

JANUARY 2025

Treasure in Jars of Clay

Jars of Clay Ministry Malawi



TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

End of year gathering

Malawi Trip December 19th to January 2nd. Focus on financial sustainability.

By JJ Matandika

This newsletter will provide an overview of the activities which were conducted during my trip and an update from each congregation under the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of Malawi (ARPC).

The 11 days in Malawi were filled with so much joy and excitement to be back home and see the progress of the ministry (especially our church planting efforts). I was able to meet church leaders and some members from several churches to discuss matters relating to financial sustainability as a key to healthy church planting efforts.

End of year gathering

I arrived in Malawi on Saturday December 21st. The next day we had an end of year gathering which brings together all ARPC congregations. I preached from 1 Thessalonians 4 focusing on holiness, love and hope. Wilicks Laston was ordained as minister of the word and sacraments. It was also time to welcome new members from the two new preaching stations of Chagombe and Kalikongwe as well as from Linthembwe and Mponela. Then we had several baptism and celebration of the Lord's Supper. The whole service took almost 5 hours which is not unusual for special occasions like this in Malawi.



This has become a tradition of our churches. Last year a similar gathering took place in Dzuwa, our first church plant in 2014. This year the gathering was at Mponela, our fourth church plant. We gather together to celebrate the goodness of the Lord and His faithfulness in the life of our church.

One highlight was the ordination of brother Wilicks. He joined us in 2019 as an intern at Mponela. He had a diploma from Teen Missions. Then pursued a bachelor degree in theology with Miami International Theological Seminary satellite center in Lilongwe and completed his studies in 2022.

He served in Ntchisi before moving to Dzuwa where he currently holds his pastorate. His ordination comes at a crucial moment to cover a huge need in our churches for an ordained minister. We praise the Lord for His grace!

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.



My plea...

I also used my time to think about the working relationship of confessional Presbyterian denominations in Malawi. This led me to write a plea suggesting some thoughts on the importance of cooperation.

I have often been burdened by the thought of so many pastors working in isolation. The overall impact and effectiveness of the church in Malawi could be greatly improved by focusing our attention on the spread of the gospel by modeling mutual respect, cooperation and unity within the relatively like minded confessional Presbyterian groups combining their ministry goals.

I am encouraged by the initial responses from respected figures. I believe that a positive perspective from key leaders is needed for this cooperation to be effective. I pray that the Lord will pour His grace amongst us so that we can see this through gospel lenses.

Presbyterian church planting works in Malawi

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My plea to confessional Presbyterian church planting works in Malawi

Introduction

1. APC, ARPC, EPC, PCA, RPC

Part 1: Our common heritage

Part 2: Our differences

Part 3: Respect Pioneers, Do Not Venerate Them

Part 4: Proposal

1. Form a Federation of Reformed

The entire document has been shared to all the key figures and has also been published on the website in order that others interested in this subject can be reached as we engage one another.

Link:

<https://www.jarsofclayministry.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/My-plea-to-confessional-Presbyterian-church-planting-works-in-Malawi.pdf>

May the Lord be gracious!

Dzuwa ARPC

My first meeting with church leaders was in Dzuwa. They provided an update on the progress of the church. One of the big projects completed was the construction of the pastor's house. We reviewed financial records and discussed the possibility of getting MKW200,000 (\$120) income on a monthly basis. They will lay out a plan on how this would work. This is a crucial step towards financial stability.



With the economic situation of most church members and heavy reliance on subsistence farming, creating additional ways of financing church operations in addition to offerings and tithes is crucial.

Beginning 2026, donations will go towards supporting new church plants and capital projects. We believe that this will be healthy for the churches. With a long history of the church in Dzuwa depending upon donations to fund operations, this was considered a priority area which needs a collective effort to ensure that it is achieved.

**“...and to work with your hands...
and be dependent on no one.”**
1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.

Bwemba ARPC

My next stop was at Bwemba church. The meeting took the same format as Dzuwa. I was especially impressed with the good ideas brought forward by the leaders on how they can stabilize their finances. The situation in Bwemba is not very different from the situation in Dzuwa as it came third in 2017 after Dzuwa church was established and there are similar challenges.



I am waiting to receive a full report of their plans for the future.

