

Doug's Report

The month of August has proved to be very busy for our work. The number of preachers attending our studies has been much greater than expected, resulting in a scramble to provide study notes for them. We prepared 500 copies of our study note material and in the first three weeks alone we distributed more than half of them. That resulted in a rush back to the printer to have another 500 sets printed. If the numbers continue we will probably have to go back and order even more. What a pleasant problem to have! More people showing up to study the Bible than you expected.

I will provide a short description of each study. The first week of studies was here in Blantyre with 35 preachers gathering on August 2nd. This study was immediately cut short, though, by the sudden death of Sophie Kasambwe (Davidson's daughter). Davidson was translating for me when one of his sons came in and told him that Sophie had passed out. They rushed her to a hospital, but she had already passed away before they could get her there. We decided to postpone the study until a later time.

Our next study was the week beginning August 9th at Wendewende. This is a historical place because it is where brother Paul Nichols began our work in Africa. I anticipated a crowd of 50 preachers, but there was a much larger crowding waiting when we arrived. Based on the number of booklets that we passed out there must have been at least 130 preachers. The



Wendewende Preacher's Study

studies went well.

The week of August 16th found us gathering in Chilema (about an hour and a half north of Blantyre) for the preachers' study. This time we had about 100 preachers in attendance.

Mulanje was the next location for our studies. The Myapa congregation, where the study was conducted, is located at the foot of Mount Mulanje the highest mountain in Malawi. During this study, Debbie and I spent a part of our lunch break playing football (soccer) with some local kids. I am sure they thought that it was pretty funny to see these "old" folks playing with them.

On August 30th, we resumed our study here in Blantyre of the one we had previously started on August 2nd. All of the preachers have returned and the studies are going well.

These studies have proved beneficial to me in seeing the type of study materials that I need to be preparing. The brethren seem eager to learn and grateful for the studies.

Meet Sister Severe

Sister Fanny Severe is the wife of preacher B.C. Severe from the Wendewende congregation. Together they have nine children and fifty grandchildren. They are all members of the church and eleven of them are preachers.

She and a few other sisters cooked for 130 preachers for four days at the Preacher's Study held at Wendewende. They had the corn ground into a flour, dressed their own chickens and other meat, as well as hauled water from the community well. Our hats are off to these hard working sisters and their dedication to the Lord.



REPORT FROM THE MALAWI BRETHREN

"How beautiful are the feet of those that preach the gospel of peace . . ." Rom. 10:15

Stephen D. Kasenda is a preacher from the Blantyre congregation. - This article is continued from last month.

In 1974 I started full time working with missionaries in Blantyre. The first was Bill

Davis. He lived in Malawi 12 years. In translating with him teaching, I also learned many things of the Bible. He is my teacher. Brother Dennis Smith

did his job efficiently and worked hand in hand with Bro. Davis.

After these men, destroyers came. Because of this disaster, Bro. Jim Franklin came to Malawi without having a friend or part of the people who were divided. He visited both sides and found our objective was to bring in unity and peace. We started working together. We have travelled every part of Malawi holding meetings, preaching the gospel to people. As you know the power of the gospel did not fail and we have unity and peace in Malawi. Christians are talking the same thing. Bro. James C. Franklin has lived in the country for 14 years, working day and night. It was required of him to go back home and rest.

I was fortunate that the brethren in USA

arranged a trip for me to visit and attend the Preacher's Bible Study in Oklahoma in 2000. I also took part in the New Year's Meeting of that year. It was an enjoyable trip and we travelled to many states. I preached wherever I went and some people invited us to stay in their homes. One of the brethren who invited us to visit their home was Bro. Doug Edwards and his wife Sister D. Edwards. They both received us with open hearts. I am very pleased that he is here as a missionary for Malawi. The Lord has blessed our work by sending a good honorable family to us.

Brother Doug Edwards has already travelled with us from south to north end of Malawi. We are all going to work with him hand in hand. It is my prayer that all may continue going well.

Bibles & Hymn Books

There is one common sight that has disturbed me greatly while being here in Malawi. Very few Christians have Bibles or song books (hymn books as they call them here). In a crowd of 300 one might see maybe 20 people with Bibles and fewer with hymn books. The women almost never have hymn books. Most of the Christians depend on their memories to be their hymn books. I know the difficulties of trying to sing memorized songs. Every year at the Oklahoma New Year's meeting when we have our singing just before midnight on December 31st I find myself struggling just to remember the words of our old hymns.

