

# Nkhani Zaulere

the Malawi Chatterbox September 2011

## 150 Years UMCA celebrations

The Universities Mission to Central Africa – UMCA – was formed in response to David Livingstone's challenge to universities in Britain to stop the slave trade and preach Christian values in Central Africa.

Bishop Charles Mackenzie and others responded by setting sail to Africa and in August 1861, 150 years ago, built the first church at Magomero. Bishop Mackenzie died on 31 January in 1862 on the banks of the Shire River.

Tawanda Madovi, Vice Chair of the Society of Malawi and Chair of the UMCA Celebrations Committee writes:

“**Diocese of Lake Malawi** – by Saturday 30 April All Saints' Cathedral grounds were filled with people. A group from Zambia's Eastern Province was led by their Bishop. The same day saw the re-dedication of All Saints' Cathedral.

In the evening I did a slide show on the UMCA history from 1861 and the response was overwhelming. This was followed by drama and choirs singing throughout the night. The grand finale was the eucharist on Sunday May 1<sup>st</sup>. It was indeed a celebration befitting the 150 years.

12 June was **Diocese of Southern Malawi's** turn. The event took place in Chikwawa, near the Shire River, at the site of Revd Scudamore's and Dr Dickinson's graves. The new enclosure built around the tombstone marks these two graves. The site has been cleared and will now become a place of pilgrimage.

30 June was the **Diocese of Northern Malawi's** turn. Being on *Ilala* was a new experience for many and seeing the development on Likoma Island was fascinating. There are now more cars on the island and Likoma has a busy airport.

Many houses have electricity and piped water; satellite dishes are quite common. The beaches – Nkhwazi, Chiponde, Mvumu, Yofu and Chinyanya – maintain their crispness.

In the evening I again presented the history of the UMCA. The next day saw the most colourful procession and undoubtedly the longest. It began from the airport near Chimota, where the UMCA team first settled after walking from Zanzibar, and then headed for the cathedral. It was well rehearsed. To see Bishop Fanuel holding the Likoma crozier, once used by Bishop Trower and Bishop Douglas, brought UMCA history alive. There was a lot of interest in the crozier. The top part is ivory, and it contains a piece of wood from Bishop Mackenzie's crozier.

The main celebration service was the climax. Having the Bishop from Lindi in Tanzania, and the Likoma main choir and another one from Chizumulu Island, was marvellous. The same service saw the ordination of priests and deacons.

After the service and lunch it was time for *Magule* – dances, some to be seen only on Likoma, marking the end of a very successful day.

As an amateur historian I walked through the whole cathedral and shared as much information as I could. However, I sadly noted that the cathedral library has been neglected and something needs to be done urgently.

The **Upper Shire** celebrations took place at Malosa on 7 August. I did my presentation on the evening before. The following day was the big day and also the ordination of 4 priests and 3 deacons.

A retreat and diocesan Synod preceded the celebrations which were held on the Malosa football ground. The service lasted from 9.00-2.00!

**Magomero celebrations** All dioceses are now raising funds for the 8 October celebrations. The Archbishop of Canterbury will be coming and we also expect guests from our Province as well as, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa.

We have erected a new detailed signpost at Magomero with the help of the Society of Malawi.”

Tawanda Madovi's very interesting slide presentation can be seen at:

[https://picasaweb.google.com/lh/sreidir?uname=100367368578266377547&taget=ALBUM&id=5643583369607446561&authkey=Gv1sRgCK\\_SwuODmdH7pwE&feat=email](https://picasaweb.google.com/lh/sreidir?uname=100367368578266377547&taget=ALBUM&id=5643583369607446561&authkey=Gv1sRgCK_SwuODmdH7pwE&feat=email)

He continues to work on the history of the Anglican Church in Malawi and is asking for photos and stories. He is particularly asking for photos of the churches at Mponda's, Nkope and Likwenu. If you can help, please contact Tawanda on [tawanda@ipcs.mw](mailto:tawanda@ipcs.mw) or 00 265 999 826 371 or Donald Arden – address on page 4.

## ***A Better Malawi Is Possible***

We like to think of Malawi as an island of peace surrounded by troubled nations. The Global Peace Index, a project of the Institute of Economics and Peace in the US, recently issued a report saying that Botswana, Malawi and Ghana, in that order, were ranked as the most peaceful countries in Africa. Is this still true?

What follows may be out of date before you read it but it will give you some background. "***A Better Malawi Is Possible***" has been issued by a civil society organisation in Malawi which lists the problems, among them:

foreign exchange shortages; Malawi becoming a "fuel queue nation"; electricity shortages; too many Ministers; the First Lady, as a minister, being paid more than 93 primary school teachers; publications being banned; police searches without warrants; the UK Envoy deported; donor bodies withholding aid; hospitals without drugs.

