

Hungering and Thirsting

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matt. 5:6)



Church leaders receiving bible training at Makata

In November, ‘Learn2Serve’ was launched in two particularly remote rural locations. Jonathan Groves, Director of The Kerusso Trust, reflects on what he found in the Makata area.

Our training destination was a simple church building with hand-moulded mud pews and dark arrow slit windows. To reach the church, it was a bumpy 10-mile drive along dirt tracks, crossing a dried-up sandy river bed along the way. Why here? Earlier in the year, two local pastors had travelled up to Blantyre to plead with J-Life to come to their forgotten patch. Such passion to learn!



The church in Makata

On arrival each morning, the team was welcomed by 60-70 church leaders from about 20 different denominations – including Pentecostals, Presbyterians, Adventists and a few Roman Catholics. Everyone was spiritually hungry, and craving Bible food.

Among them was a young pastor called Edson: daily he walked for three hours each way to attend, leaving home at first light and returning after dark. Then there was an older lay church elder, Dennis, who walked 2½ hours each way every day. He co-led a Prayer House (a church plant) of 200 members. And there was a young pastor’s wife, who perched a Bible on her lap, fed her 3-month old baby daughter with one hand, and made notes with the other.

Makata is a hilly area, where everyone survives by subsistence farming. In mid-November the panorama is one of bare, dusty maize fields, punctuated by clusters of tiny grass-roofed houses. Outside

temperatures soar to 30-35°C. November is the ‘hungry season’ when many people’s food stores run out. Following two ‘lean years’, devastating floods in 2015 and withering drought in 2016, the people are now praying and waiting. The success of this years’ rains from November to March is literally a matter of life or death.

The petition ***“Give us this day our daily bread”*** (Matthew 6:11) takes on a new urgency here. ***“Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied”*** (Luke 6:21). Whether Luke’s verse is taken to refer to spiritual or physical food, these people were clinging with faith and hope to these promises of God.

Dennis told me he now had only a few bags of maize remaining at home. And he was reserving these for his five grown-up children so they could continue feeding his grandchildren. He was visibly thin – yet Dennis still walked 7 miles each way, each day, to receive his Bible training.



Dennis

We may not have the physical hunger of Makata, but do we still have the spiritual hunger?

“He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he has sent empty away” (Luke 1:53)

Learn2Serve - Transforming lives, churches, and communities

Four years since the launch of the Kerusso Trust Learn2Serve training programme for rural church leaders, two pastors share powerful testimonies of God working in their lives and of the impact of the training on their church ministry.



Joseph's story

As an orphan child who felt alone and without hope in life, Joseph Kalilini first became interested in the things of God from a pastor at the orphanage he visited. A few years after his conversion at a youth camp meeting, he responded to God's call to go back to his home village and plant a church.

"I saw that there was a need," he says, "People were living careless lives and I wanted to share my salvation with my fellow community. So I ventured into ministry without having received any training previously. Just one month after planting the church, the opportunity arose to receive church leadership and discipleship training with The Kerusso Trust and J-Life Malawi. I said YES. This was my opportunity to learn how to teach people and share Jesus with my friends in the best way."

Joseph has now completed all four levels of Learn2Serve training and testifies to the tremendous changes it has brought to the church.

"At the moment we are moulding up to 80,000 bricks for the church building. What interests me is that the church members took a huge part. They are happy to work for the Lord, because they know that it is His work they are doing. And they are helping one another in many ways too.

We are concentrating on youth ministry. The youth ministry we started at the church now reaches into the community with a Sunday School for young people from any or no church background.

We are also learning how to handle marriage and family issues in the church. Couples who were struggling have been helped and the number of families in the church has increased compared to last year. We are praying together with people, trying to bring Christ into their situation.

We are so grateful for the training we have received. Thank you very much."



Mike (left) with Felix (right) during Learn2Serve training

Mike's story

The son of a witchdoctor, Mike Chawawa, turned to a life of crime as a teenager. At the age of 19 he was arrested and sent to prison for 3 years. During that time he experienced God's saving grace in a miraculous way.

"One day God spoke to me in an audible voice. It was a question, 'If you die today, where are you going?' The voice was so powerful but at the time I didn't know who was speaking. Somebody suggested I ask a follower of Jesus. He said it was Jesus and he led me to repent and accept Jesus as my personal Saviour and Lord. He also taught me the Scriptures and how to live the Christian life. When I came out of prison I continued to learn and to share my testimony of Jesus."

After prison, Mike accepted God's call to become a pastor, teaching others what he had learnt. Now 13 years on, he testifies to learning much from the Learn2Serve programme.

"In Level 4, we have learnt about the Lordship of Jesus Christ, about how to pray effectively, how to make disciples, how to build our relationship with God and how to build our families in the Word of God. And we have learnt about church administration.

And we've learnt how we can empower women and youth and how we can help others in the church. These things are so important. I thank God for the team of teachers, like Dr Jonathan, Pastor Ijalasi, Pastor Chikwana and Pastor Masala. To build us as pastors is something very amazing."

Mike and Felix from Mulanje, and Joseph from Luchenza have been selected to join the Entrust programme next year, where they will be trained and mentored to go and train other church leaders.

Tara brings hope to people with epilepsy



Tara speaking with rural church leaders

The Kerusso Trust is a Christian education charity with a main focus on Bible and ministry training for church leaders across Malawi.

Through our Volunteer Programme we also offer specialist community education in the villages around the J-Life site.

Tara Engelmann, an epilepsy fieldworker from Forres in Scotland visited Malawi in November to offer epilepsy awareness training and support. She is no stranger to Malawi, having first visited with us last year.