“And the Lord answered me:
“Write the vision; make it plain
on tablets, so he may run who
reads it.”
Habakkuk 2:2.

Chagombe ARPC

This church was established just before I left Malawi to come to seminary in July 2024. They have been meeting in different temporary locations before moving to the new temporary location.

Their plan for this year is to get a piece of land where they can construct a church building. They have already mold bricks for the building as you can see below. They are truly motivated to get this done.



The picture above shows the leaders and some members standing in front of their temporary shelter where church services are held. The church is led by Hastings Tambala who has proven to be gifted in setting up new churches. However I see a need to consolidate our efforts to avoid stretching ourselves. I have suggested that in the future he should focus on planting new churches in strategic areas beginning with Kasungu and Mchinji.

Matthew 28:19-20

Kalikongwe ARPC

This church was most recently established in August of 2024. They started meeting in a house of one of the church members before moving to this shelter. This is also a result of Hastings Tambala evangelistic efforts. As one way of acknowledging his gifts, the plan is to have him focus on church planting in the future. After planting a church in one area he moves to another and another person will begin discipling the new church.



Their plans for 2025 are to mold bricks and construct a church building at a location they have been freely given by the community leaders in their area. These are the blessings of ministry in Malawi as community leaders are willing to come alongside the church especially in the provision of land in areas where there is communal land.

“As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 2 Timothy 4:5.

Linthembwe ARPC

Chagombe and Kalikongwe have emerged as daughter churches of Linthembwe which was planted by Mponela church in 2022. The growth has been so amazing in these communities! The crucial focus will be on discipleship. With so many people joining at the same time, ensuring that they are discipled is critical to the health of the church. I am grateful that Mponela presbytery is addressing the issues.



I met with the leaders and some church members for a three hour meeting discussing church matters. Most of the issues raised were already resolved by Mponela presbytery. I am so glad that there is a working system when it comes to running church matters. Please pray with me that the Lord will continue blessing their efforts in His vineyard.

“I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,” 1 Corinthians 1:4

Ntchisi ARPC

This church is led by Grant Chikamveka and Adson Bwanamali. This is the only church that has successfully run a preschool and continues to do so despite many challenges.

Some of the surrounding churches focus on handouts to attract people rather than focusing upon teaching the Word of God.



Prosperity gospel churches mislead with their promises not grounded on the Bible. There are also some traditional beliefs which negatively influence the area and make it difficult for gospel proclamation.

The best solution is to establish Bible study groups in communities where church members come from. The leaders desire to get a motorcycle (roughly \$1,800) which would greatly help them as they travel around the area establishing and teaching Bible study groups.

Galatians 1:3-5

Msampha ARPC

Msampha church is led by Noah Sabuni alongside Peter Phiri an elder and Noah Maulidi, a deacon. This is the church that was also founded by Mponela church. The challenges in this area are similar to those in Ntchisi. “We have plans to implement for the betterment of our church. The first plan is to establish Bible study groups in around our community as one way of reaching out to people with the sound doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”



The second plan is to increase our total offering is making up to two hundred thousand Kwacha a month (\$120). We pray we can turn this seemingly impossible dream into a reality by doing the following: 1. teaching and encouraging our members to understand the importance of giving to support the work of God, 2. venturing into crop and animal production as a church, 3. doing some church development jobs such as “piece-work” in order to raise money for church support.

**“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”
Galatians 6:9**

Solemnization of Marriage

Adson and Madelesi were newly wedded on the 28th of December while Nelson and Naomi renewed their marriage vows. This was a unique service. I preached from the book of Song of Solomon 8:6-7.

The whole service can be found here:

<https://youtu.be/flyapjqOEtQ?feature=shared>.



Adson is serving as an associate pastor at Ntchisi church while Nelson is a church elder at Mponela.

“Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.”

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

Kapangalika ARPC

This is the second church plant following the establishment of Dzuwa church. Several people who were members in Dzuwa requested that a church be opened in their village in 2015.

The church is led by Joseph Jamu alongside Happy Nyirenda and elders and deacons.

I preached there from the book of Philippians 3:12-4:1.



