



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM MALAWI

DECEMBER 2018

Dear Friends,

Greetings from a very hot, humid and wet Malawi. Rainy season is well and truly upon us and it is so good to see people out in their fields planting and also seeing some of the early shoots coming through. We are praying that this will be a good season of rain as too much causes flooding which damages the crops and not enough means they die. So there is a balance needed to produce good crops for the next season.

This has been a year of transition as I've settled into my new role back with the Elim Pentecostal Church of Malawi. In March the new General Superintendent of Malawi, Pastor Peterson Saezi was inaugurated. His desire was to visit all ten regions before Christmas and this has been achieved. Many miles have been covered on good roads and not so good roads! The furthest we travelled was an eight hour journey to Kasungu in the central region where many pastors travelled the same distance on public transport from the north. At this conference we stayed an extra three days to carry out leadership training with the pastors. Due to the close proximity to Mozambique, Elim Malawi planted churches along the border and come under their leadership. So it was a real joy and excitement to receive many of our friends from Mozambique for some of the conferences. In one region, the only feasible mode of transport was by train and there is only one train a week. They turned up on the Wednesday beforehand and had to wait until the following Wednesday for the next train to return.

In Chikwawa region it was a great joy to witness many people get baptised in the canal on the Ilovo Sugar Plantation. The river was not an option as there are too many crocodiles!



As well as travelling to different churches to preach on weekends, on a weekly basis I travel with Bertha, who is much more than my interpreter but a very capable young woman and a very valuable co-worker, to two of the main centre churches in the Chikwawa region and Mulanje region. Ministry here involves a bible study in the morning, followed by visiting some of the elderly folk who the church seeks to help, and a kids' club in the afternoon.

With many in the bible study groups not being able to read or not owning a bible, one of the key elements is to try to help them memorise scripture. A helpful incentive to this initiative is to reward the first person to remember the verse with a small prize, such as a bar of soap. One week, the prize was a kilo of beans and I learned later that the winner of the prize that day had prayed for food earlier that morning as they had no relish for that day. They were so encouraged that this small prize fed the family for the next two days.

Visiting the elderly folk (or Agogo's as they are called) in their homes has been informative and interesting as we've listened to their stories. The one Agogo pictured below is estimated to be 103 years of age! She didn't know how old she was but told us she was born the same year as John Chilembwe died. Thanks to Google, I discovered he died in 1915. She lives alone and the neighbours help her to fetch water and various other jobs. We visited another Agogo a few days after very heavy winds which had caused the roof on her tiny house to collapse, making the house inhabitable, resulting in her having to sleep in the house of a neighbour. When I reported this to my sending church,

Tamworth Elim, they immediately responded and raised enough money to be able to build her a new house. She was overwhelmed and we say a huge thank you to all those that made it possible for Amayi Agnes to have a new home. Although work has started and progressed well, it is yet unfinished due to the recent prolonged heavy rains making it impossible to complete the work.



Kids Club is a fun time of games, singing, drama, bible story, learning Bible verses. Each week between 60-80 children arrive at each centre and take part enthusiastically in all the activities.

Elim Malawi has seven children's homes spread over Malawi caring for a total of 45 children. This year we were nominated to be one of the many countries to partake in The Elim Global Christmas Appeal to host parties for children. It was agreed that rather than throw one big party somewhere that the money would be used to host a Christmas party in each of our children's homes. So many more miles have been covered to visit each home and I have just arrived home after the last two parties this weekend. It is impossible to visit a village without attracting the company of many children. So the children from the homes were accompanied in the afternoons with their local friends to play a variety of games before supper when we enjoyed a special meal together of chicken, rice, vegetables and a fanta, followed by games and giving of gifts just for our children. Each home received a football, a bao game, a lamp, as well as other smaller personal hygiene gifts. The response was delightful to see as they spontaneously got up to sing and dance. Each party closed with a response in prayer and thanksgiving for all that God had done for them. I want to say a huge 'Thank You' to everyone who contributed to the appeal to make this Christmas such a memorable one for these young people. They have been encouraged knowing that someone is thinking about them and cares enough to do something like this for them. They all say a great big THANK YOU!



I take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the greatest gift given to us. As always, I appreciate your love and support throughout yet another year.

With love,
Jackie x