and serenade us with lively spiritual music. They are smiling faces that greet us – at least the adults. The children are staring and seem a bit reserved if not scared.

We are seated like royalty in an open air enclosure. The small children are seated on the ground in front of us....a lot of children! We are struck by their quietness and perfectly how behaved they are.

The speeches and greetings by many dignitaries begin. Chieftains, assistant chieftains, pastors etc. They are heavy in their praise and thankfulness. We are eager to give God the Glory. Following the introductions and speeches, we moved to the borehole which had been sectioned off by white cloth ropes. Len cuts all the fabric to great cheers. Then he must pump the handle and make the water flow. He does this with grace and a slow hand. Eventually, one of the elderly female chieftains stops up and shows him how it is done....and boy, can she pump! Gifts of t-shirts, bibles, cross necklaces are given to leaders. All are very grateful. Water in this and nearby villages means they can actually build churches for their congregants. This water is truly "living water" in so many ways. Access to clean water relatively close is an answer to prayer. They hope to thrive not just live.

Several customs that were interesting:

Pastors frequently say, "Hallelujah!" the people answer "Amen". Often we heard God is good! All the time! Their frequent outward expressions are always joyous.

We spend much time interacting with the adults – hugs are freely shared. We teach the children high fives and fist bumps. They are smiling now and not so afraid of us. Mint lifesavers have helped break the ice. We are sad to hear from the adults that children will miss their noon meal, so they were glad for the lifesavers. We just can't meet every need – but we would like

to...As we pile into the van we are once again being serenaded. With sticky hands and full hearts we leave our friends in this sunbaked village behind....feeling amazed.

We make a stop at Lilongwe Wildlife Center. Here we get a guided tour and nice walking time after a brief snacking on apples, bananas and cookies.

At the hotel we have time to rinse off red dust once water flow was re-established....There's that water thing again. Loving water ...

After wonderful devotions, sharing and journal reading we leave for Debonair Pizza place (where did that name come from?)

All afternoon Noelle has been most helpful explaining the village system, land ownership, Chieftains, etc. A Chieftain missed our appearance today because she was doing her part in a funeral. The Chieftains select the burial site and leads the funeral procession until it is time for the pastor to take over. Noelle shared interesting information and answered so many questions for us. He and our driver Chifundo are taking very good care of us.

What a blessing to day has been! And this evening my heart and mind are back in Chimanago with my friends. I pray they are sleeping/ resting well.

6/29/16

Kelby Halfpop

Today we woke up at the lodge with no electricity. I didn't mind because I wasn't going to do anything except brush my teeth anyway. We had breakfast of eggs & cereal and then we headed out to the refugee camp. The drive there took us closer to the mountains which was neat. When we arrived we followed in a medical vehicle. Kids were running next to our van waving and smiling. The Methodist church within the camp was a brick structure with windows and doors that swung open to let the sunshine in as well as a flow of people that heard the singing and joined us in worship. Little kids poked their faces in as well to see "the visitors". There was a lovely service that even included microphones. I was surprised. The choir sang and danced. We prayed and afterwards we were able to share hugs and words with the people. The kids were so excited to see the soccer balls we brought them, they flooded to the van. I talked to one woman who had fled from The Congo and has been at the camp for 3 years. She looked about my age. I could not imagine being in her shoes. Once we left the team and the pastor (who was very nice and smiley) went to one national monument to use the restroom- learn some history and have a nice picnic with PB&J sandwiches/ chips/ cookies and fruit. Our tour guide Edward was very good. Next it was back to St Johns to share another time of worship- this time we sat among them – it was cool and I felt more comfortable. At the end of the service we were so excited to receive their gift of chicken- but we didn't know what to do with it. (It frightened us a little actually). They also showed us the borehole and the future plans the pastor has for his church. Upon leaving we also gave out new friend, Chaney a ride home. She said she would run and go make nsima for dinner for her kids. She is a great woman. This evening the team headed for dinner at a local food court. It was good and we even got ice cream! We ended the night with devotions and reflecting on our day. God is good and I am tired.