The church needs a much spiritual guidance. I recommended that as leaders they should be meeting for Bible study once a week. This will help build up their understanding of God's Word.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Philippians 2:12-13

Mponela ARPC

I had two crucial meetings with the leadership team at Mponela. Noel Chatata is leading the church alongside Chikhoswe Diston, elder Panganani, and deacon Kalazi.

Noel relocated from Salima in August to begin his new role at Mponela church. His main focus was to visit church members to encourage and understand their challenges.



They managed to rent two acres of land for church farming activities, focusing on maize farming. This initiative aims to generate local funds for church operations.

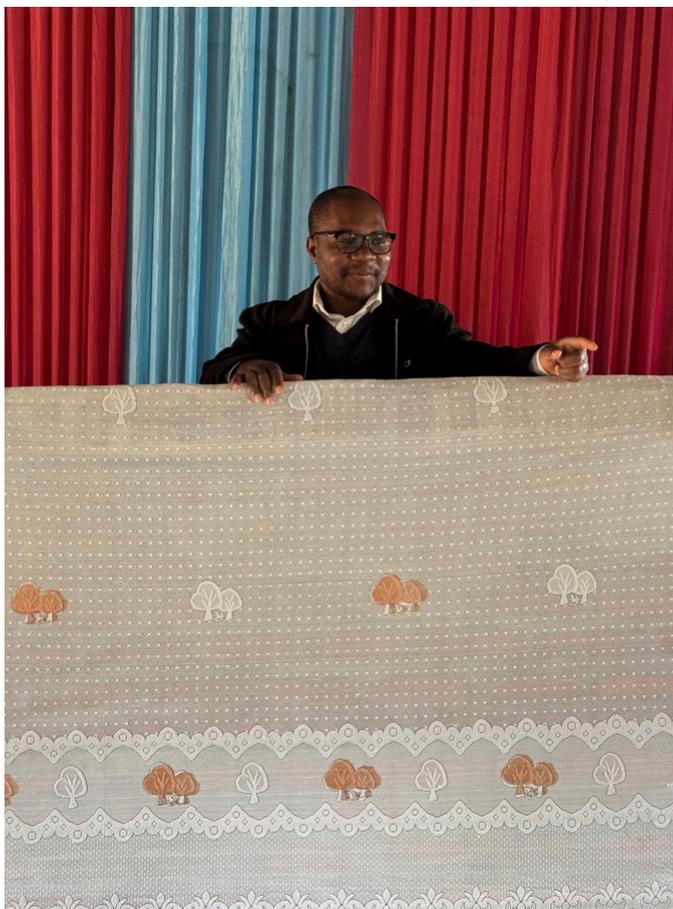
Plans for the future include construction of a pastor's house within the next two years. After harvest and selling the maize crop they have planted, they plan to build pens for raising chickens, goats and pigs.

“For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.” Colossians 2:5

Trip Summary

My visits to each church were meant to encourage each congregation to think about self-sustainability in a more serious way. I asked each congregation to provide a financial report of their income and expenses from January (or when they started in the case of the two new congregations under Linthembwe) through December 2024.

I have also asked each congregation to submit a plan of action on how they can raise MKW200,000 per month (\$120). Then the synod should start sharing pastoral support with each congregation beginning January on a case by case basis. This is one way of encouraging our churches to be able to cover their operational expenses. An assessment will be made each month on how each congregation is implementing their plan of action and advice will be provided accordingly.



Churches which show a lack of commitment to implement their own plans must come under another session and the pastor of that congregation must be taken care of by the responsible presbytery. His support will then come from the presbytery with the same agreement of contributory support between the presbytery and the synod. If any congregation is deemed unsustainable even after this, then the general assembly must decide the fate of that church and the pastor.

By the end of 2025 any outside support will go towards capital projects and not operational expenses. That's the only way meaningful sustainability can be achieved in our churches, otherwise we will just be moving in circles. I pray that the Lord will give us a unified vision to see our churches self sustaining.

New Year Pastors Fellowship

In 2022 we started a pastors welfare fund in which pastors make contributions on a monthly basis for their welfare. The new year started with a meeting of pastors discussing the future of the program and choosing new leaders. In God's providence, this was also the last day of my visit and provided a great opportunity to wrap up my time with a mutual blessing.

