



MALAWI

Mission Update

February 18, 2021



Hello Friends and Family!

I pray this update finds you all safe and sound.

We waited for the holidays to come to an end before we sent our pastor friend, Mr. Navincha, to the church in Thekerani, Thyolo. We trust him and, as the village is his home, we know he will not mislead the people. He stayed there for one month doing basic Bible teaching, baptism follow up, and general strengthening work for that church plant, including organizing and equipping some leadership, arranging for a very basic building of what will most likely be wood and plastic, and encouraging youth.

The church was meeting under a mango tree, but when rainy season started, they were forced to meet in a very small room. Rainy season is over half over, so the church will be preparing to build this simple building out of wood and plastic as the roof.

The leadership training went very well. There is one man, Mr. Kagolo, who has been willing to take responsibility and teach as best as he can since we began in October.

He was simply reading passages of Scripture as sermons, so as not to teach the Word incorrectly. He spent almost every moment with Mr. Navincha receiving counseling and guidance to build his preaching abilities. Mr. Navincha would have Mr. Kagolo preach often while he was there so that he could see where to best correct and help him.

Since schools have closed for now, due to Covid growing rapidly here in Malawi, Chisomo was home while Mr. Navincha was there. We praise God

that this youth has a tender and passionate heart. He also took the opportunity to learn from Mr. Navincha and even encouraged the church through preaching. Mr. Navincha said he did very well.

The church is also interested in starting their own choir! There is one family in the church that loves to serve through music. This family is heading up and doing their best to organize a strong choir.

Many women are also organizing themselves as a church group. The leader of women will most likely be Chisomo's mother. They are interested in having a church uniform, this is common in African churches. These women will be responsible for direct teaching and guidance of the younger girls in the church. They will be arranging seminars or conferences with girls, making sure the girls value not only Biblical teachings, but education and chastity, also, since marriages as early as the age of 14 in such rural villages is common. As a ministry, we know that we must address this issue, also.

Everyday Mr. Navincha received more families interested in joining the church. The church now has about 30 faithful attendees; there was about 9. While he was there and preaching the real truth of the Word, the church grew rapidly. This has also encouraged us to be traveling there more often. It is a two hour and thirty-minute drive from our home. The villagers were shocked and happy to hear preachings and teachings they had never heard before. There is a Catholic Church in that village, but the main church the people are converting from is a church in which the pastors practice polygamy and even smokes and sells marijuana. Even Chisomo and his mother came from this church. Chisomo shared with us once that he saw the pastor smoking even while the church was in session during song time. We praise God that the freedom of His Truth is taking a firm ground in Thekerani!

Even the village witch doctor and his family has converted and begun coming to church. He was very sick and Mr. Navincha went to pray for him in the name of Jesus, and the witch doctor was healed. From that point, he saw the Light. His house is no longer a place of darkness!!!! Some prayer meetings have even been held in this new establishment of Light. How "lit" is your dwelling place?! Do you properly prioritize truth and righteousness? It is a challenge, but an important one! Darkness can creep in quietly and stealthily.

January 12 was an exciting day for Limbani and me. It is easy to desire to do more and more for the Lord, with the Lord, to see yourself going places far and new, but I was recently encouraging Limbani that ministry must always start at home. I was wondering about the soul status of our guard, Mr. Muchi. Mr. Muchi is retired from a government forestry project. But despite being a bit older, he is strong and very faithful. He always wears a smile and is honest. We appreciate him a lot. On this January 12, Limbani took an opportunity to speak with him about God and salvation. Though they were speaking in Chichewa, I was pretty sure I knew that this was the conversation that was happening. I excused myself and went to pray. I heard Limbani start to pray and was so glad that it all seemed to be going well! As soon as Limbani said, "Amen", the sky, which had been quietly raining, opened a grand and rolling thunder. I knew the heavens were rejoicing that a soul had been added to the Kingdom! Limbani continues to take opportunities to encourage Mr. Muchi in the Lord. Pray for his continued growth!

The ministry in Bvumbwe is going on well. We considered taking a pause due to Covid, but decided to take precautions and press on.