So we have decided to attempt to provide more Bibles and hymnbooks at a discounted price for the Christians. There is a Bible Society here in Blantyre which provides Bibles in large numbers. A little over a month ago I purchased 8 cartons of Bibles and have already run out of them. About a week ago I purchased another 8 cartons and anticipate that they will be gone



shortly as well.

It is the hymn books, though, that really go fast. I simply cannot keep a supply on hand. I purchase some on one day and may be out of them before the week is over. There are isolated places in the bush where brethren almost get into a stampede trying to get to me when I have hymn books. It makes me feel sad to see the disappointed looks when I have to tell brethren waiting in a line that I have just run out of hymn books.

Bible knowledge is the key to spiritual growth. Peter tells us to crave for the pure milk of God's word so that we can grow (1 Peter 2:2). If we want to see the churches in Malawi grow stronger we must work hard to not only teach Christians but see that they have Bibles and other study helps. Remember the words of David, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). Please pray for this part of our work.

Transportation in Malawi

I am told that gas prices are going through the roof in the United States. We may need to borrow Malawi's most prominent means of transportation--the bicycle. I have never seen more bicycles in my life than here in Malawi. When one drives down both the paved and dirt roads here he is constantly bobbing and weaving to avoid bicyclists. After driving in Malawi for three months I feel that I am ready for the Nascar circuit. Most of the preachers who attend our studies come on their trusty bicycle. They travel with a pump and a patch kit to keep up with flat tires. Bicycles also serve as major cargo carriers. One sees huge bags of charcoal, 10 foot pieces of lumber, cages with chickens and a host of other things on the backs of these "work horses." Bicycles serve as ambulances and taxis in the bush. Debbie saw one with a sign on it that simply said, "For Hire." I suppose there is no job too large for a good bicycle.



DEBBIE'S EXPERIENCE

Sophie Kasambwe, our sister in Christ and my friend and Chichewa teacher passed away August 2 after suffering from heart disease. She had become a good friend and a link for me with the people. Doug and I went over to the house



her funeral the following day.

We left at 6:00 that morning with eight people and seven seats and drove about four hours. The funeral took place at Sophie's father's home in the village. The furniture was removed and it was wall to wall people in the four rooms sitting on grass mats on the floor. The living room had singing and preaching going on. The bedroom off of it had the casket and women relatives crying and wailing. The back room had women sitting in silence. I went into the wailing room and gave Maggie (Sophie's stepmother) a hug and went back out and sat in the preaching room and sang and listened to a fiery speech by one of the preachers. After two hours of preaching and singing most of us in the states would have thought we had already been to the service two times over, but we hadn't actually had the service yet. I wanted to sit with the ladies on the mats out in the yard, but nothing doing, one of the men came and collected me and directed me to my special seat beside Doug under the brush arbor. There were three or four hundred people there sitting around the arbor on the ground. They had a viewing of her body and all passed through the house. After the viewing was over they

brought Sophie out and laid her casket on the mats in front of the arbor. The women relatives and sisters from church gathered around the casket and sat on the ground. A leader from the church at Blantyre gave the obituary, words were given by several preachers and Doug. Then they had prayer and all the preachers stood up and sang a song for her. Then they put her casket on a flat bed truck. The related women got on the truck with it. The preachers and leaders walked in front of the truck. The rest of us walked in back of it. We sang the whole way. It was a mile walk down a trail to the cemetery. It was a beautiful procession that stretched a long way. I fell to the back of the procession so that I could take a photo of it. To me that was tribute enough to Sophie with all the people she had touched in her short life. The cemetery is nestled among trees next to Lake Malawi with mountains looming in the background. What a peaceful place for a body to stop and rest until the Lord comes! As we all watched, she was lowered by loving hands of the preachers who had climbed down into the newly dug grave next to her mother. Men took turns shoveling dirt. Inez, her 15 year old daughter placed the small wreath of flowers on top. The Chisomo singers of which Sophie had been a part a few years ago sang as they filled the grave.

to give our condolences to Brother Davidson and Sister Maggie and Sophie's daughter, Inez. It was dark and many were sitting outside. The furniture had been cleared out of the living space and women were on the floor crying and singing. After a wake and service the next day for the Blantyre people, they placed her casket on a flat bed truck and loaded up with people and took her to the village for

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