

AFRICAN MEMORIES



JOHN & JUDY POTTER

WAY BOOKS

MORAYFIELD, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

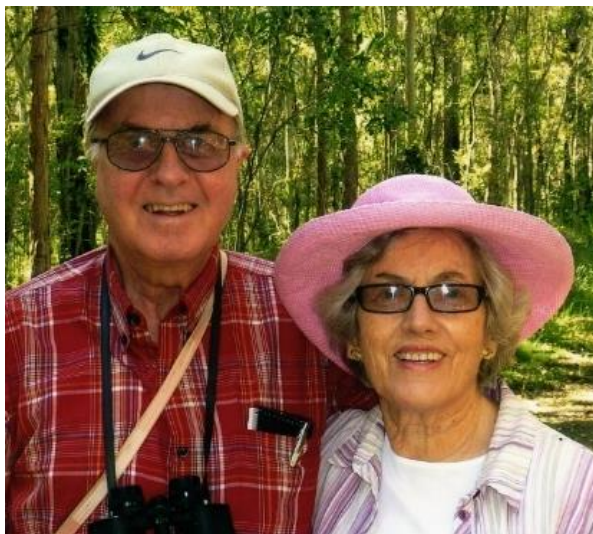
AFRICAN MEMORIES

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Cover Picture: Moving Timber on Zomba Mountain 1978



John & Judy Potter, an Australian couple,
called to work in Africa 1976-2015

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FOREWORD

This book records some experiences enjoyed by John and Judy Potter in Africa in the years 1976 to 2015.

The Lord began to bring Africa to our attention in 1975, but it was when we were 42 and 41 years of age respectively, on the 20th of June 1976, that we received a specific invitation to give ourselves and our family into God's hands for his purposes (Deut.16:9-11). After spending three days thinking about this as individuals, we came together and made the Pentecostal Offering, giving ourselves, our three sons and our daughter, and all of our possessions into God's care. A few weeks later, John left his job in the South Australian Department of Agriculture and took off for Africa to see what the Lord wanted us to do.

We were domiciled in Africa for fourteen years in two stages: three years in South Africa and Malawi (1977-79); and eleven years in South Africa (1988-1998). In between these sojourns and post 1998, one or both of us revisited the continent many times on short term assignment.

As an extension to our calling, our eldest son Tim took a job in South Africa in 1980. He is still there 44 years later and currently employed as a Director and Chief Engineer for the Motheo Construction Group. In 1987m our second son Mike and his wife Dani were sovereignly called to teach school in Kenya; they remained there for twelve and a half years and, since coming home, continue to make trips to Kenya to support an orphanage program.

In October of 2015, we closed our African work. Over forty years, we never belonged to an aid or missionary organisation. Our work was

financed from our own resources together with some timely and welcome unsolicited gifts from interested friends and supporters.

Not everything that we set ourselves to do in Africa was successful. We did our best, but our best was not always good enough in the face of the stiff spiritual opposition we encountered along the way. The Lord knows well our human frailty; we leave the judgment of our time in Africa to Him.

We had grace to understand that we were not the first to bring the consolation of the Gospel to Africa, that our calling was only a small part in the long term plan the Lord has for Africa. We rejoice to have been part of a continuing line of faithful people who have been led by the Holy Spirit to leave their homes and friends in the United Kingdom, the USA, Canada, Australia, and other places, to walk with the Lord amongst the inhabitants of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Along the way, we met some outstanding pioneers and senior statesmen of mission effort in Southern, Central and East Africa. We also met many people who will never grace the pages of books on missionary achievement but, nevertheless, have done outstanding work at great personal cost to advance the cause of Christendom in Africa. They will reap their reward in another world in which God's righteousness will reign for all eternity. Let us introduce you to a few of them.

John & Judy Potter
Morayfield, Queensland Australia
January 2023

YEARS OF PREPARATION

John was born in St Peters, an inner suburb of Adelaide in South Australia on the 10th of April 1934. Judy was born, Judy Solomon, in Jamestown, a rural town north of Adelaide, on the 9th of April 1935.

We were both born into Methodist households, something for which we are extremely grateful. Our parents were seventh generation from the Wesleyan Revival in England, and we enjoyed an outstanding childhood as a result of being brought up in that culture. Our family connections with vibrant Methodist communities, meant that Church, Sunday School, and Church Sports Clubs were our main places of social interaction on weekends in our teen years. We met for the first time in Sunday School in 1950, aged 16 and 15.

During the week in our childhood and teen years, as was common practice, we applied ourselves to our education. John attended East Adelaide Primary School, Urrbrae Agricultural High School, Adelaide High School, and the University of Adelaide – graduating in 1956 with a degree in Agricultural Science. Judy attended Orroroo Primary School, Glenelg Primary School, Adelaide High School, and a Business College prior to taking a job with an Insurance Company.

We married in 1958 and immediately relocated to Jamestown where John had been appointed to work as a Soil Conservation Officer by his employer, the South Australian Department of Agriculture. Judy never returned to employed work. From the day we were married she set herself to become a consummate house manager and mother. We spent just over four years in Jamestown before being shifted to Loxton on the River Murray for another four plus years. We had three sons, Tim, Mike, and Steve, during our time in South Australian country

appointments. In September 1966, John was appointed to a senior position in Adelaide to oversee Soil Conservation Work Statewide. We settled into a suburb north of Adelaide called Broadview and enjoyed seven years of interaction with the local Methodist community. Our life as a family continued to be stable, productive, and enjoyable.

