

Nkhani Zaulere

the Malawi Chatterbox

March 2008

“Good seed & Fertilizer. Stop.”

from The New York Times

Malawi is feeding its hungry neighbours, in place of extending a begging bowl to the world. It is selling more maize to the World Food Programme than any other country in Africa. Farmers explain this extraordinary turnaround with one word: fertilizer.

Malawi's leaders have long favoured subsidies for fertilizer and improved seed, but they reluctantly obeyed foreign aid fashions in Washington. In the 1980s and 1990s, the World Bank pushed Malawi to eliminate subsidies entirely. It should grow cash crops for export and use its foreign exchange earnings to import food.

In a withering evaluation of the World Bank's record on African agriculture, the bank's own internal watchdog concluded in October that the Bank itself had failed to realize that improving Africa's declining soil quality was essential to lifting food production.

After the 2005 harvest, the worst in a decade, Bingu wa Mutharika, Malawi's new President, decided to follow what the west practised, not what it preached: “As long as I'm President, I don't want to be going to other capitals begging for food.”

Deep subsidies for fertilizer and lesser ones for seed, abetted by good rains, helped farmers produce record-breaking harvests. From 1.2 million tons in 2005, maize production leapt to 2.7m in 2006 and 3.4m in 2007.

In the hamlet of Mthungu, Enelesi Chakaza, an elderly widow whose husband died of hunger five years ago, boasted that she got two ox-cart loads of corn this year from her small plot instead of half a cart.

Mrs. Chakaza watched her husband starve to death that season as they tried to subsist on pumpkin leaves. “He was one of many who

succumbed that year”, said the local agricultural officer. “I had a little something but I could not afford to help each and every one. It was very pathetic, very pathetic indeed.”

Jeffrey Sachs, the economist who lobbied Britain and the World Bank on behalf of Malawi's fertilizer programme, has championed the idea that wealthy countries should invest in fertilizer and seed for Africa's farmers.

From the 2007 surplus, Malawi donated 5000 tons to Swaziland and Lesotho and sold 400,000 tons to Zimbabwe. A British economist in Lilongwe says the extra maize produced because of the \$74 million subsidy was worth \$120 million to \$140 million. “It was really a good investment.” Action Aid say that over recent years the allocation of funds to the Ministry of Agriculture has shifted from 3% to about 13% of the total budget.

“The rest of the world is fed because of the use of good seed and inorganic fertilizer. Full stop,” said Stephen Carr, who has lived in Malawi since 1989, when he retired as the World Bank's principal agriculturalist in sub-Saharan Africa. “This technology has not been used in most of Africa. The only way you can help farmers gain access to it is to give it away free or to subsidize it heavily.”

Canon Barnaba Chipanda –

by Canon George Ndomondo

Barnaba was a priest from 1960 until his death in 2002. He was born in 1917 and married Fedge Agnes Chitwanga from Chindamba village, Malindi. They had eight children but four died very young and two in their middle ages. After graduating from St. Michael's College, he taught for 16 years in Fort Johnston and Nkhotakota. While teaching he received a call from God and joined St. Andrew's Theological College at Makulawe on Likoma. He graduated in 1960 and was posted

to Matope to work with Archdeacon Paul Lundu.

After work at Chilipa and on Likoma he was sent to Mponda's as Archdeacon of Shire and served at Nkope, Balaka and Monkey Bay. He retired in 1987 to Mgundaphiri village near Mangochi boma. His retirement did not stop him serving; he went on as a voluntary priest and was happy cycling round the churches within Mponda's parish.

He was fond of taking snuff, but always he was a smart priest. The snuff brought him a lot of Moslem friends and always he would share what he had with his friends. Buying snuff was not a problem to Fr. Chipanda. Birds of a feather flock together. The man was so loved and respected by Moslems as well as Christians. His pastoral visits had two ways, to Christians as well as to Moslems alike.