Thursday, June 30, 2016

Bess Hibben

It was another beautiful, sunny day. We all had breakfast together in the Lodge dining room. Chifundo, our driver, once again had our van clean and ready for us to board at 8AM. We drive north out of Lilongwe and headed towards Mizuzu. Our first stop was Madisi where we drove directly to the "farm". We met Joseph, the caretaker of the farm. After introducing ourselves, Joseph explained the concept of permaculture farming and explained the many practices utilized to preserve the land and utilize all God has given us. We saw many interesting and unfamiliar vegetables and fruits. These included "air potatoes" and Amarantha, Maye, Pole beans, Guava and papaya. We learned how the seeds of the Amarantha could be used. We saw rabbits and learned that their waste was a valuable fertilizer. Joseph explained how the composting toilet was designed and how our waste was also valuable for maintaining soil. The "drainage" canals around the house and garden beds all led to a reservoir for storage of water after the rainy season ends each year. As we were preparing to leave, Joseph's wife came out of the house with fresh roasted peanuts which were awesome! Joseph's family includes his wife, Cretia and their daughters Hopeness and Happiness.

Len presented gifts to Joseph and Cretia and Pastor Francis who had joined us also. Our time together was once again closed with prayer and thanking God for our many blessings.

We then travelled farther north on the main highway which was filled with many people walking and children running, chasing goats and cattle. The traffic was heavy with trucks carrying people in back sitting on piles of sacks filled with various products. Soon we came to a large crowded intersection which we learned was near the home of former President of Malawi, Hastings Kamuzu Banda. We pulled in to a "petro" station to fill up the van and take a potty break. We all had a "soft drink" (Coke products) while we visited with everyone to utilize the restroom.

As we continued north toward Mizuzu on M1, the terrain gradually became much more hilly and green. After a long drive we finally reached Mizuzu a little after 4pm. Robert was at the front door of Living Lodge, to greet us with the Malawian welcome we've come to know. Afterwards we were assigned our rooms and by 6pm we drove to the Mizuzu church parsonage where Pastor Copeland and his wife Jane live. An abundant meal was

served. Much, much preparation went into the preparation of this meal. We were joined by a room full of people including Copeland's family, members of the church and students from the nearby tailoring school. The food was delicious and enjoyed by all. Before leaving for the lodge, we sang songs, prayed and visited with our new friends in Christ.

Back at the lodge, Kay led us in devotions based on genesis 1, the story of creation. She then asked us to be thinking about the time in our lives that we recognized God as creator of all things. She shared a story of Isabella, a lady she "roomed" with on a recent trip to China. As a young child being raised in a Hindu family, Isabella was an unlikely person to convert to Christianity. But one day, a missionary dropped off a Bible at her home and she was intrigued by the fold edged pages and leather binding. She began reading and came to chapter 12 where the Abraham story starts. This was the beginning of her journey to Christ as her Lord and Savior. Several from our group shared their faith stories as well. We recognized the many ways God provided to bring us to faith.

Kelby read the daily journal. Len gave a report on financial support provided through the Malawi Partnership of Hope. Further discussion took place regarding future planning on how best to be in partnership with the UMC in Malawi.

We ended the evening with many thoughts and anticipation of tomorrow.

Friday, July 1, 2016

Julie Halfpop

After another great breakfast and organization of gifts and supplies for the day, we were in the van at 9:22am for another fun-filled day.

Our first stop was to pick up Copeland and then we headed to Kabanda nursery school where 30 one of a kind kids greeted us with the familiar song. We marveled at how smart they were. One little tyke told us about the Bible another shared all of her important body parts and another counted intently. Pastor Angie encouraged them to let their lights shine and we joined her in song. Crosses were placed on the children while we prayed for them (after we figured how to untangle them). Pastor William introduced the leaders of this preaching point and gifts were presented. His wife Celeia is the teacher. We left clothes and the hats that were sent. Then we were off with pastor and wife on board to a second nursery school at Divengu which had 15 beautiful, smiling children singing their hearts out. Introductions and gifts were shared.

From here we quickly trotted to share in the dedication of a borehole at Mzokotz UMC, in the village of Chimalebatheb. Chiefs Loren & Edward and their wives were so welcoming. They even shared a peek at their homes. The village crowd was small, but lively. We heard often, "you are my friend." We left a suitcase of clothes here. Chief's wife, Flora fell to her knees in appreciation and put that suitcase on her head to share with the village.

