

## Education Updates at Namikango by Eric Gephart

### A New Chapter in Training Disciples

For nearly sixty years, Namikango Mission has focused on training and creating church leaders and encouraging people towards maturity of faith as disciples of Jesus. Over the decades, this training of believers has taken many forms, beginning with the Bible schools in the 1960s, expanding into various development ministries over the years. Today, Namikango is known throughout Malawi as a predominant training center for Christians. Thousands of Malawians and Mozambicans have benefitted from classes, services, lessons, and development practices through Namikango's varied ministries.

As Malawi continues to develop, a larger percentage of the population is learning English for professional jobs. Because English is often viewed as a professional language, many churches have, for many years, been asking Namikango for an English Bible curriculum. The ideas behind an English Bible school started developing many years ago and have slowly developed into Namikango's newest ministry: **Discipleship Training Institute (DTI)**.

The DTI will provide a thorough, three-year, 32-course program taught on Namikango's campus in English. Beginning classes will be small, approximately 15 students per class, and will go through the program together as a cohort. This close-knit group of students and their families will learn and grow together in the curriculum's four educational streams: Biblical Theology, Spiritual Leadership, Community Development, and Personal Identity. Each section of classes has been created to cover educational principles as well as practical applications - specifically for church leaders in rural Malawi.

In addition to classroom education, students will also intern at a local church for the duration of their studies. This internship will give the student valuable experience in church leadership and also give the student space to try out their classroom knowledge in real life situations. Namikango Mission will benefit by employing students and their spouses as day laborers for our agriculture ministries.

We at Namikango are very excited about this new ministry and look forward to launching the school in February 2021. Please pray for the Mission as we look toward this launch date and work to accomplish everything necessary to be ready by that time!

### Teaching All Namikango's Ministries

The Discipleship Training Institute (DTI) is the newest ministry that Namikango is launching. It is in no way a departure from the nearly 60-year legacy of Namikango in Malawi – but an additional avenue.

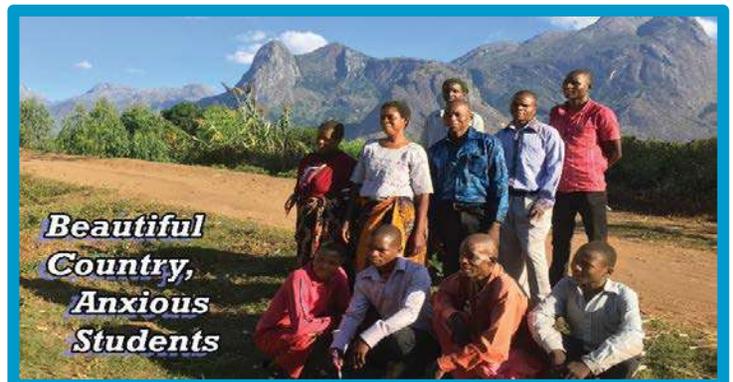
Since the 1960s, Namikango has been known country-wide through its Village Bible Schools as a mission that emphasizes Biblical literacy in the Church of Christ. While these Village Bible Schools are a continuing ministry at Namikango, the DTI will bring these Biblical studies together with Namikango's Community Development Ministries to allow students to learn skills from every ministry.

The curriculum for the DTI is robust and rigorous, broken into four themes. The first is **Biblical Theology** which includes traditional Biblical classes necessary for students to understand the Bible's content and message. The second is **Spiritual Leadership** and includes classes aimed at preparing students to become leaders in their churches. These classes include preaching and teaching, spiritual formation, counseling, and other instruction essential for church leaders to productively and spiritually lead their congregations.

The third theme is **Community Development**. It focuses on common problems faced by many rural Malawian villages today. These classes help prepare the students with skills necessary to address the community needs and serve their neighbors as Jesus commanded. The classes include HIV awareness and prevention, Malawian agriculture practices, and Village Savings and Loans, all done through our Community Health Evangelism (CHE) Ministry.

The fourth and final theme is **Personal Identity**. These courses focus on the student's personal relationship and identity in light of Christ's love. The classes help students understand themselves and how God views them so they can become transformed disciples of Christ - ready to go out and make more disciples. Classes focus on the student as an individual and in relationships with their family, church, and community.

Students in the DTI program will graduate with certifications in all of Namikango's ministries. It is our prayer that this new school will bring together Namikango's many ministries under the legacy of Biblical education for the Church of Christ in Malawi.