While he was at Mponda's he continued to witness not only in church but also when taking funerals. He knew what the cross had done for him and therefore what it will do for everyone else. The cross to him was the supreme act of faith on God's part in the capacity of human beings to respond to the appeal of sheer love and self-sacrifice.

He always had a message when he stood to preach; not a single person could go to sleep. His long sermons always had points to them, and each point was explained with some emphasis. Sometimes he would hit any object near him, sometimes he would hit his chest. Though he was short, his powerful voice made him a forceful preacher.

He was a man of prayer who observed daily Mattins and Mass, Sext at midday, Evening prayers and Compline at night. Mponda's experienced a good catch from the net used by Fr. Chipanda to fish for people along our waters of Galilee – the Shire River.

His sudden death at his home on the 2nd of October 2002 was a great shock. The vast crowd at his funeral at Mponda's showed the esteem with which he was regarded by Christians and Moslems alike. Christians in particular miss his lovely chanting. May he and his wife Fedge rest in peace.

Ten years in Malawi: was it worth it?

by Chris Lavy, orthopaedic surgeon,

Why did Vicky and I go? We could give a spiritual answer about going where God guides – and that would be true – but the simplest answer is that we were needed. The 12 million people in the Greater London area had more than 200 orthopaedic surgeons; Malawi, with the same population, had none. One of the poorest countries in the world, it had few doctors and annual spending on health care of about £2 per person.

I went to work for a local charity and a new medical school, supported by Christian Blind Mission International. We planned to stay for four years. but by the end of three I was involved in setting up national and regional surgical training and we had to extend our stay.

After six years we were building Malawi's first orthopaedic hospital. I had to stay to see this through, so before we knew it we had been there for almost ten years and had three children.

It is hard to see how the NHS can hope to compete for excitement. But was it worth it? From the point of view of the thousands of patients I saw and operated on, I would say yes. I saw an astounding variety of problems, from wild animal trauma to untreated club feet so severe that the patients' soles were facing the sky.

I saw children with legs so bowed that their buttocks touched their ankles, and spines so twisted that their chest and pelvis faced different directions. They seemed happy with the treatment as they went cheerfully away after the operation with the bent part generally straighter than before. But only long term outcome studies will tell whether the benefit was lasting.

From my trainees' point of view, I think the answer was also 'Yes'. But they were so polite I may never know the truth. I helped re-establish training for paramedical orthopaedic Clinical Officers. They are the backbone of Malawi's trauma service. The country's district hospitals have no surgeons, and some have no doctors at all.

Thirdly from the point of view of my family. My wife found a fulfilment in Malawi that I would never have imagined. A GP in the UK, she set

up a paediatric palliative care service, touching and inspiring many short young lives.

I don't know if it is fair to ask whether the ten years were worth it from our children's point of view, as they didn't exist when we first went to Malawi. They certainly benefited from a wonderful school that emphasized being out of doors and where they made friends of many races and religions. Not a day goes by without them asking why we had to come to the coldness of England.

Fourthly, my career. Ten years ago, most UK orthopaedic surgeons were generalists. Now their total number has risen considerably, and some operate only on one joint. Gordon Brown, Bono and I will be sad if the next generation of UK surgeons becomes so specialized that they are of no use in poorer countries.

On a personal level? I made friendships that will last a lifetime and had my eyes opened and my heart challenged by the world's major orthopaedic problems. I sat with health ministers and saw some of the difficulties in providing modern orthopaedic services to people who have nothing. I recommend that all UK doctors spend some time in the developing world so that they can ground themselves in the realities of what is happening on our planet.

British Medical Journal 13 November 2007

By Water to Malawi

Speaking at the Royal Geographical Society on behalf of the Nyika-Vwaza Trust, Professor Colin Baker unveiled proposals to canalize the Zambezi. The following is abridged from Colin's lecture.

During the Mozambique wars the rail-lines south of Nsanje and the bridge over the Zambezi were blown up. Instead, Malawi has had to build a new line to Nacala, further north on the Indian Ocean coast. But rail is a much more expensive means of carrying freight than is water.