Then we were off to see Lake Malawi. Oh, what beautiful scenery. The mountains and valleys were many shades of green sprinkled with flowering trees and the many villages. The textures and colors were splendid. We enjoyed our first nature's calling bathroom stop and had a quick lunch. Here we encountered a conflicting situation in that we had several children swarm our picnic with expectant eyes. The van was quiet for a short while after. I think we all experienced emotions that could only be addressed through prayers.

Soon we came upon the "orphanage" as Len so fondly referred. In a blink we had 12-15 monkeys clamoring out of the trees for bananas. Some were carrying babies. They could peel those bananas in a snap. As we approached the lake, the picturesque views were breathtaking.

We shopped for ½ hour at the curio market where we met Fantastic Bob and Happy. Chiffundo managed to get us a close up peek at the Lake. We even got to get our toes wet.

We caught some zzz's as we traveled several hours back to Mzuzu.

Supper was enjoyed at the lodge. Several of us had Chombo per Noel's recommendation. It was delicious despite it was looking at us.

After supper we readied for the tailoring school graduation, some of us packaging gifts others organizing the church. I think we all hit the sheets in a heap.

Saturday, July 2, 2016

Cary Halfpop

Kelby's devotion focused us on how we are the same rather than different. Bess read the journal for June 30.

Breakfast welcomed a new day and more sunshine. Our morning meal again fell into compliance with "Robert's Rules of Breakfast as Ordered." His staff sure does a great job for us in all ways. I sure do eat a lot here.

Our morning agenda moved us on to Copeland's church for the graduation ceremony of the Hope Tailoring School. Eleven women were graduating. Prior to the ceremony, Copeland provided a short tour for the team of the old church and the old tailoring school. The room where the school originated could not have been bigger than 10' x 16', and it was now being used as living quarters for a guest of Copeland's, a nice young man who happened to be wearing an Iowa Hawkeye hoodie.

To say the least, the new church and tailoring school buildings are major upgrades. We also got to look around the grounds to see several chickens running around and a huge tomato garden. The grounds and facilities are all quite nice.

Master of Ceremonies for the event was Vitu. As the graduates entered the church, it was not pomp and circumstance we heard, it was the young ladies singing a song that seems to me to be thanksgiving, praise and worship. They sang another song which seemed like a thank you for allowing them the opportunity to be in the tailoring school program. I'm not certain if this is what the songs were about, but they all seemed grateful.

A group of young men, the Kabanda Boys, provided some very entertaining song and dance, including drums, which were enjoyed by all. We then took a break to look over the tailoring school and make some purchases of their clothing.

The grads reentered the church following intermission wearing new outfits that were just beautiful. I've seen a lot of Project Runway over the last few years, but nothing to match this show. The quality and craftsmanship of their material and clothing items appeared to be impeccable. The Hibbens purchased some stuffed animals for grandkids that were very cute also.

The grads next performed a skit for us which showed how happy they are that their families allowed them the time to attend the school. I thought some of them may have been through acting, dancing or choreography training prior to the tailoring school as they were quite proficient.

One of the young ladies delivered a speech on behalf of her classmates. They followed this by presenting the Ankeny team with some nicely wrapped gifts. What a nice surprise that was.

Angie shared some nice words about how we all learn to use our gifts from God. God is still creating and teaching us how to make a better world.

The Kabanda Boys performed another fun number and then Len offered some words of encouragement to the grads.

The Guest of Honor, Anita, gave a very nice speech in which she stated, "God gives hope to those who are already hopeful, not just those with no hope." "God is not in the business of harming people." See Jer 29:11. God has also used the tailoring graduates to give hope to other people around them. She asked all the remember to commit all your plans to God.

Gift bags and certificates were presented to the graduates by Team Ankeny.

Copeland Nkhata offered a few comments, names the top 2 students of the class and presented sewing machines to the top 6 students. Many photo opps followed the ceremony and then we all walked back to Luwinga

Lodge. We shared a wonderful dinner provided by Robert's staff and they did a great job making sure we were all well fed. I sure do eat a lot here.

We were entertained by some tribal dancers of the Ngoni Tribe. At least a portion of the dance was known as an Ingona dance. At dusk, we were off to get some groceries and have dinner. Boy, we sure do eat a lot here!