## Pandemic Procedures

As the Corona virus swept across the United States, causing lockdowns, churches had to decide the best way to continue Sunday services. Sunday services were unhealthy, and potentially against lockdown rules for crowds. Thankfully, most churches in America were already equipped with some form of technology and transitioned their services into an online format. Most congregations have continued meeting online throughout this pandemic, and though it feels odd to “go to church” on your couch, we have continued to enjoy access to worship and preaching.

But what happens when you’re in remote Malawi and your church has no technology? How do you continue church during a pandemic in Malawi?

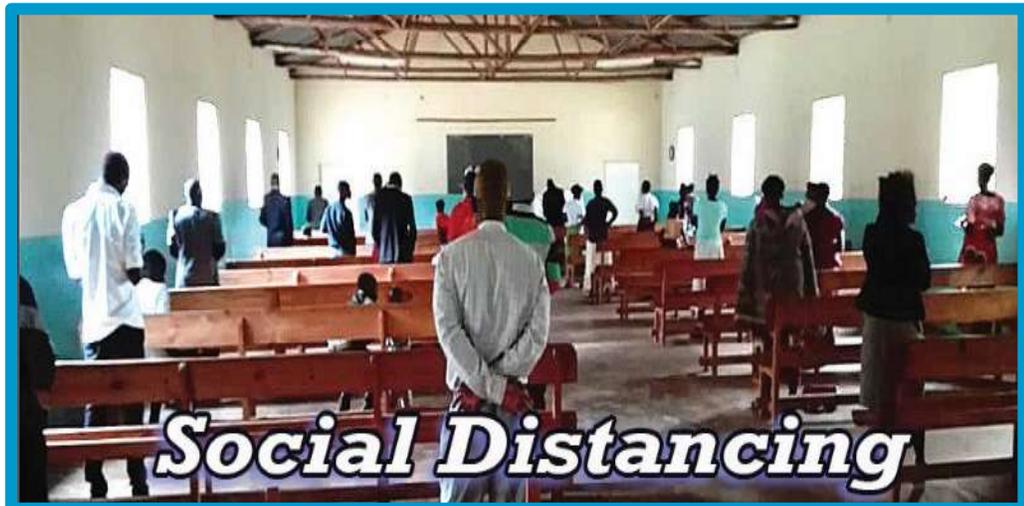
These are the questions our church leaders have been asking over the last month. Malawi is one of the last countries on the planet to join the pandemic, meaning the churches had time to prepare themselves and their congregants.

Weeks before the first confirmed virus cases were reported in Malawi, many churches began educating congregants on symptoms and prevention methods. Washing stations were set up outside most churches,

and congregations were split into smaller groups in anticipation of lockdown restraints.

Since the virus has now been confirmed in Malawi, congregations like Thondwe Church of Christ (pictured here) began multiple services, with church leaders running two, three, and sometimes even four services back-to-back, taking all day Sunday. Around 50 people at a time come to take part in a shorter service, sitting apart, washing their hands when they leave, and making room for the next 50.

In this way, the churches are continuing to meet while leading their communities by example – 50 people at a time with lots of fellowship but no hand shaking. Eric



## View from a Grandparent

by Jane Evans (mother of Becca Hayes)

We have been blessed beyond measure with our children living in Malawi. Such amazing adventures we have had! Malawi is a beautiful country made even more beautiful with its warm, gentle people (there is a reason why it is called, “The warm heart of Africa”).

We have enjoyed gorgeous views of the green mountains, amazing sunsets, and have listened to the songs of the birds. We have seen wonderful things – lions, elephants, those crazy army ants, waterfalls, markets filled with all manner of items, and women in colorful native fabric.

We watched the baboons taunt the dogs and steal the mangos at Ben and Becca’s house. They were quite entertaining! And we’re watching as our precious grandchildren grow into God-loving children. The 40-hour journey is not easy, but the hugs from those grandchildren make it worthwhile.

Several years ago, our son, Gary, Jr., and his family traveled with us to Malawi. It was a great experience for the cousins to get together. The African cousins were

excited to show their American cousins where they lived and played. We got to experience worship in a village church and sit on the ground for a meal.

On one of our treks we had to pull off the road for the Malawian President to pass. That trip was an experience of a lifetime.

We believe in the work at Namikango. Ben and the other team members are doing an amazing work. So much has changed since we first started visiting there. Many lives have been touched and brought to the Lord. God is certainly working at this Mission. The work is hard and, because of this being a different culture, at times it can be challenging.