Malawi and Mozambique are currently working on a project to re-open the Lower Shire and Lower Zambezi to navigation to provide a direct navigable waterway between Chinde on the Indian Ocean and Nsanje, a distance of 148 miles. This compares with the distance to Beira of 500 miles and Nacala of 562 miles.

It is intended to be part of an inland transport system linking Malawi with the rest of east-central Africa. Inland from Nsanje, Malawi's transport system is to be improved and extended.

Proposals include building a bridge at Chiromo for both road and rail use and providing barges on the Lake to serve the people of Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania who live along its shores. A trilateral memorandum of understanding was signed by the governments of Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia in April 2007.

Also to construct a port at Nsanje and to modernize the old port at Chinde which has been little used for 100 years, though traffic never completely ceased. To link the ports of Nsanje and Chinde, the Shire-Zambezi waterway will be dredged to form a modern canal on which shallow-draft, self-propelled barges, and push-tugs with interlocking barges will carry freight.

The importance of that part of the original railway line which closely followed the Lower Shire before the Mozambique war will be restored, and the most southerly part of the Shire and Zambezi will regain its former role as the major carrier of goods to and from Malawi.

It is understood that China is likely to finance this imaginative project which will bring about a full circle in Malawi's history. Ed.

Colin Baker's lecture has been turned into an attractive booklet with 65 illustrations, many published for the first time. It costs £8.70 post free in the UK, from Harry Foot, Stowford Farm, Harford, Ivybridge PL21 0JD. t. 01752 892 632. E-mail: stowfoots@southdevon.org Cheques should be made out to the Nyika-Vwaza (UK) Trust, to which Colin has given all proceeds.

“The future belongs to the Organized”

This is the motto of the National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi. By banding together, farmers can achieve better prices and be trained in management to ensure products meet standards.

Although still a fledgling concept in Malawi, a growing number of smallholders have formed associations to sell tea, sugar, cotton and nuts

to processors who cannot get enough of Fairtrade products as the sector booms in Britain.

Brands such as Café Direct and Divine Chocolate have become household names. The latest launch is Liberation Nuts. The leaders of the movement are intent on a rapid acceleration to take it beyond the billion-pound mark. What began as a fringe movement has now been adopted by the supermarkets.

What this means to Malawi can be seen at Mchinji, where the government hospital had no provision for the patients' guardians – family members who come to look after relatives. Now a brick shelter is going up, paid for by groundnuts. The same story is repeated across Malawi, especially at Lujeri, near Mt. Mulanje, where 6,000 smallholders are poised to receive £400,000 once they receive Fairtrade accreditation. It is a route out of poverty built on justice and initiative.

The Observer

“AIDS, Surgery & Life, a Malawi Mosaic”

Michael & Elspeth King's new book (Arco – ISBN 978-0953 9290-1-6: £7). Post free from Spirituality Centre Bookshop 020 7626 5031, 10-6, Mon to Fri.

“A mosaic of our life in Malawi over the past twelve years, with some flashbacks to the previous eighteen years. Then we were working, as surgeon and university lecturer, in Blantyre. Now we live for part of each year in a small cottage by the Lake, near Nkhata Bay. We travel around the beautiful Northern Region, visiting rural hospitals where Michael operates and teaches. Elspeth visits the wards and clinics, and has taken an interest in the AIDS situation over the years, as well as initiating various community projects.”

A few lines picked at random....
'Drowned' I was told when the 12 year old boy
was rushed in from the beach....
In Karonga museum we saw an 8-metre
dinosaur skeleton excavated nearby...
Our tiny baby, drenched with rain, had a
baptism in the capricious climate of Mulanje..
I saw a Heughlings robin make her nest in a
hollow branch, thrush-sized, red-breasted.....
The rising sun casts golden beams across
Lake Malawi to Chilundu point.....
Ancient Tonga songs re-echo over the water
as the fishermen signal to each other...

And once when I took out a book, I was stung
by a scorpion, causing awful pain...