The grocery store was not open for our major purchases, but we were able to get Copeland's communion wine nearby.

We had sinner at the A1 Restaurant. An intoxicated local had a few words with Scott but calmer minds prevailed.

Bess shared a devotion on feet. Romans 10:14; how beautiful are the feet of someone who brings good news. We have all seen lots of beautiful feet in Malawi.

A good night's sleep was once again in order.

Sunday, July 3, 2016

For today's journal, we are each sharing something special we witnessed on this day or so far in the trip.

One thing that I remembered from Saturday was during our tour of Mzuzu UMC prior to the graduation, we saw the old tailoring school and the old church. They have been repurposed. Perhaps God has repurposed some of us during our lives. Cary Halfpop

After worship, Scott called Bess & I over where he was visiting with one of the parishioners from Mzuzu UMC. She had recently been to the doctor and had the summary of her visit which indicated that she had blood pressure problems, a likely infection, loss of appetite and mouth sores from what we could decipher. She had learned that we were a nurse & nutritionist from introductions at the service. We asked questions and tried to offer insight through a translator. Scott led us in prayer as we laid hands on her. Julie Halfpop

My highlight has been spending time with the girls that worked at the lodge- Eunice, Naomi and Joyce; as well as my new friend Gertrude. I am very close in age with them and I've enjoyed getting to know them better. I added them on Facebook so we can keep in touch. Kelby Halfpop

I was encouraged by the explanation and the faith Witness had as she tried to explain that she was not fine and that she trusts God for a miracle. She tried to get the message across but even though Bess and Kay did not understand the language, the Holy Spirit could tell them that she was sick and she needed help. Though I intervened to interpret but much ground was already covered. Their prayer by Pastor Scott encouraged us all and I believe in my heart that God will touch Witness and heal her.

Noel Kumweuda

Spending time with Kay, Angie, Julie, Eunice, Naomi and Joyce to prepare the meal for our friends was such a blessing. The girls were so helpful with the charcoal fire. What a great job that fire did for cooking those chickens. We had fun sharing and exchanging cooking ideas. We all found ways to work as a team without any "committee meetings" ahead of time. By God's grace we had a nutritious and delicious meal to serve to our friends. God blessed us with enough leftovers for the girls to enjoy later the next day. We were all humbled when we realized the girls were eating the meat and skin off the chicken bones that we were going to throw away! Once again we see how much we take for granted. After the meal we had a beautiful time of sharing and singing hymns. Bess Hibben

Sunday was a day of seeding and growing relationships – from Bible study to worship - to "offerings" - to meeting with Kephus and then cooking an awesome meal for our Mzuzu church leaders and friends. (Thanks to our Ankeny woman for being our chefs and making a great meal- enjoyed by all) This was our opportunity to meet new folks and go deeper in getting to know one another, sharing words that continue and expand the Partnership of Hope. It was truly enjoyed by all. Scott Hibben

In Malawi, people are often called upon to pray, lead a chorus or give a testimony. At home, people would be very uncomfortable with that. During Sunday worship, Rev. Copeland asked me to lead a song. They'll Know we are Christians by Our Love – at home with accompaniment would not

have been nearly so nerve-wracking. Fortunately, everyone joined in and made it to the end. Later in the service, Rev. Copeland said, Pastor Angie will preach and serve communion. I knew about the preaching, but not communion. I thought we were all doing it together. (All = Copeland, Scott & me). They had a pitcher of water for me to wash my hands. There was a bowl of cut up pieces of bread and the silver tray of communion cups. Since there were no hymnals with responses, I did an informal version and everyone came up a row at a time and knelt on the hard tile floor to receive the communion meal. To me, it was like World Communion Sunday- all of God's children together at the table – the way it is meant to be.