The fellowship has been welcoming many new adults. Not all have become faithful attendees, but we have a couple! It is exciting. We love to hear their testimonies of the work of God in their lives and the encouragement they receive from the teachings.

As a fellowship ministry, Limbani agreed with some members to take a day trip to a nearby mountain for prayer and encouragement. In my condition, I could not join them, but they enjoyed it a lot!!! The prayer was rich and many came down the mountain with testimonies of encouragement and joy, as some of the youth had not experienced a prayer that first takes sacrifice. Climbing the mountain was not easy. When we go out of our way to encounter Christ, He will not disappoint us, but He will surely meet us and minister to us there!

The youth group is going on well. We have about 20 youth that meet us faithfully, rain or shine. In the beginning of January we chose some faithful members to take some responsibility roles within the youth program, whether they handle attendance or arrange songs, they are excited to be actively part of the serving. We pray for ways to keep encouraging them and getting them to be more and more active.

The Daily Bible Reading program has been going on for about two months now. I am constantly encouraged by the number of youth who have been faithful in it. They have even been giving testimonies that now they have been exposed to Truth and are encouraged because they know how to read the Bible now. They have even asked me to be checking what they write each week to make sure they are understanding and making plans to apply the Scriptures properly. This zeal is what will bring great change in their lives!

Meet our Youth!!!!

We want you to meet Mack Enock. He is one of our faithful and active youths. He is always timely and excited. He enjoys sharing the Word and even leading songs. We like to find out where our youth come from and about their home life. So, one day Limbani asked Mack who he stays with. He said he stays with his brother. The brother is about 12 or 13. I am not sure how he lost his parents, but they are both deceased. He is now the parent of his brother. At age 19, he is in grade 10 and has a lot to juggle in life. His house collapsed in some heavy rain and he managed to build a small mud hut to be living in with his brother. We were touched that he has this life, but never expressed it or searched for sympathy. His brother went to the mountain with Limbani and told Limbani that Mack can go and pray on the mountain for even three days sometimes, seeking God for help and guidance. Wow! Do I always simply seek God first? His faith is evident. He is humble and kind and always well-mannered. We can even often find him in the youth room early, sweeping. On Valentines Day, we felt led to give him some groceries and clothes.... we had only ever seen him wearing one pair of pants. You could see tears pressing his eyes even before he knew what the bags held. We always tell the youth we are family. The bond of Christ is deeper than any physical relation.

Meet Grivin Chimwaza. Grivin has not missed a single youth group since we started. He seems shy and quiet, but he actually has very good English and a big heart!!! Grivin is crippled.... his arms are a little short and he has two fingers and a thumb on each hand. He never complains about this, or lets it stop him from doing anything! He enjoys living a vibrant life. Grivin is an Arts Coordinator for our youth group. He arranged a wonderful drama about encouraging and loving words for our Valentines Day youth group meeting. Grivin has been growing a lot in Christ. He is from the Catholic Church, but has testified that he has learned many truths from Limbani and

me. I enjoy checking his Daily Reading Program. He always comes up with great insights in the Scriptures he reads. We hope to help him practice preaching such truths! One testimony I enjoyed hearing from Grivin was from the day we taught them about forgiveness. He does not have a close or good relationship with his father, as the father abandoned him. He was angry and ready to disown the father, but through the testimony of Limbani and the words of truth from the Word, he decided to forgive instead.

Tamara Lucius is the head girl for our youth group. She has been faithful since the beginning. Her commitment to the ministry and God is evident. She helps us with crowd control, leading songs, and other tasks, as they arise. At first, Tamara was very quiet and it was not often easy to get her to feel comfortable. But she soon became comfortable and active and now even brings friends to youth group! Through some guidance, we have seen her grow in some amazing ways. Tamara loves children and I look forward to serving in children's ministry capacities with her more, when Covid passes. Tamara's mother sells tomatoes in the local market. The income from this is how her family eats and survives.

Below are pictures from the mountain adventure and you see Grivin in a suit jacket, Mack with a green shirt under a collared shirt, and Tamara with her hair tie!

Thank you for your prayers. I also remember you all.

In Christ,
Leslie