In rural Malawi, epilepsy is more common than in the UK, and many with epilepsy

are excluded from their families and communities. People fear epilepsy is contagious, or the result of witchcraft or evil spirits. Because of this, people may seek to hide their condition from those around them. Women in particular are unlikely to seek help. And children face discrimination in the education system; many simply do not attend school. Proper diagnosis and access to medication are major challenges.

Tara gave epilepsy awareness talks to a number of church and community groups through our local partner J-Life. This included around 200 church leaders at two 'Learn2Serve' workshops and the J-Life staff team themselves. Tara presented

her teaching within the context of God's love for the poor and the outcast.

At Khombwe village, Tara addressed Chiefs and community leaders gathered from many villages around. She also spoke to a packed room of 90 people who either had epilepsy or were caregivers. Tara visited some of them in their homes, offering support on management and treatment of epilepsy.

Malawi Epilepsy Association Director, Mr Action Amos, has asked Tara to return to provide in-depth training for local epilepsy volunteers.

Connex Ijalasi, J-Life Malawi Director, said

"Tara has been a great blessing to us and the ministry. With so little provision for those with disabilities in Malawi, it is fantastic that she can share her skills and experience with church and community. Her training makes a difference."



Community Children's Bible Clubs: six months on ...

Since the big launch of the Community Children's Bible Clubs last June, when over 1500 people attended, Clubs have started in the three villages of Khombwe, Namitalala and Chilingani, near the J-Life site.

Three clubs, with 300-500 children attending weekly, quickly divided into eight clubs. This was due to the large numbers of very young children and the distances some of them were needing to walk. The leaders, too, have divided into sub-teams and many are leading two clubs each week. A further group of leaders will be trained for when the clubs restart in April after the rains.

Donel Mchenga of the J-Life team has a tremendous gift with children, and is now heading up the Bible clubs. He



Community Children's Bible Club leaders

provides guidance and direction to the young leaders, and mentors and supports them in their challenging roles. An unexpected outcome from these clubs is that the leaders are discovering orphans and other desperately needy children that the local Community Based Officers were unaware of. Donel is seeking to link them to those in the local community who can provide support. Another benefit is that groups of

mothers hear the teaching from a distance, where they sit with younger children playing nearby.

Tara Engelmann, a volunteer from Scotland, visited three of the clubs this November. She taught the children about prayer, did memory verses with them and taught new games. She commented how the leaders worked well as a team, engaging the children in drama sketches, leading singing and organising team games. While Tara was there, an in-service training day was held at the Kerusso Resource Centre for the leaders. Tara taught epilepsy awareness, and Donel facilitated an opportunity to share and exchange learning.

"I was amazed at the commitment of the leaders and how attentive the children were," said Tara. "What a great ministry this is."

Ministry Visit to Malawi - with Rev Andy Hayes



Andy teaching church leaders in Luchenza

In September Rev Andy Hayes, Pastor of Bridge of Don Baptist Church in Aberdeen, accompanied Jonathan Groves, Director of The Kerusso Trust, on a visit to Malawi to take part in bible and ministry training.

Andy writes: "It was a great privilege to spend 3 weeks in Malawi with The Kerusso Trust and alongside J-Life, Kerusso partners. Together with Jonathan I was able to take part in ministry at the Children's Community Bible Clubs, visit needy child-headed families, preach in local churches, and teach as part of the Learn2Serve programme. It was a full schedule but I found it energizing rather than tiring! This, I am sure, was due to both the prayers of God's people and the thrill of working alongside wonderful Malawian Christian leaders who are motivated by a great passion and vision for their church."

Jonathan and Andy taught on two level 4

Learn2Serve workshops in Luchenza and Neno. Jonathan led a whole book study of Colossians, exploring the Lordship of Christ and the difference this makes in the life of the Christian. Andy taught a new course on preaching and the life and character of the preacher, emphasizing the importance of living out what you teach.

"Malawi is a country of such great need, people might ask why train pastors?" continues Andy. "As respected local community leaders, pastors are uniquely placed to influence their communities for good. I sought to help church leaders to use the Bible to speak into the deepest needs of the community – needs like injustice, abuse, violence, gender issues, poverty, grief and pain. Focusing training and resources on them benefits many more people in the long run."

Reflections

Since returning to the UK, Andy has reflected on the many things he learnt

himself from his first trip to Africa. "First I was blessed and humbled by the vibrancy, authenticity and uninhibited nature of the Malawians' worship. If people with so little can give thanks for so much, how should I be responding to God's grace and goodness? I was also struck by the simplicity of the Malawian church. Here we often complicate church ministry but keeping it simple gives the Malawian church a sense of freedom to respond to God and to needs.

It was a blessing to see the way Connex Ijalasi and J-Life Malawi are committed to building the next generation of leaders. This has inspired me to review my own investment of time, energy and prayer for growing leaders and ministries back in Aberdeen.

Finally I was inspired by the way Malawian Christians pray. Their energy and enthusiasm in prayer is something I want to hold onto and bring back to the UK church."



Jonathan Groves said,

"It was a blessing to have Andy share in ministry in Malawi. As well as his teaching, Andy was able to offer us valuable strategic insights for the future.

How you can help

Pray: We produce a monthly prayer diary by email, post and on Facebook. Let us know if you'd like to receive this.

Do: Offer your time and skills to help with an aspect of the work in the UK, or maybe hold a fundraising event. Contact us if you'd like to know more.

Go: Consider joining a team going to Malawi to provide training to the community programme or church leaders.

Give: You can give to the work of The

Kerusso Trust by cheque, bank transfer or online through:



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