Angie Loomis

A wonderful worship service. The afternoon was spent shopping for food, 150,000 Kwacha! A highlight for me was preparing the chicken/veggies/ rice soup. No broth to purchase so it was 2 chickens in a large pot of water, onions, carrots and celery to make the broth. The stove is slow but very hot. Eunice knew I was worried. After a bit she arrived in the kitchen with a charcoal burner. It is red hot and exactly what we needed. Back to my primitive camping days. As a group we chopped veggies, cut up fruit and made sandwiches and cookies. The kitchen workers observed out every move and were helpful. They were thrilled with the food and spices we gave them. I was caught quit off guard when I handed Eunice the pan of chicken bones, fat and skin left after picking the meat off. A moment later the 3 of them were salting it and gobbling the fat and skin. I would have gagged and they make porridge with the rest. I loved the look of pure joy on their faces when we told them they are our guests and went thru the buffet 1<sup>st</sup>. A very blessed day! Kay Oliver

Monday, July 4: 2016

Today, we are remembering the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations going on at home and feeling a little homesick. We said our good-byes to Robert, Copeland, Elvine and Gertrude. We loaded up our vehicle and started out for the farm. We stopped at our usual potty stop in Kasanga and got out the snacks to up our strength.

When we arrived at the Michingi farm, we went to the church to do introductions to the people who had gathered to greet us. Lester was our emcee. We met the new pastor, Victor, who is serving his first charge out of seminary. He is very bright and capable and the circuit is lucky to have him. After introductions, we went to the home of a widow whose husband

died in January leaving her with 3 children to raise. We had a kind of memorial service, I was asked to give a message. I felt like I was back in Dale Carnegies class on impromptu speaking. But with the prayers and support of everyone, the family could see that people cared. Then we went to Edward & Etins' home as Edward's son, Jeremiah, died of cancer. So we repeated the process inside their home offering words of hope and encouragement and comfort. Afterwards, they served us fried donuts, roasted nuts and pop. They were very gracious hosts in spite of their grief. Then we went back to see the new piggery. They had a ribbon cutting service. Edward gave a nice speech including a poem about Iowa that included corn, soybeans and hogs. I got to cut the ribbon and we got a tour. The building is a nice brick building with 10 pens and a storage room for feed. All the pigs had names. They were obviously very proud and they should be. They have done a lot in just a year. We also saw where the UMW keeps their pigs and was the only structure they had last year and the new operation is quit and upgrade.

We said our good byes until tomorrow and drove to Michingi to Grace Lodge. We gather in the restaurant for reading the journal and having out devotions and sharing our God sightings. We enjoyed our meal together and went back to our rooms. Kelby and Kay helped me get bags ready for tomorrow. Cary, Julie and Noel went to check about internet. Len worked on getting the hiccups cleared up on no lights, no heat, no hot water. Things are getting resolved and besides we are on an adventure and God is with us!

Angie Loomis

Tuesday, July 5, 2016

The morning began at Grace Lodge in Michinji with breakfast, then off to Mikundi Church/ preschool where we were greeted immediately by the children, teachers and others with song and dance.

We had picked up Pastor Victor and some other adults who were to lead us through the day. With their assistance the teachers at the preschool led the children through several songs (and dancing) and their letters/numbers. One of the introduction songs sounded a lot like "Shake your Booty" thought it may have been "Shake your Body" but I like "Shake your Booty" better and so that's what I'm going to report here that they sang.

The children so loved to have their pictures taken and see themselves. (True at every site we have been to.) After their singing we share a few songs, then Chifundo "helps out" with "This Little Light of Mine", in English and Chichewa. Pastor Victor led the children in the presentations, and we

offer gifts to Pastor Victor and the 3 leaders and cook. They also share dreams for the expansion of the preschool, including a safer cooking area with running water.

After visiting the preschool, we went a short distance to the Sopha School, a government secondary school for area youth. This day they were working their Form 1 & 3 exams. We toured the campus led by the Head Master, Jonathan. Afterwards we met with all the youth/students giving them an opportunity to answer questions. The conversation primarily focused on the importance of education – setting priorities– and planning the course of one’s life – not letting fallen behavior (pregnancy, drugs, alcohol lack of focus on ones studies) to lead them off course in their lives. Pastor Victor, Noel and Kelby shared moving personal witnesses that spoke to this, as well as the young adults Pastor Victor invited to come with him.

We then returned to the farm where Rose and the other women prepared us “the best meal I’ve had in several days!” Bon Appetite!