Workers, Faith Communities and Concerned Citizens said – "*A better Malawi is possible*" – this would mean:

selling the Presidential jet; banning the import of luxury cars; Zimbabwe repaying at once the £12m debt for food supplied by Malawi; pruning a bloated cabinet; the anti-corruption bureau investigating the Malawi housing scandal; the President declaring his assets; nullifying the First Lady's appointment as a minister; holding local elections now; providing drugs to all hospitals and clinics; paying the arrears of 300 nurses owed for three years; and ten other points.

**UN Welcome** The UN welcomed the signing of an agreement between the Malawi Government and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). This follows the July 20 and 21 anti-government protests in which police killed 19 and injured another 58.

CSOs describe the UN-facilitated dialogue as the last chance for President Mutharika to avoid mass anti-government protests.

Instead of a second day of demonstrations planned for mid-August, a national gathering was held on 16 August attended by the President, civil and religious leaders. Prayers were said for dialogue and understanding.

Joseph Zuza, Roman Catholic Bishop of Mzuzu and chairperson of the Episcopal Conference preached. He spoke of the need for Malawians to work together to solve the country's problems, "which are of our own making." "Whoever thinks he is a perfect person is stupid and foolish."

"We may put the blame on the civil society or non-governmental organisations, blaming them as being misguided and leading people astray. We may say these people have not been elected and therefore do not have a mandate to act on behalf of the society or citizens or our country. Yes, they have not been elected but they are working for the good of the nation."

A spokesperson for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the party of the President, accused Bishop Zuza of being a provocative agent of the opposition.

Catholic men, women and clergy organisations have responded by saying, "We would like to remind those in political leadership positions that Bishops, as leaders of the Church, do not enter the field of mere politics."

**Not above the law** The Malawi Law Society (MLS) says that President Mutharika should not tell the judiciary to stop granting legal relief through injunctions. MLS president, John-Gift Mwakhwawa said, "No authority, including the President, is above the law and that as long as government continues to govern against the rule of law, the injunctions will continue to be issued."

"We condemn the President's utterances in the

strongest terms. On behalf of MLS, we are assuring Malawians not to fear his threats of arrests for simply exercising their rights. If people get arrested for not committing a crime, they shall be freed by the courts.”

**Presidential Contact and Dialogue Group** (PCDG), chaired by Archbishop Bernard Malango, said at the end of August that statements that would derail dialogue between Malawi Government and civil society organisations should be discouraged.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the country had written to the UN Resident Co-ordinator, Richard Dictus, who is facilitating the talks, complaining that Mutharika’s threats about war show that he lacks political will for the dialogue to succeed.

A joint communiqué signed by Malango, CSOs representative Voice Mhone, Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (Congoma) chairperson and the UN Co-ordinator Richard Dictus, said both sides of the talks had reiterated their commitment to the process.

Some of Malawi’s media have concerns about the membership of the 10 member Group, many of whom have strong links with the ruling Democratic Progressive Party.

**A new Cabinet** of 32 was sworn in on 8 September, 14 down on the previous one. Former Finance Minister Goodall Gondwe has Environment and Ken Lipenga is at Finance. The President’s wife becomes National Coordinator for: Maternal, Infant and Child Health as well as HIV/Nutrition/Malaria and Tuberculosis and his brother, Peter Mutharika takes over foreign affairs.

**A by-election** at Rumphi on 7 September saw the ruling Democratic Progressive Party lose to the Aford party by a substantial majority.

We all hope and pray that developments in Malawi will progress smoothly and peacefully.

## **Taxi-bikes**

“Boat-making was a hard job, so I decided to switch. I make about MK1,000 (£4) a day” said Kanjira Khombe, who has taxied passengers for two years. “I’m used to it and am able to carry big-bodied people,” he said.

Unlike the noisy swarm of motorbikes in other parts of Africa, in Malawi you hear the gentle

squeak of bicycles.

“I really like them,” said a twenty-year old Canadian student. “You just hop on a bike if you want to get around.” She said, adding that she steers clear of those with non-padded passenger seats.

While motorists are crippled by petrol and diesel shortages, the taxi-bikes step in. They skirt the high fuel costs and are able to reach more people in this rural landlocked country where 39% live on less than \$1 a day.

A Dutchman, Peter Meijer, set up a bike business in 2009 in Blantyre. He also makes bike-carts. His most popular product is the “Care Cart” bicycle ambulance. He has already sold 800.

## **Witchcraft-based violence**

A Malawian rights group has secured a grant from Norway to launch a study of witchcraft-based violence on children, women and the elderly.

“Witchcraft - based violence is a serious problem in this country,” says George Thindwa, Executive Director of the Association for Secular Humanism.

