



# MALAWI MISSION PARTNER COMMUNIQUE

By Missionary John Holtz

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## “Two birds...One stone”

Two birds.  
One stone.

We’ve been killing a lot of our flying friends in Malawi lately.

But don’t worry dear bird lovers and ornithologists! The Crowned Cranes, Fish Eagles and Bee Eaters are safe. And so are all the other species. (At least from us!) Our targets are two birds of a different feather. We want to 1) sharpen our computer skills and 2) submit timely statistical reports. Both “birds” seemed to have eluded us in the past – but now they are in our sights.



### Sharpen our computer skills.

Most every LCCA Called Worker now has a laptop computer. WELS has been generous with such gifts. Some have received computers upon graduation from the Seminary and others received them at different times when requests were considered and granted by the WELS.



Not only did the Malawian Called Workers receive computers, but also an entire library of books and resources from various sources such as the Northwestern Publishing House, Multi-Language Publications and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

What resources are now at the pastors’ fingertips?

Just to name a few...

- The People’s Bible
- The People’s Bible Teaching Books
- Sermon Studies
- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essays
- The Chichewa Bible
- Greek resources
- Videos such as *The Story of Jesus for Children* and the *Jesus Film*.

And so much more!

This amazing library causes no sagging bookshelves. These books have no yellowing pages. No packing and lifting heavy boxes if the pastors are called to another congregation.

Needed? Just a power source and a little “know how” to literally “tap” into a gold mine of Bible information! But not every pastor had received training how to use the computers.

So why not now?

And so they are. Computer skills are being sharpened.

One bird down. And the other?



### **Submit Statistical (HCC) Reports.**

Each year the WELS Board for World Missions (BWM) wants to receive statistical reports from its world mission fields. Malawi included. But keeping and submitting statistics hasn't been a top priority for many in Malawi.

It's time to start.

The WELS BWM would like each world mission field to look at the “statistical report” in a new light: as *Healthy Church Characteristics* or HCC. The new name speaks for itself and it speaks volumes! In a paper about the HCC, the WELS Board for World Missions writes:

*The Core Mission of the WELS World Missions (WM) is to “Spread the Gospel in a way that empowers others to develop healthy and growing churches.” The mission involves not only the proclamation of the Good News but also the development of a culturally appropriate Word and Sacrament ministry by working with local Christians. The local Church will become equipped to make the next disciples.”*

*“The vision of WM is to develop local churches or church bodies that are healthy...development of such a healthy church takes time, planning, effort and above all the Lord's blessings. As the work is*

*being planned and implemented, good stewardship compels us to develop tools to evaluate progress and direction of the work....the complementary tool for evaluation is the statistical report WM refers to as the HCC report.”*

So that's the second bird in our sights: submitting, in a timely way, the statistical, or now known as the HCC report. Here in Malawi, that also means keeping an accurate membership list and monthly reports from the congregations.

But what is this all about really?

WELS President Mark Schroeder answers that question well in his article in the January 2018 issue of the *Forward in Christ: A Lutheran Voice* magazine. He entitled his article, **Souls, not Statistics**. He begins the article this way:

*“It's January, and that means WELS congregations have tabulated and submitted their statistics for 2017. Those statistics track membership, worship attendance, baptisms, confirmations, members joining and leaving as well as congregational finances.”*

He goes on to talk about what those statistics revealed: the slow but steady decline of total membership in WELS; but he also describes a way forward. He then closes the article in this way:

*“In the end, it's not demographics and statistics that should be our focus and interest. Our interest should be in the souls that have been bought by the blood of Christ and in remaining faithful to holding onto and proclaiming the message of the gospel. As we address the challenges together, we look to God for the blessings that only he can give.”*

Well said! It's really all about souls bought by Christ! The whole article is excellently written and worthy of a read. We used it in Malawi to help us understand what place statistics and HCCs really do have in the big picture. Though important, they are not the most important.

So the LCCA Called Workers in Malawi are looking at the HCCs now as a tool for their ministry

in caring for Jesus' sheep. After all, each one is an "under shepherd" of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

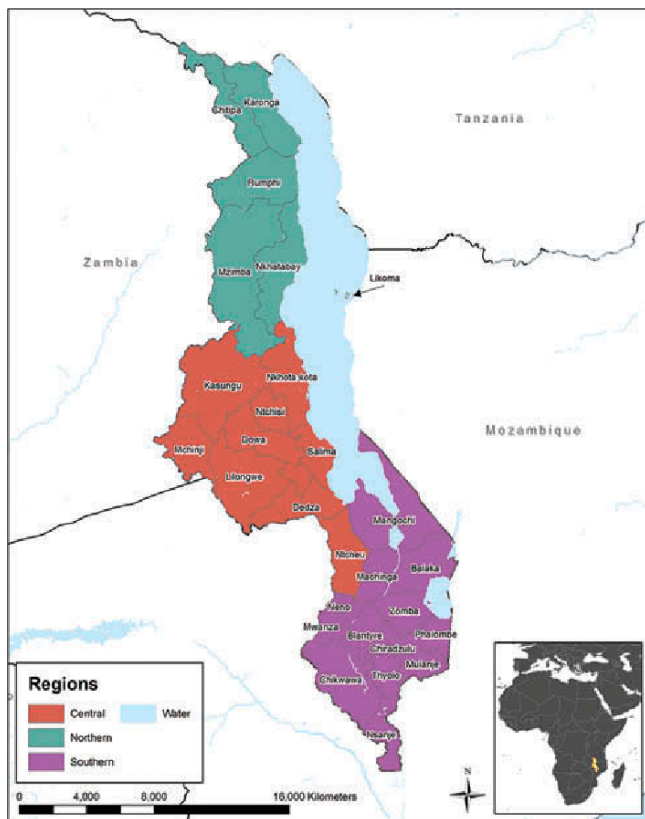
Another bird down.



And it all happened – and is happening – with one stone: The Professional Development Program.

The Professional Development Program in Malawi has been set up to address the ministerial needs of the national Called Workers in Malawi. The Called Workers are given an opportunity to consider and suggest what courses could serve them well. Past courses included the Psalms, Inductive Preaching, a Marriage Seminar, Cultural Awareness and the Reformation.

Each Professional Development Course is presented<sup>1</sup> to each group of Called Workers.<sup>2</sup> Currently there are 5 main groups. These groups are formed on the basis of geographical location.



There are three regions in the country of Malawi: the northern region, the central region and the southern region. Currently there is one group of Called Workers in the north, one in the central and three in the south.

So with a lesson and a truck, the Professional Development course hits the road two times a year. The courses are usually one or two day sessions with a follow-up a month or two later.

The Called Workers are now working hard to gather membership lists, teach their own congregation elders to properly fill out monthly reports and eventually submit the HCCs. At the same time, most of the Called Workers are sharpening their computer skills in doing so!

Two birds.  
One stone.

Your Malawi Mission Partner,

Missionary John Holtz

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1. Presently John Holtz is the one serving in this position.
  2. Currently there are 34 Active Pastors.

Note: Shown in the picture on the first page: Pastor Daile, Pastor Chilembwe, Pastor Mandevu and Pastor Chinyanga at the Computer/HCC course in the Central Region.