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Backing up a bit, we should tell you a little about our spiritual journey. In 1951, at age 17, John was attending Church regularly, singing in the choir and teaching Sunday School but feeling the need to have a more direct connection with the Lord. In this regard he was a bit of a misfit with his teenage peers and even Judy. His study years, marriage and work progressed normally and successfully, but behind the scenes he continued to seek a personal relationship with the Lord.

Nothing happened until June 1966 when John was 32 years of age. One Sunday evening in Loxton, he was sitting alone in our house reading a tract on prophecy and speaking in tongues. Judy had gone to church, and John was baby-sitting the boys. Suddenly, John was surrounded by the Holy Spirit's presence. He sat there somewhat stunned. Nothing else happened and after a few minutes the Lord quietly retired. John later realised that this was the Lord's way of alerting him to the fact that he, like everybody else since Pentecost 30AD, was baptised (immersed) in the Holy Spirit. Since that time, he has experienced the Holy Spirit's *external* presence countless times – it is the Lord's way of letting us know that He is with us, and we are on track. Some people call it 'the anointing'.

The next thing that happened was in 1969 when John became aware

that the Lord was leading him to be baptised. As a Methodist he had been Christened as a child, but this time it was the Holy Spirit specifically instructing John to get baptised by immersion in water in his adult life. John was baptised in a small Pentecostal Church one Friday evening; and that night, in bed, he experienced the ‘washing of regeneration’ (Titus 3:5). He got up the next morning completely clean inside.

It was only in April 1972, that John experienced being FILLED with the Holy Spirit. One Saturday afternoon, under prayer from some Pentecostal brethren, the Lord exploded in John’s innermost being and completely occupied the place where he thought and had his being. Following this experience, John began receiving sovereign words from the Lord; he was on the journey of renewal of the mind (Titus 3:5). The Lord was not only *with him*, but also *in him* (John 14:17)!

John’s first Spirit-infilling experience had a direct effect on the family. That night we all attended an Assemblies of God Crusade in Adelaide and Judy, and the three boys, all went forward to give their lives to the Lord. Judy was determined not to be left behind!

The first ‘word’ John received from the Holy Spirit was an instruction as he stepped out of our Broadview front door one morning. The Lord said: “Read the book of Jeremiah.” John said: “Lord I am on my way to work just now, but I will read a chapter of Jeremiah each day as you have suggested.” Over the first thirty days John found the book of Jeremiah exceedingly boring. It was only on the thirty-first day that the lights came on; John had discovered the New Covenant statement announced by Jeremiah and picked up by the writer to the Hebrew in Chapters 8 and 10. John now had clear guidance as to the operation of

the Holy Spirit in his life and had found the doorway to sonship.

The first practical result of John's connection with the Holy Spirit came in 1973; he began to feel strongly that our family should move from our city home to Coromandel Valley, a small rural community in the hills just south of Adelaide. John's brother and other Christian friends of ours were located there. We moved in August 1973. This proved to be an Exodus 'entering the land' experience. We 'camped at Kadesh-Barnea' for six months while our new house was being built. While we were there, the Lord spoke to John again, saying: "John, I am going to fill your house with the Holy Spirit." John had been reading about Solomon's temple being filled with the Lord's presence and interpreted this as the Lord saying that He was going to manifest His presence in the house that was being built. The Lord surprised us by leading Judy, our three boys, and eight other young people from Coromandel Valley to travel to Elizabeth in the north of Adelaide, over two nights, where all of them were filled with the Holy Ghost and entered into the joy of the Lord! Our house (the people) was indeed filled with the Holy Spirit!

This was not the end of it. When we finally crossed into the land, we found that our physical house was also filled with the Lord's presence. In Coromandel Valley we became part of a community of Spirit-led people. We attended morning services at the local Methodist Church each Sunday, but our fellowship was a daily process of interactions, both practical and spiritual. There was no Sunday evening service at the church, so we began to meet in our home. We had a large lounge/dining room and up to seventy people met there each Sunday evening. The next three years were a time of incredible blessing. The Arc of the Lord was present in our home; people were healed of physical ailments in the midst of the praise and

children as young as seven years were filled with the Holy Spirit just walking around the room! Once again, the Lord was *with* us as well as *in* us.

In November 1974 John received another sovereign word: “John, read the book of Haggai”. This told us that the Lord’s objective was for us to build the ‘temple’ in these restoration times. We did not understand the full implication of what the Lord was showing us at the time, but we did understand that the end-time temple is made of human agents, not bricks and mortar (Eph.2:19-22; I Peter 2:3-5). We were to learn a great deal more about this process as time went by.

AFRICA

From mid-1974, we found ourselves being surrounded with information about Africa. There was no ‘word from heaven’, just a lot of African news coming at us. We said to the Lord, “We are happy to go to Africa if that is you want us to do.”