Part of the grant will be used to draft a new Witchcraft Act to safeguard the rights of victims. The state-funded Law Commission is reviewing the Witchcraft Act of 1911.

## **Cotton and tobacco**

Tobacco accounts for 60% of all foreign exchange earnings. Burley tobacco, of which Malawi is the world’s largest producer, has been selling this year at 39% below the government’s set price.

Tobacco has been the chief export crop and used to earn up to \$400m – 70% of its foreign exchange. In the past it was known as ‘green gold’ and employed some 500,000 people at its peak, contributing 25% of government revenue.

Government has removed 200,000 peasant farmers from the donor-funded \$180m fertiliser subsidy so that an additional \$1.5 can be used to develop cotton as an alternative to tobacco. Cotton is a crop with potential and grows well in Malawi.

The change cannot happen overnight. Currently tea and sugar are the next foreign exchange earners after tobacco.

## **Britain suspends part of its aid**

Britain has indefinitely suspended £19m of its general budget support to Malawi over its failure to address

concerns over economic management. The World Bank, the EU, African Development Bank, Germany and Norway have all suspended general budget support to Malawi.

However, Britain – Malawi’s main bi-lateral donor – is still expected to spend £93m a year in Malawi until 2015. Nearly 40% of this goes on health.

### **Malawi’s own Florence Nightingale**

Using the most basic equipment Charity Salina’s birth clinic has delivered over 40,000 babies and recorded no deaths.

She left her research job in the USA and with her pension and a \$600 loan opened a birth clinic in Area 23, just outside Lilongwe, after witnessing too many deaths during childbirth.

She blames lack of decent healthcare facilities for countless tragedies. “People don’t have transport to take them to hospital. Labour sometimes starts at night, there is no transport available – what do you do? You can have the best resources in the world but if you’re not trained properly you can’t give life.”

She is often contacted to assist when already too late for the baby or mother. Her birth clinic opened in April 2008 in a highly populated residential area that women can easily reach by foot.

She nursed her dream of starting a clinic for years until she had enough money. “Sometimes you have to start the ball rolling before others come to help you. So I was buying one pillow and keeping it, then two blankets.” There is no fancy equipment in her scantily resourced clinic. It’s based in a small house that Salina rents and she’s on call 24 hours a day.

She credits her training for her successful deliveries, “I am horrified and I am experienced. As soon as I see this is not a condition I can cope with, there and then I transfer the woman to the main hospital.”

Once the babies are born, Salina tries to discourage the mothers from having more children than they can cope with.

“It’s our duty to bring live babies to the community, live babies to Malawi, live babies to Africa.”

### **Fighting malaria**

The pesticide DDT is the main plank in Zambia’s campaign. Shrikant Blatt, Professor of medicine at Nairobi says, “We are losing the war against malaria. The parasite is becoming resistant to all drugs we know. We have no option other than DDT, sprayed on the indoor walls of bedrooms, this will enable us to control the malaria pandemic.”

Malawi’s Secretary of Health has said, “DDT spraying is cheap and effective. Other chemicals may last two or three months; DDT will last 6 months or more; it is much cheaper and much more cost effective than other chemicals.”

My personal experience is that of Swaziland in the 1950s. The Usuthu Mission was abandoned in 1913 because the staff were dying of malaria. Spraying internal walls with DDT was totally effective, safe and very cheap. Two men with knapsack sprayers visited us every three months, sprayed the walls and virtually eliminated malaria from the country. (DA)

#### ***The Changing Role of Forestry in Conservation and Development : why Trees are good for Malawi***

is the title of a talk to be given by Professor Jeffery Burley at the Nyika-Vwaza(UK) Trust evening at the Royal Geographical Society in London on Tuesday 8 November. Doors open at 6.00pm. Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi calendars will be on sale.

Jeff worked in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe and was Director of the Oxford Forestry Institute. He is currently senior partner in C-Questor LLP, which specializes in carbon sequestration.

Application forms for tickets can be downloaded from [www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org](http://www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org) or obtained from Harry Foot at Stowford Farm, Harford, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0JD. [stowfoots@southdevon.org](mailto:stowfoots@southdevon.org). Tel: 01752-892632

### **In brief**

**Certificates of excellence** have been given to two outstanding people, Fr Matinga and Mr Peter Pota.

Fr Matinga received his award because of his dedication in planting churches in the interior of Malawi as opposed to the lakeshore, where Christianity had taken roots.

Mr Pota received the award because of his hard working spirit at St Luke’s hospital as a medical assistant long after his retirement age.

**Dr Susannah Woodd**, a USPG missionary, returned to England in June after four years dedicated work as Medical Officer at St Luke’s Hospital and its 5 health centres in the Diocese of Upper Shire. She has now started a year’s MSc course on public health for developing countries.

**Kwacha devalued** – now MK265 = £1

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