A visit to a healer on Likoma: 1997

A choir of about thirty people were softly singing African songs...on and on. Mr. Kumpolota made a striking entrance to greet Michael – “You are the big doctor. We know you are here. Yesterday I took a patient to the hospital to see you. We waited two hours but you had gone to Yofu.”

Michael offered to examine his patients. The first had come 700 miles from the Lower Shire Valley with a painful arm and swollen lymph nodes; another semi-paralyzed man with swollen joints, difficulty in walking and weakness was recovering here – possibly naturally.....

Michael asked if Kumpolota could manage TB? He replied that he can cure magical TB but not medical TB, so can he have some drugs please? His sympathy for many patients was clear.

Church news is mixed

We reported in July the appointment of Bishop Trevor Mwamba of Botswana as Dean of the Province. Just before retiring as archbishop in September, Bishop Malango dismissed Bishop Mwamba and replaced him with Bishop Albert Chama from Zambia. Bishop Malango retired from Upper Shire in December and now lives in Area 12, Lilongwe.

Upper Shire and Lake Malawi dioceses were instructed in January to elect new bishops at extremely short notice. The process of collecting information on possible candidates, for parishes to come to a decision on whom to elect, and for the elective assembly to come together normally takes two or three months. Lake Malawi secured a court order to delay their election; Upper Shire carried on but failed to reach the two-thirds majority required.

The appointment of the Upper Shire bishop has now been delegated to the Provincial Episcopal Synod which meets in March.

To know more, watch the website –

www.churchtimes.co.uk

We print the following because Malawi is part of the Province of Central Africa, comprising

Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi.
The Province is the ultimate court of appeal for the two Malawi dioceses which have no bishop.

In Zimbabwe there have been dramatic developments. Bishop Kunonga of Harare, a close ally of President Mugabe, has dismissed many of the clergy who do not share his political views. *The Church Times* reported in October:

“He is answerable to the Church on 38 serious charges, including incitement to murder, following a farcical non-trial in September 2005 and closure of the case by the Archbishop of Central Africa, the Most Revd. Bernard Malango.”

Kunonga announced recently that he was taking the Diocese of Harare out of the Province of Central Africa and joining the Province of Kenya. A high court judge in Harare has now ruled that Kunonga is no longer part of the Anglican Communion.

Bishop Sebastian Bakare, described by Archbishop Rowan Williams as “a deeply respected and courageous elder statesman of the Zimbabwean Church” has come out of retirement to replace Kunonga as Bishop of Harare. As Bishop of Manicaland, Sebastian was a strong advocate of land reform and was fiercely outspoken about the intimidation of starving people in rural areas.

At his enthronement as Bishop of Harare in January this year, Sebastian was locked out of his own cathedral by Kunonga but 12,000 Anglicans came to his enthronement in a sports stadium. He has no money, no cathedral, no keys and no office. He says to us: “It’s not enough to say, ‘Let’s pray for Sebastian.’ We need concrete support. We need people willing to get their hands dirty.”

Women, especially the Mothers’ Union, are the backbone of his support, and his wife Ruth is his mainstay. “It’s a fresh start,” he says, “it’s about taking risks, following the way of the cross. Let’s go for it and see what happens.”

Read the whole story, together with a fine photo of this doughty fighter, in the *Church Times* of 22 February or visit www.churchtimes.co.uk or ask a computer-literate grandchild to print it out for you.

Uranium mining

After much controversy, it now seems certain that uranium mining is going ahead in the Northern Region. Production from the original project, at Kayerekera village near Karonga, is now scheduled to begin in March 2009. It is being undertaken by Paladin Energy, based in Perth, Australia.

Paladin is investing \$200 million, including a fence to keep away inquisitive children. Families evicted by the mine receive about £350 each in compensation, together with a high chance of employment. Watchmen at the mine receive 90p a day.

There has been concern that traces of uranium might seep into the Lake and so into the fish which provide a significant part of the protein needs of all the people of Malawi.