For a time, the Lord said nothing. Life continued as normal, apart from one extremely important surprise. Judy became pregnant at 39 years old and delivered a baby girl, Elizabeth Anne Potter, on the 20th of July 1975. We do not wish to be hyper-spiritual about this, but the circumstances relating to this pregnancy confirmed to us that this was part of God’s sovereign plan for our family. It is impossible to relate how much Elizabeth has contributed to our lives. She was the child of our ministry years, came with us to Africa at age eighteen months, and is standing with us today in our later years.

On Sunday the 24th of August 1975, John was driving our Kombi Van down the road from Blackwood to Coromandel Valley when what

seemed like an audible voice said to him: “Tomorrow I am going to bring a prophet amongst you”!

As it happened, John was due to fly to Brisbane, Queensland, on the 25th of August, to interview two people for a job in the Agricultural Department. When he arrived at the airport, he saw Pastor Andrew Evans who had baptised him in 1969 and went over to say hello to him. With him was Gerald Rowlands, Pastor of Glad Tidings Tabernacle in Brisbane. He had been in Adelaide to preach the previous evening. Gerald was travelling back to Brisbane on the same plane as John. John was travelling in what we now call Business Class and Gerald was in Economy. They had a stop-over in Sydney. When they entered the Sydney terminal, Gerald called out to John and asked if they could re-book their seats to Brisbane as the Lord had spoken a word to him that he wanted to share with John. Thus, it was, that Gerald shared with John how the Lord had led him to go to Africa, how he had resigned his position in Brisbane and how he and his family were heading for White River in South Africa at the end of the year. He then turned to John and said: “On the way to Sydney the Lord told me to tell you that He needs Agricultural Scientists in Africa. Does that mean anything to you?” John said: “Gerald, I am an agricultural scientist, and the Lord has been surrounding me with information about Africa. I shall certainly pray about it.”

When they arrived in Brisbane, Gerald and John parted. John went to the hotel where he had booked a room for the interviews. He had two hours to wait for the first interview. As he sat there, he was suddenly confronted by a vision of African people, mostly women and children, smiling and waving to him. This was the first such vision he had ever had. It was an extraordinary experience! Then the Lord spoke: “Read Isaiah 55”. John did so and understood. The chapter spoke about

moving out of doing things in your own strength and moving into the Lord's plan for your life. Verse 12 spoke of going out in joy and being greeted by singing and clapping of hands; it seemed to John that this fitted well with the vision he had seen. At that time, John missed the significance of verse 5; the Lord was holding that back for another occasion.

John completed his interviews and flew home to Adelaide in the afternoon. That evening he shared with the family for the first time that the Lord had something for us to do in Africa.

About six months passed and we had no further word from the Lord. Now and then we would tell the Lord: "Lord, we are ready to go to Africa, just tell us how and when please." But there was no reply.

In July 1976, John was travelling to Loxton for three days of meetings when something like a claw took hold of his head. John started receiving bad thoughts which he could not control. He sweated his way through his meetings without telling anybody what was happening to him. On the way home, he cried out: "Lord, I am going to Africa!" Immediately, the claw was gone. This was the first experience John had had of the Lord's disciplines. Thankfully not the last; we value the Lord's discipline more than we can say.

When John arrived home, he shared his experience with Judy, and we waited on the Lord for further direction. Nothing came, so in desperation, on Sunday night the 20th of June 1976, we got on our knees before the oil fire in our lounge room and said: "Lord, we are desperately in need of some direction. Please help us." Immediately John received the scripture Deuteronomy 16:9-11. Seeking confirmation, he said: "Lord, I believe you are going to give Judy a word". Judy had never had 'a word' before; she opened her eyes, saw

John reading Deuteronomy, and cried out: “Why are you reading Deuteronomy?” “Why do you ask,” John said. She said: “As soon as I closed my eyes, I saw the word Deuteronomy, in flames.” We concluded that this was definitely something from God!

Deuteronomy 16:9-10 is a statement relating to the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. The Feast of Weeks is seven weeks long and you keep it by giving something to the Lord equal in size to what the Lord has done for you. We thought about this scripture for three days independently. We both came to the same conclusion; God was asking us for total commitment. We came together again and gave our lives, our children and all of our possessions into the Lord’s hands for Him to dispose of as He willed.

The first practical outcome of this was that John resigned from his job with the Department of Agriculture, to come into effect on the 8th of August, seven weeks from the 20th of June. This brought about an amazing response. When the word got out that he had resigned, John had people from Victoria chasing him to come and work for them. Then he was advised by letter that he had been recommended for the position of Director of Land Degradation with The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation located in Rome at twice his current salary in \$USD – the top job in his field in the world! Was this the devil or was the Lord testing our resolve!

John was in Canberra a few days later and received a call from Francois de Toit, the Agricultural Attaché with the South African Embassy. John had met Francois at a recent conference. They met for lunch. When John told Francois that he was heading to South Africa, Francois asked him if he was willing to make a few courtesy calls with South African Government Agricultural Officials while he was

there. After lunch Francois took John to the Australian National University and introduced him to the Head of Agronomy from Fort Hare University in the Ciskei in South Africa, a university set up specifically for Black African people – Nelson Mandela was a student there for a time. This man offered John a job as Senior Lecturer in Agronomy on the spot! It began to sink in to John that he had definitely done the right thing by resigning!!