Please pray for our family over there, for the workers, for the churches, and for the many people that need the Good News of Jesus. Thank you for your support of this great work!





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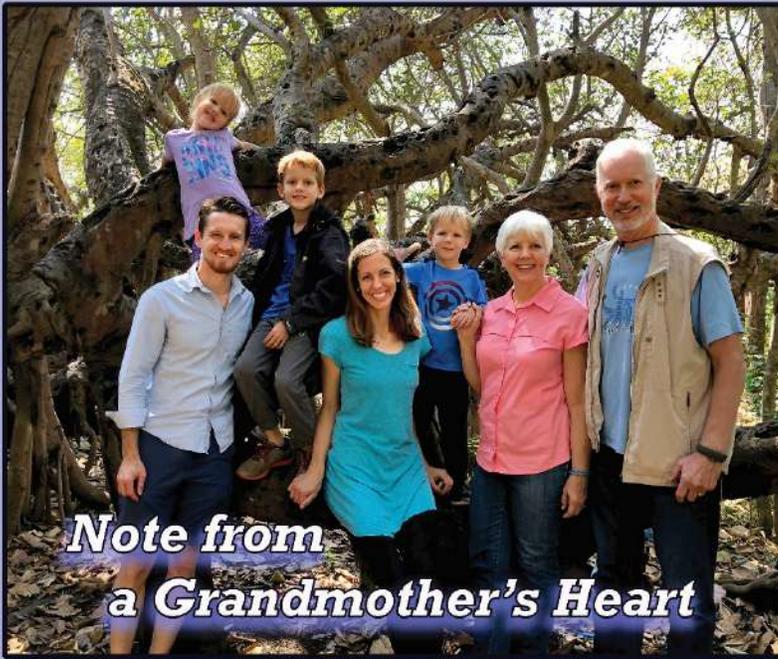
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## Malawi is Experienced at Combating Plagues

by Sidney Vaughn

Over the years, malaria has been an ongoing health struggle for Malawi and other regions of Africa; thankfully, Malawi has been winning this battle. But this was not so in the recent past. In the late 1800s missionaries came from England to Malawi knowing that 90% of them would die of malaria. It was not a matter of if they would die of malaria but when, which was likely within TWO years. It took real dedication to the Lord for a person to make the decision to become a missionary and go to Malawi. What a commitment to the Gospel that was ... and still is.

One great English hero, physician, missionary, and explorer, made Malawi famous as he traveled to Malawi and made reports of these gentle people, of the beautiful land, and giant lakes. His name was Dr. David Livingstone.

Lake Malawi and Mulanje Mountain were sights that Livingstone was the first European to see. He died in nearby Zambia in 1873 of malaria. He is credited with aiding in abolishing slavery.

On one of my visits to Malawi, I was traveling with Jim Albright when we came to Monkey Bay, south of Lake Malawi. Jim pointed out the many gravesites there. All of them were graves of missionaries who came and died. They thought malaria was transmitted in the air, especially in the mist around stagnate water. They tried to avoid these areas but died anyway. Imagine knowing that your time of serving was probably going to be limited to two years or less. It was some

time before they heard of quinine being effective in prevention and treatment.

Malawians were more resistant to malaria; having grown up with it, they built up immunities. However, many of the locals still die of malaria. It remains the major cause of death in children under 5 years old. Thirty-three percent of the children in Malawi die of malaria, even with medicines available.

Quinine has become the best treatment for malaria and now it is hoped to be a possible relief for some symptoms of the coronavirus.





## COVID Update by Ben Hayes

The government in Malawi has required all non-essential businesses to move to office shifts, rotating the staff in and out, and minimizing the group gatherings. Like here in the US, health services are considered essential, so our maternity staff must continue to work, while our other staff members operate in shifts.

We received a request from Moses (our Clinic Administrator) to purchase some of the needed supplies so our maternity workers could continue working safely. Our other staff members will be working mostly from home.

The cost was for these supplies is \$1,300 for boots, masks, gloves, aprons and soap/hand sanitizer for our 25 maternity staff members. The govt. has not been able to provide any protective equipment for many health workers, thus causing some to stop going to work for fear of contracting the virus.



Even though we too had not planned this expense in our budget, we felt it necessary to provide funds to make this provision. If anyone would like to make a special donation to cover this unexpected expense, it would certainly be appreciated.

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