



MALAWI MISSION PARTNER COMMUNIQUE

By Missionary John Holtz

May 2018

“Hearts Aflame”

Seven years ago a fire was kindled.

Today it burns strong and bright.

Aflame are the hearts of nine men¹ who have been studying for the full time ministry since 2011. It was then that they first entered the

Lutheran Bible Institute in Lilongwe, Malawi. It was last year that they all finished the Seminary in Lusaka, Zambia.

“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”²

People asked and God answered.

Nine more workers in Malawi’s harvest field.

Behind them are the rigors of the classroom. Ahead of them are the pastoral responsibilities of the congregation. For the past 10 months, each one of



these young “Timothys” has been getting a taste of practical ministry:

“Vicar year.”

Vicar year has been “boots on the ground” service. Learning the ropes. Testing the waters.

Getting a “feel” for real life ministry: writing and preaching sermons, leading Bible studies, counseling the troubled; meetings and devotions with the elders, the children, the youth, the ladies.

Out of the classroom but in the congregation. But still students of the Scripture. Always students of Scriptures: reading, learning, experiencing, applying the Word of God. Ah, yes, the best tool in the ministry toolbox: the Word of God. Useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.³

Just one month to go before their Vicar year is finished.⁴ This past year has been a warm up for

what lies ahead: becoming a full time ordained minister of the gospel.

No wonder that Wednesday, the 30th of May 2018 has become so special to these men: they each received a double blessing: a diploma and a Call!

The two-fold celebration was combined into one grand day: Graduation and Call Day.

It was marked with just what you'd expect: the presentation of diplomas, the announcement of Calls, the delivering of speeches and the giving of gifts. But the special day was punctuated and highlighted with something greater than all of those combined:

The Word of God.

Rev. Gilbert Mwangomba preached from his chosen text in the book of Jeremiah.⁵ He gave his sermon the theme, *"Let God's Word be Strong in Your Heart!"*



An important message from God for graduates turned vicars turned pastors; an equally important message for you and me.

After all, we can relate to what Jeremiah was going through, can't we? He suffered opposition because of the Word he shared. Taunts and insults came his way.

Give ear to Jeremiah's book and you'll hear the bitter cries of an anguished, rejected man. Jeremiah is not just dejected, he's on the verge of despair.

Empty of joy and full of complaints.

*"Cursed be the day I was born!"*⁶

Though down and out, Jeremiah still grasped the promises of God. One thing had not been extinguished:

The fire.

In his heart, it was still there. The wick was not snuffed out. Faith still flickered. Love still burned. His passion for lost and straying sheep, still aglow. The Holy Spirit had kindled the fire in Jeremiah when he was a young man and He continued to stir, stoke and fan it into flame. Jeremiah himself announced:

"His Word is in my heart like a fire..." (20:9)

Denis Wortman noted the same thing when wrote his hymn, *God of the Prophets* (CW 543):

*Anoint them prophets, men who are intent
To be your witnesses in word and deed,
Their hearts aflame, their lips made eloquent,
Their eyes awake to ev'ry human need.*

His vision was not so much looking *back* at the prophets of old like Jeremiah but looking *ahead* to the preachers who were still to come.

And they still are.

Go back and read the hymn verse again. Meditate on it. Ponder it. Note that Wortman's words are really a request to God. Untold thousands of hymn singers have prayed that petition ever since.

May I humbly beg the same of you? Ask the Holy Spirit to "anoint" these nine men with an extra measure of love for the souls which will be under their care. Plead persistently that Jesus grant them a love to be His witnesses and speak with clarity His amazing gospel of forgiveness. Ask unwaveringly that God the Father awaken them to see the most important needs that the people have.

To be sure, most of you, if not all of you, will be praying for men (and their families) whom you will never meet this side of heaven. They have names

you've probably never heard and come from villages you'll likely never visit and serve churches you'll perhaps never enter.

But just think, because of the grace of God and the work He is doing through the WELS through generous gifts and offerings, Malawi now has...



Vicar Frank Mukhweya gave the student address.

1. Banda, Johnston Chilembwe
Kachimangah, Billy Hardwell
Macherenga, Ammon Mangungu
Mandevu, Stanford Charles
Mitengo, Medson Dyton
Mpingiza, Joseph Joab
Msiska, Khwima Kajitaye
Mukhweya, Frank
Munangali, Lameck Chaponda
2. Matthew 9:37
3. 2 Timothy 3:16
4. June 2018 is the Vicar's last month of work in the congregation then they take a one month holiday (July 2018) before starting the full time ministry in August 2018.
5. Jeremiah 20:7-9.
6. Jeremiah 20:14

- Nine more preachers to proclaim God's love in Jesus Christ.
- Nine more teachers to share Bible Stories and Bible Studies.
- Nine more ambassadors to represent the King of Kings.
- Nine more shepherds to feed and water the sheep.
- Nine more pairs of beautiful feet to climb the heights and descend into the depths to share the good news of the Savior.
- Nine more...

Hearts Aflame.

Sincerely,

Your Malawi Mission Partner,
John Holtz