THE FIRST SPY TRIP

John booked a trip to South Africa to spy out the land. He took off on the 25th of August 1976 – exactly one year from the day of his calling in Brisbane (above). The only people he knew in Africa were Gerald and Elizabeth Rowlands. They had landed in South Africa in January 1976 and were now living in White River, working with the Emmanuel Press (EP), so John headed there.

John had noted that his flight from Australia was due to arrive in Johannesburg at 11pm and he needed to organise accommodation overnight before flying to Nelspruit the next morning. He asked a former colleague who had worked in Botswana to recommend a place for him to stay. He gave John the address of the Moulin Rouge Hotel in Hillbrow. This was a few weeks after the Soweto Riots when a number of students had been shot by the South African Police. John was not aware that Hillbrow was fast becoming a centre for activists bent on violent action against apartheid. He spent a restful night, was introduced to guava juice at breakfast, and took a two hour walk through the streets of Hillbrow which he found completely peaceful.

The small domestic service plane that John caught to Nelspruit was ideal for viewing the landscape over which he flew the next day. It was the end of the dry season. As a professional soils-man, John was

struck by the mud flows that gave clear evidence of Noah's Flood.

John landed at Nelspruit Airport around 5pm. He looked for Gerald and Elizabeth Rowlands. He had advised them that he was coming so he was surprised to find them not there. He waited for an hour or so, but nobody came. The young couple running the airport were ready to close the facility. Finding John still there they asked him where he was going. When John told them White River, they said: "We live in White River so we can take you there."

John spent his second night in Africa in a thatched cottage at the White River Hotel. He still remembers the unfamiliar smell of the thatched roof and the incredible noise made by the local frogs as they croaked their way to some watery breeding spot. The next morning, John rang the Emmanuel Press. Loreen Newington answered and soon afterwards she and David picked John up and transported him to the Rowlands home on Mont de Dieu. There he was told that Gerald had spent the weekend ministering in Swaziland and was only due back that day.

Mont de Dieu is a property of around twenty morgen (one morgen is about one hectare). The property was purchased in the mid-1970s by a young couple called Oscar and Nancy Röttcher; they bought it specifically to house the missionaries that the Lord was sending to work in the Emmanuel Press (EP) operation. It was they who gave the property its name: 'Mount of God'.

On the property there was a main house which the Rowlands were occupying. Associated with this house were two cottages. At the other end of the property there were four more houses which were occupied in 1976 by the Kirbys, the Blanches, the Brodericks and the Smallmans – all from the UK. The Röttchers lived on an adjacent

property and Nancy's parents, the Newingtons, lived in a granny flat rondavel there. Nancy's sister Joy and her husband Adrian, the Horshams, also had a house on that property. Together, these families constituted the Emmanuel Press family.

After a night in the Rowlands house, John woke with the word: Zechariah 4. This is a word to Zerubbabel and specifically a call to build the temple. More of this later!

After one night on Mont de Dieu, Gerald and John returned to Swaziland. There John had the pleasure of sitting alone in the stands surrounded by African people at the Swaziland Independence Day Celebrations. Amidst endless marching routines by Swazi warriors, the program for the day included a message from Howard Jones from the Billy Graham Association in the USA. John met the Rev Jones at the back of the stands later in the day. With him was Elijah Maswangani, a Shangaan preacher from South Africa who later became a good friend to our family.



Howard Jones and Elijah Maswangani

John was privileged to stay with the Rowlands and mix with the EP team for three weeks filled with a multitude of introductory experiences to Africa. He visited the Kruger National Park, attended a Christian caravan park meeting on a long weekend, shared the pulpit in a large Indian Church in Durban with Gerald, and met the daughter of Congo missionary Willie Burton in Vryheid, amongst other things.

After three weeks of investigation, John came to understand that the Lord would be pleased if our family moved to South Africa in January 1977 to prepare to open an office for the EP in the Central African country of Malawi. This decision was reinforced by the fact that Bill Kirby had visited Malawi in August 1975 to investigate that possibility and had returned with a good report **on the very same day** that John had received his vision and Isaiah 55 in Brisbane - the 25th of August 1975. The Emmanuel Press Directors agreed with John's decision.

John left White River on Monday the 19th of September. The Press people had arranged for him to stay with Dr Harry and Marina Brodrick in Pretoria. John spent the next week catching up with courtesy calls. He took a two-day trip by air to East London to visit Fort Hare University just in case he was missing something, and this was where he was supposed to be heading. He flew out on a Tuesday and landed to find the whole region covered with fog. His contact met him, and they drove through King Williamstown to the campus, with fog all the way. The campus was closed because the students had recently tried to burn it down. John returned to East London the next day, still in fog, and left completely sure that this was not where the Lord wanted him to be!

On returning to Pretoria, John dealt with government courtesy calls in

Pretoria arranged by Francois de Toit, and then took a train to Potchefstroom, to visit staff at the University there. A few years previously John had hosted a Dr Grobler and a Mr Knott from this University when they visited Australia. He had forgotten about this but was reminded of it when taking tea from a silver tea service with the Vice-Chancellor. Mr Knott it seemed was away for the day but would like to catch up with John in the evening at his hotel. The visit to the University was uneventful; John was certain he was not being called to work in Potchefstroom.

