

Eric & Mercy Mango

MALAWI CHRONICLES

NOVEMBER 2018

We are grateful to the Lord as we celebrate a decade of marriage. It has been a journey of friendship and love. We have enjoyed many blessings. Our three children are a delight and our desire is to see them grow in the fear of the Lord.

Back Home! Praise the Lord for a successful renewal of our children's passports last August in Zambia. It was a great blessing to see family and spend time with friends. During our stay, Tom Sanchez was a great help in taking care of Grace when she wasn't feeling well. He also took care of our tummies by preparing a wonderful meal the night before our return to Malawi. It made us want to stay longer. On our way back, a journey that would take a day and a half ended up being a 6-day trip due to frequent breakdowns with our car. ***We are grateful to all those who have given toward the purchase of a new vehicle.***

We continue working among the Yao (99% Muslims) to see lives transformed and the light of Christ shining in this darkest part of Malawi.

Open doors amidst opposition! In the process of building relationships, we have encountered life-threatening situations. An accusation was brought to the traditional authority (TA) in one of the villages we are reaching that we are forcing

people into Christianity and an announcement was passed in the mosques that everyone should resist and oppose what we are doing. Like Paul and Silas before the Sanhedrin, Eric and another Christian friend were summoned and interrogated. After three difficult meetings with over 50 chiefs and Muslim leaders in each, the Lord softened the TA's heart. She called for Eric and at this meeting she opened the door for us to operate in her community. She gave eight hectares of land asking if we would consider starting a school and train people on making compost (organic manure). The nearest secondary school is at about 25 kilometres making it difficult for children to go to school. Discouraged by the distance, parents who cannot afford a bicycle prefer sending their children in the fields to chase monkeys away from the crops instead of going to school.

A secondary school in this area and the use of "Farming God's Way" methods would not only meet the greatest needs of this community but also provide Christian witness in this purely Muslim community. ***Please pray for God's guidance in this.***

With this open door of training people in organic manure, we are equipping Pastor Nyadani through the "Foundations for Farming" training so we could

together reach the Yao Muslims in Ipani. He is very passionate about Muslim evangelism. During their recent training, a staunch Muslim believer and advisor to a senior chief, Bakili gave his life to the Lord. ***Pray for him for strength and boldness as he begins his journey in a Muslim community as a born-again Christian.*** Opposition and rejection await him.

Transformation through Music and Sports! Lives are being transformed through music and sports. Eric and Chris continue to work with the youth in Ntaja. This team has over 40 members. Through this ministry new doors to share the gospel of God's grace and provide council to the youth in the community continue to open. Most of these young people have complicated backgrounds such as early marriages, broken families, abusive parents, early pregnancies, sexual and drug abuse, and others have faced rejection by their parent. Spending time listening to this group narrate their stories can be very emotional. In July Chikondi, a young man who had studied Islam for six years and was about to be installed as a sheikh gave his life to the Lord during a Bible study session before the music class. ***Please pray for his safety!*** In the mid-month of October, Eric conducted a seminar on worship exposing the team to



One of the frequent breakdowns with our car



Our family—Eric, Mercy, Shalom, Grace, Eric, Jr.



Nyadani in black shirt and Bakili in green trousers making compost



Youth music class



Vera's sewing shop



The Grace Women's Conference at Ntaja

different forms in which they can use their talents in worship. The group sure has lots of skill and potential. They brought it all on display and it was beautiful!

I can't make it! Simba (lion) rolled and the children helplessly cried. One night after the other we heard the cries of young children shouting, "I can't make it, I can't make it" and each time, the sound of the horn and drums grew louder and louder. For a month, children between the ages of 9–12 gathered in different camps for the initiation ceremony "Chinamwali," a time when children are prepared for adult community life. These sessions include good teachings on hygiene, hard work, and respect for elders in the community. However, it's a crying shame that brutal and demonic practices are also done, leaving the participants traumatized. A camp of about 40 girls or boys is planted in the bushes. A medicine man comes with a knife and circumcises all the boys in the camp. Within five minutes he can circumcise 40 boys without any form of anesthesia and then the knife is carried to the next village. Traditional medicine is rubbed on the fresh wound and the boys are not allowed to bath. Their parents are back home until the camping time comes to an end. Before the end of camp, arrangements are made for both boys and girls to have sex. The myth is that if they don't do so their wounds will not heal and they will have a life of misfortune. These practices have a higher risk of spreading HIV/AIDS. The youth who attended these camps at the age of nine confided in us and unveiled the dark secrets of these seclusion camps. They explained how much they were beaten for not following instructions and how others died in the process due to uncontrolled bleeding.

Pray for the healing of these precious souls from the trauma and traditional oppression.

A little goes a long way. We look forward to graduating another group of women who have completed the sewing class training. We have really been encouraged by the way the training has made an impact in the lives of those we graduated last year. The machines they received gave each a great start and some have worked so hard to buy more to do the sewing business effectively. Some are doing this business from their homes and others carry their machines to the market places, so they can easily reach their customers. Vera, one of the ladies who has benefitted from the training shared that she can save over \$100 a month from her sewing business. With this, she can help her husband with education costs for their children and meet other daily expenses. We continue to trust the Lord for greater things. ***Pray for the provision of funds for us to give this year's graduating team a start.***

Toward self-sustainability. We are grateful for another successful completion of Self Help Group (SHG) training for Annie that took place early this month. We are encouraged by how these trainings are helping her in her personal life and ministry. Annie has become more committed to the work of women's ministry in the Grace Churches in Malawi and her confidence is building up. She also worked so hard in traveling to different churches in preparing for this year's women's conference. She is currently heading a group of 16 women in her SHG and will begin meeting with a second group next month. Undergoing these trainings will help her learn the means of being self-

sustainable and teach other women in the church and community the importance of self-sustainability. Other lessons in these trainings include small business trainings and Discovery Bible Study methods. To help her effectively reach the members of the group, she received a bicycle from the SHG team. ***Pray for Annie as she builds on her facilitation and capacity building skills.***

Welcome to Ntaja! We give all the praise to the Lord for a great turn out at this year's women's conference held in Ntaja, Malawi, October 26 – 28. A total of 44 women represented 11 different Grace churches around Malawi under the theme, "A woman of noble character" from Proverbs 31. Mercy and Annie worked together in organizing the conference. Sue Vinton, Emmanuela Asong, and Sylvia Nyakambiri, Alice and Maggie (Annie's mentors from the Self-Help Group) taught during the main session and in workshops. The women who all attended were happy to have come and remain grateful for the transforming teachings they received. They very much look forward to many more annual conferences. We are encouraged by the commitment displayed in each woman raising more than \$15 for their transport expenses. This is something they can use to feed their families for more than a month. As a team of missionaries, we covered the food expenses. ***Pray for the challenge of transport the women zone leaders are facing.*** Visiting the churches in the zones helps Annie to know what is going on in different churches and then to effectively report to the National Council. ***Pray for Annie as she begins to mentor someone who will take over her role and pray for the provision of bikes for the leaders.***