After lunch, we headed out on a “not walkable” distance to Chakapana, a new preaching point on Pastor Victor’s circuit. Well over a hundred children and adults greeted us as we drove up to their thatched hut church. After greeting one another, we all moved into the church, with a tidal wave of children rolling in upon us as everyone was seated. Still there was not enough room so people peered in through the door and windows.

Pastor Victor then led us in a worship service that included singing and dancing by all, and then the “women’s choir”, followed by the “men’s choir”. We sang too or at least we tried.

I was fortunate enough to be able to lead the service with the message – talking about “our family resemblances” – sharing together as “Christ bearers” – that we all are called to be in Christ – “Christ bearers” like Mary (Luke 1), who have been crucified/been made new in Christ (Galatians 2:20).

Gifts were shared and lay/chief representative offered “speeches”. At the conclusion of the service, Pastor Victor had the congregation for a “high five” greeting line for all the Ankeny folks to pass through.

Kay took a picture with the “somber” chief’s representative – who when he saw his picture smiled as broadly as the children when they see their picture too.

Returning back to Grace Lodge we shared in supper and devotions – reflecting on a full and most fulfilling day with our friends here in Malawi (and the giant spider on the wall that each night came out for supper, too.)

Scott Hibben

Wednesday, July 6, 2016

Breakfast as usual. Enough said. Scott, Angie, Len and Lester go to implement place to look at a used tractor.

As we leave for the farm we pick up Sugar, chicken, beef, tomatoes and cabbage – but must get to 3 stores and 3 roadside businesses – another adventure.

On the way we see tree branches and leaves partially blocking the road. We learn from Noel Chiffunda and Pastor Victor whom we've picked up, that this signals a funeral nearby and we should proceed slowly out of respect. A short while later we encounter another placement of leafy branches – this signifies the site and you should turn off the road to go to the funeral. A simple but effective communication to villagers. At the farm, we are greeted by Rose and Lester, many women and a lot of children. It is July 6<sup>th</sup>, their Independence Day. We sing Happy Birthday to Victor, 24 years old today.

Tour of the farm includes: 1700 banana trees, some of the sweet fruit that is sold at market. We get to see plots of sweet potatoes, corn, peppers, ground nuts and rice. Lester explains how each is irrigated. Len tried the pepper and finds it to be hot like a scotch bonnet. We visit the water tanks and several climb up on the building. Elderly women are shelling ground nuts, workers are harvesting sweet potatoes and others are irrigating corn. Edward has built an amazing bee hive which is active. While visiting the Piggery, we find the hog Iowa is feeling better and is standing today. Yeah! A very special place is the tree and surrounding ground where the 1<sup>st</sup> services of United Methodist Church of Makundi were held. It really feels like sacred grounds. Lester wants a sign to designate the spot.

For lunch the women, under the direction of Rose and Edness serve us another delicious meal much like our own 4<sup>th</sup> of July – fried chicken, coleslaw, rice, noodles with tomato sauce, bananas and watermelon.

Later I shared with Rose we were excited about eating there because we knew it would be so good! She laughed heartily and told Edness.

While Pastor Scott and Angie and Carrie have a meeting with Lester and Edward – Julie, Kelby and Bess play games with the children. Although

challenging, Duck, Duck, Goose and Simon Says were interesting and fun. The parachute was very popular as well.

I was sitting in the van with the door open waiting, so I invited Rose to join me. Rose invited the women to the farm as a special treat for the holiday. She said they are thrilled to have rice as December is only time to celebrate with it. They enjoy doing the cooking and cleanup together as it's social time for them. Also their children and they get to eat well.

I mention there are many women and children and ask where are the men?

Rose: Well 1 is a widow (the one we visited and Angie did the condolence service.) Most of the other men are polygamist and do not come to church, so they are with their other wives. One man recently took another wife and ran off with her leaving the others alone. I asked about lack of support for the wives. She said some men go to the drink and do not help the wife or support her. Most women have to support themselves, I can knit, some help, harvest to make a little money, piece work.

All the women we saw live on a nearby farm so they could come.

Rose said many of the workers come in the morning hungry so she feeds the workers nsima before they go to work.

There is much for me to ponder.

And back to Grace Classic Motel, we arrive tired, dusty and dirty. No electricity and no water. Another day in paradise – we are blessed.