That evening Bob Knott met John in his room at the hotel. They chatted about soils and other things of common interest for a time before he asked John: "What brings you to South Africa, Mr Potter." So it was that John explained to him how he had committed his life to the Lord and had been led to visit Africa to find out what he was supposed to be doing. Bob jumped up, grabbed John's hand, and ran him down the stairs to his VW car, crying: "You must meet my wife; she is a prophet!" They drove down darkened streets and stopped in front of a suburban house with one light showing. When they went in, they found a woman sitting at a dining room table talking to a Jew who had recently found Jesus as his Messiah. After dismissing the Jew, she turned to John without introduction and said: "You must go to Hatfield Baptist Church this weekend. In the future you will be involved with a book shop. That is all. Good evening." With that, John was taken back to his hotel where he spent some time praying. The Lord spoke only one word: "Your mother will come with you to Africa." The next day John took the train back to Pretoria.

As it turned out, the Brodricks with whom John was staying were members of the Hatfield Baptist Church and it had been their intention to take him to the morning service on the coming Sunday



Hatfield Christian Church in Pretoria, September 1976

morning. They arrived at the church building just as the service was starting. The only seats left for them were three rows from the front on the extreme left-hand side. This proved to be strategic as from there John could see that, while Pastor Ed Roebert was leading an outstanding time of prophetic praise, there was another man, hidden from most people behind the pulpit, who was experiencing an intense time of prayer. This was the preacher for the day, Jan van der Hoeven, Secretary General to the Christian Embassy in Jerusalem. At the appropriate time van der Hoeven was introduced. He rose and said: “Last week I was in Washington DC in the USA. As we were driving down the freeway I noticed that the odometer was reading 555. I knew immediately that this was Isaiah 55:5: ‘Thou shall call a nation that you know not, and nations that know you not, will run to thee because of the Lord your God.’”

As we indicated, above, that verse from Isaiah 55 had not penetrated John’s thinking in 1975 in Brisbane, now it was being brought to his

attention dramatically. Van der Hoeven went on to preach from Matthew 25, but the Lord said to John: “I am confirming your calling to Malawi”. This was the 25th of September 1976. John flew out to Australia that evening.

When John arrived in Adelaide, the family was at the airport to meet him. John’s mother was there waving at him and calling out excitedly: “I am coming with you to Africa!” Audrey Potter was about to become a missionary at age 68!

JOHN'S MOTHER AUDREY – IN THE QUIETNESS OF THE NIGHT

Audrey Potter, nee Webber, was born in 1909 in a small township in the south-east of South Australia called Kalangadoo. She was the third child of George and Eliza Webber, Methodists and shopkeepers by profession.

When Audrey was five years old, the family moved to Lameroo in the South Australian Murray Mallee. The Methodist minister at Lameroo was the Rev Robert Stanley; for some reason he and his wife took a special interest in Audrey. They had been missionaries in the Pacific Islands, and they said to Audrey one day: “You will be a missionary one day, Audrey.” The comment stuck in Audrey’s mind.

Audrey was ‘commercially literate’, despite only having schooling to Year Nine. She could add up a column of figures upside down, faster than the person serving her - much to the embarrassment of her children on some occasions. Soon after Audrey finished her schooling the family moved to Adelaide, where Audrey served in a millenary shop prior to meeting and marrying Brian Potter, a lithographer, and a SA State Opera tenor. The couple settled in St Peters, a close-in suburb of Adelaide. In time, John was born, followed by his brother David three years later.

In 1945, Brian joined Ted Stallard in a partnership to develop what proved to be a successful printing business. Audrey, spent the next forty years as a home maker, as was the practice of the day for Methodist married women. She was an outstanding cook and seamstress, making all of John’s and David’s clothes, including suits. She was also a good pianist and accompanied Brian in Opera Arias at

Potter family get together. When John and David were teenagers, Audrey ran a grocery and vegetable shop for a season.

Sadly, Audrey was widowed at age 63 years. Brian died of a massive heart attack in August 1972, aged 66. By this time, they had moved to a beach house located at a seaside resort south of Adelaide called Port Noarlunga.

On the card we prepared for posting to people who expressed condolences for John's father's passing, we included the scripture: "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion." We used this scripture because John was in his office in Adelaide when Judy rang with the news that his father had died. After hanging up the phone John bowed his head and said to the Lord: "What about my Dad Lord?" (Brian had been a lifelong practicing member of the Methodist Church but had not met the Holy Spirit in the way that we had recently). Immediately, the word of the Spirit came: "Our hope is in the Lord." John was filled with the Holy Spirit and experienced an extraordinary joy that did not leave him throughout the whole business of the funeral and assisting his mother make the necessary adjustments in her life.

A few months after Brian died, Audrey heard singing coming from the street in front of her house. She went out and found six young people, one with a guitar. They were singing: "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return....". When the song was finished, Audrey went over to them and said: "I know that song, we put it on my husband's funeral card." It turned out that the singers were from a small Pentecostal Church in neighbouring Christies Beach. One thing led to another, and Audrey finished up attending that church, getting filled with the Holy Ghost and finding rich fellowship within the church

community. There she developed a close relationship with the Lord. We were not at all surprised when she announced she was coming with us to Africa.

