



# MALAWI MISSION PARTNER COMMUNIQUE

By Missionary John Holtz

November 2017

## *"Another Place to Bloom"*

Another book is being written.

I can guarantee a good read.

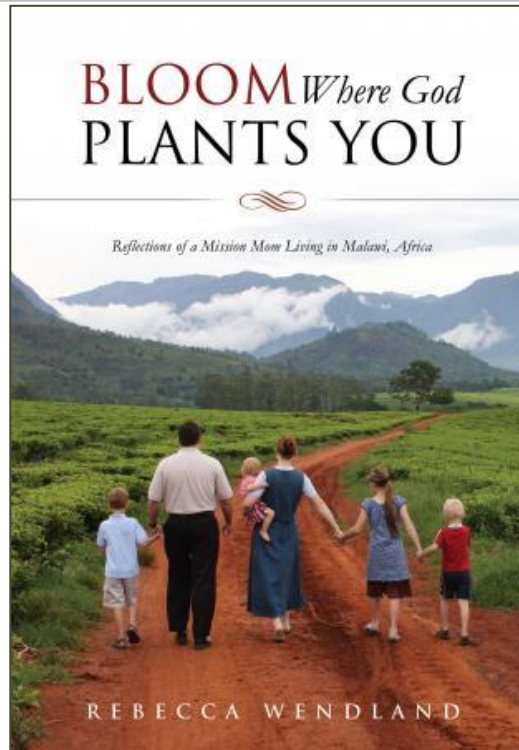
It includes the Rob and Rebecca Wendland family. And so many more.

Maybe you already read the first book that Rebecca authored. She compiled a selection of emails that she and Rob had written to their family and friends over the years while in Malawi, Africa; it was those very writings that became the basis for her book, *"Bloom Where God Plants You."*

And they did.

In 2003 God planted them in Malawi's oldest city and main commercial and industrial center: Blantyre. This is a busy, bustling southern region city of multi-story offices, markets, and mini-bus mayhem. The streets are as crowded as they are noisy.

Rob's ministry work, however, for the most part, took him *out* of the city into the quiet, laidback African bush known as the "Lower Shire." It was there in the stillness of this valley where he would let the Lord Jesus whisper His own story of forgiving love.



Even though Rob and the family are back in Wisconsin, living on the Seminary campus in Mequon, it is this unique Malawi gospel ministry that is still fresh in his mind:

*"Ministering to people in the Lower Shire & working with national pastors have been highlights. Long days down to the Shire, dusty & bumpy roads with enthusiastic members receiving me at the end of the journey are wonderful memories."*

Wonderful memories indeed! And what else will Rob miss about Malawi?

*"Aspects of the culture and people – the rural lifestyle of my (former) members, the way respect is shown and received. The warmth of the people and also warm weather and climate...the people can show so much kindness and patience. The beautiful, tropical landscapes, as well as the relaxed idea of time, are also things I'll miss."*

Rebecca, too, has her things that she will miss about Malawi:

*"I will miss the enthusiasm of the village worship and singing along with the friendly people...I'll miss the*

*tropical weather, plants and country. I will also miss the mission ladies' retreats studying and sharing together God's Word."*

But is there anything Rebecca *won't* miss? Maybe a few things...

*"I will not miss security issues, being far from family & sleeping under mosquito nets. I won't miss power, water, internet & food outages and fuel shortages. I won't miss the dust and mold."*

Though their daughter Bethany won't miss waking up with clusters of bites from "who knows what kind of bugs," she's thinking about the things she really loves. Bethany says she's going to miss the fresh vegetables and fruits (like Litchis<sup>1</sup>) and the delicious slabs of Chambo<sup>2</sup> (aka tilapia) from Lake Malawi.

Hannah and Nathanael, who have been away from Malawi while schooling at Lutheran Prep School (LPS) in Watertown, Wisconsin, both share the same sentiment: *"Though we will miss Malawi, it's going to be nice to have the whole family back together again!"*



*Reunited!*

Hannah, Rebecca, Caleb, Nathanael, Rob.  
In front: Bethany

And now they are.

Perhaps unknowingly, Caleb has been preparing for this day when they would move. Throughout the years he's

been collecting stones. When he and his family would visit various sites throughout Malawi, invariably he would find a stone and keep it. He's selected a few choice ones from his rock-pile stock-pile and has taken them to Wisconsin. Most likely you'll find them proudly displayed on a shelf in his home. His mom comments on his behalf:

*"Those stones bring back memories and are reminders of the special places and times with family...they will serve as concrete reminders of all the rich blessings we have enjoyed together."*

For Rob and Rebecca, those rich blessings have come over a span of 14 years in Malawi.

But the house that was the Wendland home now stands vacant and quiet.

- No more Wendland birthday celebrations at the Kabula house.
- No more St. Andrew school runs.
- No more shopping trips in the Blantyre markets.
- No more holidays at the Lujeri Tea Estate.

The things of Malawi are the things of the past.

We had a farewell.<sup>3</sup> They sorted and sold belongings; they took what they wanted and left behind what they didn't; they packed up, boarded a plane<sup>4</sup> and said good bye to the Warm Heart of Africa and hello to the Dairy State of the USA.

But really it wasn't the land of milk and cheese that beckoned them to move.

The Lord of the Nations did.<sup>5</sup>

The One who called and equipped them to serve in Africa is the same One who now has called them to serve Him in America.

And equip them He will.

Rob will serve as a Church History and Homiletics Professor at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Just think...Rob will have the opportunity to touch the lives of many men who will also go out one day – only God knows where - and proclaim the message of forgiveness in Christ. The very same message that Rob had shared

in the Lower Shire Valley in Malawi!

Imagine how blessed the Seminary students will be to have a professor who will be able to share his rich mission experience that the Lord had given to him on the Malawi field.

*“Dear class, let me tell you about the time when...”*



*Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Campus*

Who knows, maybe some of Rob’s classroom experiences and some of Rebecca’s home situations on the Seminary campus will end up in their emails. I don’t know. I also don’t know if Rebecca will write another book.

But I do know that someone else is writing His: our Lord God! It is the Lamb’s book!<sup>6</sup>

Hasn’t He already begun writing? Isn’t the Author of life also the Author of the Book of Life? Isn’t He, in a sense, writing the chapters of our lives that are yet to be read? And isn’t it true that every believer’s name is written in that book?

And when the last chapter is finally written, those same hands which wrote the book will be the same hands enthusiastically receiving every one of his believers at the end of this earth’s bumpy journey.

Including the Wendland family. Including so many more. Including...you!

A Book we might call a “best seller?” I think so! An exciting read? No doubt!

Even though the Wendlands are now gone from Malawi, they are not gone from the *real* Warm Heart of Africa which is Jesus Himself. The Wendlands are securely tucked in Jesus’ arms like a page in a book.

The next chapter about the Wendland family is now being written. They have been given a new Call. A new home. A new congregation. A new circle of people. In a sense, a new planting by the Gardener Himself.

Another place to bloom.

Sincerely,

Missionary John Holtz  
Your Malawi Mission Partner

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1. Litchi fruit.



2. Chambo.



3. Farewell was on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2017 at Kuchawe in Zomba.



4. Rob, Rebecca, Caleb and Bethany departed Malawi on Sunday, 12 November 2017.

5. Rob received a Call on 3 June 2017 to serve as Professor of Church History and Homiletics at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. He officially accepted the Call to on 16 July 2017.

6. Revelation 21:27