Thursday, July 7, 2016

We awoke earlier than usual at Grace Lodge in order to get the bags loaded and get on the road towards Lilongwe. Some of us opted for peanut butter vs the eggs and chips.

We unloaded the bags at Bridgeview (which really did seem like the Taj Mahal, as Len warned us during our first stay). It was a quick stop and we darted off to celebrate the borehole at Madaliso UMC in Lobzeni Village.

We picked up Pastor Rose, the Lay Leader, Owen so they could ride with us. It was a bit of a haul with many bumps and much dust. Rose said she generally takes a shorter route on a motor bike to get there.

Again we were greeted with much enthusiasm as we entered the village. A children's choir in simultaneous motion shared several beautiful numbers.

We quickly proceeded to the borehole where Len offered words on behalf of AFUMC and Pastor Scott prayed. They showed us the old well where a child recently died after falling in. Several other townspeople had died from Colera and diarrhea.

We visited the preschool and heard several students share the months of the year and then we settled at the future site of the UM Church under a large tree for further festivities. The preschool teacher, Lay Leaders and a Chief addressed our group noting sincere gratitude. They also told us of the serious short supply of food due to the drought and of their need for preschool supplies, Bibles and hymnals.

Pastor Rose offered a message and many gathered. There are almost 75 members. Several folks were away for a funeral.

We then presented gifts and spent a few minutes mingling. There are 17 Malawi boreholes now that we have supported. The group piled back into the van again to Lilongwe.

Scott, Angie and Len met with Daniel when we got back and the rest of us squeezed in a bit of shopping. Many shops were closed due to the Muslim holiday.

At 5:00pm our team convened with Daniel, Lindewa (Financial Director of the UM Conference) and Chiconde – Miss Sampson – the office manager. (Noel might have to correct them on that!), Copeland, KDO, Lester, Edward and Vitu. A fine meal was enjoyed by all. Each of us shared our highlights and recommendations. \*\*

We all retired after devotions which were led by Scott regarding what we will be learning in Malawi and what we will be taking back. Kay shared the journal.

Julie Halfpop

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Daniel offered the following vision regarding “the ministry”

- It remains relevant
- A shared platform of prayer is established and maintained within the partnership
- Malawi is established as an Annual Conference by 2020.

July 8, 2016

After spending the night at the Bridgeview Hotel in Lilongwe, we joined in a delicious breakfast at 6:30. Pastor Copeland joined us and we had another discussion on Matthew 6, the Lord’s Prayer. At 8 am some of us left for a trip to the fabric store accompanied by Chifundo and Noel. Turns out it was an open market back behind the building in a long, narrow, dark alley. The alley was filled with small stalls filled with piles of beautiful fabric. All the fabric was sold in 2m, 4m, or 6 m lengths and was priced at 1500-2000 K per 2m. We also took a few minutes to stop by the market so I could buy a

nativity and “tri table”. Noel was so kind to accompany me for the negotiations process.

Once back at the hotel, we once again had our suitcases loaded by Chifundo after dispensing our “funds” in different suitcases to assure less than 50 pounds! We pulled out on time by 10:15 and drove to the Lilongwe airport. At the airport we said our emotional farewells to Chifundo, Noel and Edward who had accompanied us. It felt like I was leaving a big chunk of my heart with these new friends in Christ

We check our bags without any issues and made it through security without any incidents. Len always made sure we all made it.

Our flight for Johannesburg was uneventful and included lunch.

After landing in Johannesburg we made our way to gates A 7-8 to settle in for the 3-4 hour wait. Some of us walked just to keep moving in preparation for the long flight home. Several checked out the “Out of Africa” stores for one last time. The Halfpops diligently searched for a plug for Kelby’s computer to no avail. So they ended up being able to charge up at the electronics store thanks to the generous offer from the store manager.

Our final flight was delayed by 40 minutes which was actually no “big deal”.

By 8:40 pm we boarded and headed for the USA. We did take a final picture of our group before departing. We had once again been approached by several who noticed our T-shirts and asked about The Partnership of Hope.

Our trip from Johannesburg to Atlanta was exceptionally easy and we touched down at 12:09pm Malawi time – 6:09 USA EST!

Alleluia, Amen. God is good; all the time God is good. Praise God!

Bess Hibben