THE POTTER FAMILY MOVES TO SOUTH AFRICA

When our family moved to White River in January 1977, we consisted of John, Judy, Audrey, our sons Mike and Steve, and Elizabeth our eighteen-month-old daughter. Our eldest son Tim stayed in Coromandel Valley with friends to continue his studies in engineering at Adelaide University.

While in White River, we stayed in one of the cottages near the Rowlands home. We expected to be there for just a few weeks because our destination was the country of Malawi, sixteen hundred kilometres to the north. Gerald Rowlands and John flew to Malawi early in February 1977, where John found and applied for a job in the Ministry of Agriculture that exactly suited his qualifications and experience. They flew back to South Africa content in the knowledge that the Potters would soon be packing up again and heading northwards. In fact, we did not leave for Malawi until the 4th of July 1977, almost six months after we had first landed in South Africa.

We spent most of our time in South Africa with the white community. Our only opportunity to connect with Africans was a regular preaching engagement with a large Teacher's College called Ngwenya located in the nearby township of KaNyamazane. On the first occasion that we went to Ngwenya, there was an enthusiastic response when John introduced Judy and our sons and our daughter. When he introduced Audrey there was an explosion of joy with people clambering over chairs to greet her! The man leading the service said: "This man is showing us a good example, he is caring for his mother."

This was our introduction to the African cultural importance of the Agogo, the 'Big Mother'. It is a rich family term used with profound respect. When an African goes home to their village, they say, 'I am going to see Agogo!'



The Potters with Students, Ngwenya Teacher Training College 1977

Our time in South Africa was not wasted. We enjoyed participating in the Calvary Assembly meetings held in the Rowland's house each Sunday morning. This was the first time we had experienced Tabernacle of David worship over a sustained season. Secondly, while we were in White River, we participated on a daily basis in the building of new Emmanuel Press buildings. John installed most of the interior fixed furnishings and Judy took her turn at painting. We left for Malawi a week after the press was opened, but only after an outstanding dinner meeting was held at the local hotel, where all the

team were assembled. The Potters were sent off with good wishes and prayers. Thirdly, and most importantly, we discovered that the Lord had brought us into Malawi in His immaculate timing. We left White River right at the end of the time we later identified as the Prayer Season. God was ordering our ways!

When the Lord called our family to Malawi, most of us had no clear idea of what we would be required to do. Audrey was the only one who was really clear about it. She said she was ‘coming to help.’ There is an unfortunate tendency in church circles to consider giftings as a hierarchy – apostles at the top and the rest in descending order. Our view is that all the giftings are equal. We are all sons of God, we have all received the same Spirit, we are all members of the same Body. People with the ministry of a ‘helper’ (1 Cor.12:28) should take notice of what the Lord did through Audrey during her 68th, 69th and 70th years in Malawi and understand that helpers are equipped with an anointing for a spiritual ministry of fruitfulness and importance in the body of Christ, as much as anyone else.

THE TRACT MINISTRY

John’s job in Malawi was important in getting us into the country but our primary purpose was to establish a local office of the Emmanuel Tract Fellowship (ETF), the Emmanuel Press’s literature arm. We moved there on the 4th of July 1977. On the way up in the plane the Lord spoke to John: ‘Acts 19:10’. This was a clear instruction that our mission in Malawi would be completed in two years and would reach the whole nation. The registration certificate permitting us to operate a literature ministry in Malawi arrived on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles in September 1977.

Soon after this, the first tracts and Correspondence Bible Courses

began arriving by plane from Emmanuel Press, 1600km to the south. This was the beginning of an airlift that saw nearly 4 million tracts and a quarter of a million Bible Courses brought into the country in the next two years.

We started distributing tracts through some newly made missionary friends and some Malawians whose names we had from their previous contacts with Emmanuel Press in South Africa. On the 13th of September 1977, we received in our post box the first decision slip torn from an ETF tract. What rejoicing there was over that first decision slip!

The work was begun in our government house; first on the dining room table, but later in Audrey's bedroom. As the work grew from 100 decisions per month to 235, 615, 1379 and so on, the work load began to present problems. Not the least was that we would get up to find Audrey had been working since five o'clock while the rest of the family had been sleeping! "Listen Grandma," we would say, "don't knock yourself out - we can all help." Our words had no effect, she would just look at us, and we would find her at it again the next morning.

Mind you, in those early days, the whole family were involved. Audrey directed operations and kept the records; Judy typed the list of new contacts; Mike and Steve wrapped and packed for posting, and Elizabeth stuck on the stamps. John's government job demanded his attention five and a half days per week; his contributions to the ministry were confined to evenings and weekends.

It soon became apparent that we were going to need Malawians to assist us in the work because we began receiving letters in the Chichewa language. Somehow, we found Macford Chipuliko. He was

our first provision for this task. Our first approach was to give the Chichewa language letters for Macford to translate, and prepare replies for Macford to translate back into Chichewa. Later we simply let him answer the letters himself, because it became apparent that he had an excellent Bible knowledge and knew the background behind the student's questions far better than we did. One frequently asked question was: "Who was Cain's wife?" We learned that the Ethiopian Church taught that Jesus was the white man's saviour, Nimrod was the Black man's saviour, and Cain's wife was an African!