Government however appears satisfied that this is not a danger and has granted two more licences to prospect for uranium and other minerals, one to Paladin for a north-eastern part of the Central Region and one to another mining company.

IN BRIEF

Under-5 deaths per thousand births in 1970 were 341; in 2000.189. They are now 115, still far more than the UK figure of 6, but a massive achievement. Health Minister Marjorie Ngaunje attributes the fall to immunization, vitamin supplements and eliminating neo-natal tetanus.

Malawi health facts from BBC news

1 nurse for every 3,500 people
1 doctor for every 60,000
6,000 nursing posts unfilled
500,000 AIDS orphans

St. Martin’s hospital Malindi - from a visiting nurse:

“Lack of drugs critical. Now in the middle of the malaria season, no quinine, no paracetamol, no testing agents to test blood.

“80% of children admitted with malaria are anaemic. 40% need blood transfusions. Some are dying for lack of blood and drugs.”

Leonard Mondoma, Canon Rodney Hunter’s faithful cook and a warm supporter of his theological views, has now been in

Nkhotakota prison for 15 months on a charge of having murdered Rodney. Most people think he is innocent and that he should be released on bail to support his family. Malawi has a back-log of several years of homicide cases because of the shortage of lawyers. A civil rights organization has been asked to take up his case. Please hold Leonard and his family in your prayers.

R.I.P

Francis Manjele was trained as a dispenser on Likoma Island and worked in Mozambique before joining St. Luke's Hospital in the early 60s. This dedicated man was still working with HIV patients until his death in December. For his outstanding work over more than 50 years, Francis was honoured by being admitted to the Order of the Epiphany, the highest recognition the Province can give to a layperson.

Ella Mhone, the highly respected and much loved Mothers' Union worker with St. Agnes Guild for teenage girls over many years, died in October and will be sadly missed. During the time she looked after the St Agnes Guild, Ella helped many girls to face the challenges of a modern society where HIV/AIDs brings heavy responsibilities. Two groups of British young people who visited Malawi last year were particularly impressed by Ella and what she was doing.

Paul Binks went to Malawi in 1981 as the doctor in charge of Malawi Against Polio, better known as MAP. His wife Margaret, also a doctor, came with him. Their work was funded by Rotary under their Health, Hunger & Humanity programme. Sadly Margaret died after their return to the UK. Paul went back for two years to launch a Lilongwe project for training rehabilitated children in carpentry, vegetable-growing and other trades. The MAP campaign was so successful that Rotary raised their sights to immunize children worldwide against all common infections. In 3 years recently Rotary raised over \$135 million for Polio Plus.

John Masano, a Mozambican, came to Malawi in the 1950s and taught himself

English by reading the Nyanja, Portuguese and English NTs side by side. He was ordained in 1965 and served at Mkope, Monkey Bay and Blantyre. The diocese sent him on a 3-months course to St. George's College, Jerusalem, and later for a year to the Gaba Catholic Training Centre at Eldoret in Kenya. In 1979 he was made Archdeacon of Shire, based at Matope. After serving in Malawi until retiring age, he returned to his home in Mozambique where he again became an archdeacon in the Diocese of Niassa. There he died recently after a long and fruitful ministry.

Anniversary gifts from MACS

An imaginative menu of presents, and cards with beautiful photographs, are available for you to send to friends and family, saying that instead of giving them a present you have provided X for someone in Malawi. Menus and cards can be ordered from:

Sally Huband, 2A Ashurst Cottage, Lewes, BN7 3AP
01273 890 155 sally.huband@tinyworld.co.uk

Malawi Reunion

& AGM of MACS :

13 September 2008

10.30 - 3.30

St Saviour's Church Hall, Pimlico, SW1V 3QW
go to Pimlico station; turn right; cross over road
75yds to St Saviour's Church in Lupus Street
hall is around the corner in St. George's Square

Come, and bring a friend with you

Editor: Donald Arden: 6 Frobisher Close, Pinner HA5 1NN
tel: 020 8866 6009 ardendj@yahoo.co.uk