As the work increased it became a problem that Macford had a government job and was unable to help during the week. Judy had become flat out managing the household, running the financial side of the ETF ministry, and transporting in our car the increasing number of boxes of material coming from South Africa. This left Audrey battling away on her own in her bedroom most of the time. As for the boys, Mike and Steve, they were busy completing correspondence schooling. So, it was back to prayer for more assistance, and this led to Jessie Kaulemu becoming our first paid employee. After that, the Lord added others. We had eleven people working with us as the decision slip count reached 10,700 in May 1979, and the Bible Course output rose to over 19,000 per month.

Our home soon became inadequate for running the operation. In February 1978 we received from the Lord's hand a magnificent office building in the centre of Zomba – see photo below. Two couples from Australia, the Moores and the Owens, offered to pay the rent.

THE EMMANUEL TRACT FELLOWSHIP

The Emmanuel Press Literature Program was simple enough. Forty tracts containing illustrated Bible stories and tear-off decision slips

were printed on cheap news-print paper. When a decision slip was returned the signatory was sent a Bible course entitled: The Lord Jesus Christ and His Wonderful Names. The course had a section where the recipient answered questions. The answers were Bible verses found in the text – the idea being that answering the questions required the student to return to the text to find the verses and then write them out; what is known in the education business as reinforcement.



ETF Office in Zomba. Some of our people after a Sunday morning service

When the first course was returned it was marked and a second course called Wonderful Salvation was sent out together with ten tracts – the idea being that the student could start evangelising amongst their friends. After Wonderful Salvation there was a course called Doctrine, and after that a course called The Gospel of Mark. Once all four courses had been completed the student received a Certificate

confirming that they were now a Member of the Emmanuel Tract Fellowship. They also received a badge and 200 tracts to distribute.

The Doctrine course was cumbersome. Bill and Gwen Kirby, UK Assemblies of God Missionaries working at the Press in South Africa, replaced it with two courses called Wonderful Life Parts I and II in 1997. In 1979 the four courses were converted to a six- part course called Wonderful News by Ron and Betty Gull, Elim Missionaries, also at the White River Press,



Judy gives a tract to a hungry heart (Malawi 1978)

We received amazing stories with regard to tracts. One letter we received was from a young man in a refugee camp in Zambia. He reported that he was busy using his tract to share the gospel with people in the camp; his problem, he said, was that he only had one tract, and this was wearing out – could we send him another tract? We

sent him a thousand and our only regret was that we could not see his face when he received them.

There was a boy in Zomba we noticed that had three ETF badges on his shirt. When we asked him how he got three badges he said: “I spend my time after school going from house to house giving people tracts. I wanted more tracts, so I used three different names to get them!”

Literature is an extremely effective medium in parts of Africa where there are no newspapers, no TV and people own little. When we went out into the villages on Sundays, crowds would gather around us excitedly and grab for a tract. When the pressure became too great, we would throw the tracts up into the air; on no occasion did a tract hit the ground! We have gone into village houses and found tracts sitting on a special shelf – such was the value placed on them.

Over two years 1977-79, over 117 000 people responded to the Malawi ETF program. We began receiving letters stating: ‘Since we have done the Bible Courses we have started meeting on Sundays – we are now 25 people. What do we do next?’ John began to send out a monthly newsletter with a few suggestions. The circulation increased over time to 2553! Two and a half thousand informal churches had risen up spontaneously as a result of our literature program! What we wish to make clear, though, is that none of this just happened. It was worked out in day-to-day labour, prayer, and faith; and it was John’s mother, Audrey, who bore the brunt of the frontline work, along with the African staff, was in the thick of it.

STAFF TRAINING BY AGOGO AUDREY

By mid-1978, Audrey’s routine was to rise at 5.30am and be in the car

by 7.10 a.m. ready to be dropped at the office. The staff would mostly be there when she arrived and by 7.30 a.m. it was all systems go. John Chilwa would be back from the Post Office with the mail bag by 7.45am; and he would begin the task of sorting the mail. Then the team would spring into action. Decision slips were taken for typing the names and addresses on first courses; returned courses were taken for marking, the results were recorded in record books, and the marked courses were prepared for dispatch along with the next course and ten tracts for distribution. Everyone had a job to do with sufficient overlap to allow for unavoidable absences. All of this required training. We had expected that the Lord would bring in some terrific Christians with great office experience to assist us. We were wrong; he sent in the poor, the lame and the hungry.



Some of the ETF office team at work

We used to hold a study meeting in our home on Tuesday evenings

and a worship service in the office on Sunday mornings. Most of our staff could not attend those meetings; it was in the daily prayer meeting in the office, that ground was taken for the Kingdom. Prayer time was scheduled for 9am. Right on the dot, the office door would be closed, and Billy Machika would deliver Audrey her tea exactly to specification. What beautiful times of gathering unto the Lord followed, what songs, what times of tears and rejoicing! What memories for Audrey Potter, called late in life to serve the Lord in the centre of Africa, to see the Lord raise up for her some spiritual children.

The office became the site of a little discipling community, not only in the business of building efficient office practice but also in assisting individuals take their place in the Lord's Kingdom. What wonders the Lord worked amongst our staff. Audrey saw him convict, touch, heal, instruct, guide, and build His life into these young Malawians over the next twenty plus months. When she left the country in September 1979, she left behind, not an office, but a community of African brethren, baptised into Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, and trained to continue the literature work without our assistance.

How many times did Grandma see our office girls fall away under home pressures, but under the Lord's hand, fall spontaneously to their knees in the office prayer meetings, weep their way back into the Lord's presence, and commit themselves to Him afresh. How many times did she see the Lord touch bodies, meet financial needs, housing needs, education needs, every need!

The ETF office and John's Government Office would close each day at 4.30 p.m. Audrey and John would come home and they would sit on the veranda with a cup of tea each afternoon. Quietly they and Judy

would review the day - deal with problems, rejoice over victories, and commit needs to prayer. In the midst of this, Audrey would be tearing up sheets of stamps for the next day or completing her records.

At night, Audrey would sleep the sleep of a shepherd of the flock, resting her body but alert for the voice of the Master who would often wake her with his divine conversation. This was the place of bringing before him the needs of the next day, the place of knowing Him in the quietness of the night.

A MOTHER IN ISRAEL



ETF Team Members: Ruth, Fanny, Audrey, Jessie, and Elita Banda - 1979

The work of the Kingdom comes a day at a time. It is a discipling work, a work to multiply the ministries so that the Kingdom can expand. My mother rejoiced to have the privilege of helping to produce spiritual children in the continent of Africa as she approached her 70th year. Her ministry was worked out face to face at the grass

roots level. She learned to weep with those who were weeping and to rejoice with those who were rejoicing. She became for those young Africans, not a strange white woman from another culture, nor just the manager of ETF Malawi office; she became Agogo, the big mother, their servant and friend. The example of servanthood she set before them was indelibly marked on their hearts.

When Agogo came back to Australia she continued to receive regular letters from her dear ones, half a world away. There were still opportunities to help: a word of encouragement, a few dollars to pay the school fees for someone's sister or little brother. Her heart often longed to see and hug these dear ones but sustaining her in her separation was the knowledge that each one was standing as fruit that will remain. No longer did they need to be propped up; they were people established in the life of the Kingdom, walking in the divine instruction of the Holy Spirit and beginning to disciple people in their own right. We give all the praise and all the glory to Jesus the Christ, the Lord of the whole earth, the author and finisher of our whole salvation for these happenings.

Agogo Audrey passed away in Adelaide in 1998 aged 89 years. We had just arrived home from our second sojourn in Africa. Audrey was in an aged care facility. She had faded away physically; the staff said they did not know what was keeping her alive. We believe it was because she was waiting for news that we were home again. John laid his hands on her and told her that it was OK, we were home. Whether she heard him or not we could not discern so we prayed for a few minutes in tongues. Immediately, we felt the Spirit leap within her. She passed away quietly a few days later.

FULAKSANI (FRANKSTON) CHILASANJE

THE CONTENTED MAN

When our family arrived in Malawi in July 1977, our first accommodation was in the Zomba Government Rest House. We stayed in two chalets in a garden full of poinsettia alive with sunbirds. We were supposed to stay only four nights but finished up staying twelve.

Under John's contract we were eligible to occupy a fully furnished house for 26 Kwacha (K26) per month; in those days this was equivalent to \$AUD 26. The house we were allotted was a three-bedroom brick house on a half-acre allotment in a suburb of Zomba called Kalimbuka. We moved into it on the 16th of July 1977.

On our first morning in our new home, we awoke to find the front lawn covered with well-dressed Malawian gentlemen all holding small books in their hand. We approached one of them and asked what they wanted. He told us they were house servants looking for work. (Judy said: "I am an Australian, I do my own housework!"). We told the men that we were not ready to employ anybody just yet and they quietly dispersed. John mentioned this incident to a colleague at the Land Husbandry Centre where he was working. He said: "You have to employ people, they need jobs. There is a man in our labour team who is an experienced houseboy; I can find you a gardener as well." John mentioned this to Judy that evening, and we agreed to join the ranks of the expatriate aristocracy that employed servants.

When Fulaksani Chilasane was introduced to us the next morning we were shocked; his clothes were nothing but rags – he looked disgusting! Notwithstanding, he provided us with documentation that

proved he had been the house servant for the Town Clerk of Blantyre and a High Court Judge. We asked him why he was dressed so badly, and he related the following story. When the Town Clerk completed his contract and returned to Rhodesia he gave Fulaksani a pair of trousers. When Fulaksani wore the trousers down the street a police officer stopped him and accused him of stealing the trousers. The trousers were confiscated, and it took Fulaksani eighteen months to get them back. Sadly, someone else had been wearing them in the meantime, and they were completely worn out! The incident made a powerful impression on Fulaksani – he seldom wore good clothes in public again!

Fulaksani was employed by the Potters for 16 Kwacha per month (\$16 Australian) plus free food and lodging. He was hastily transported to the Zomba market where a Khondi (veranda) tailor made him two sets of servant's clothing. These were ready that afternoon, and Fulaksani, called Frankston at his suggestion, was duly installed. His duties were to keep the house clean and tidy, make beds and wax the concrete floors regularly.

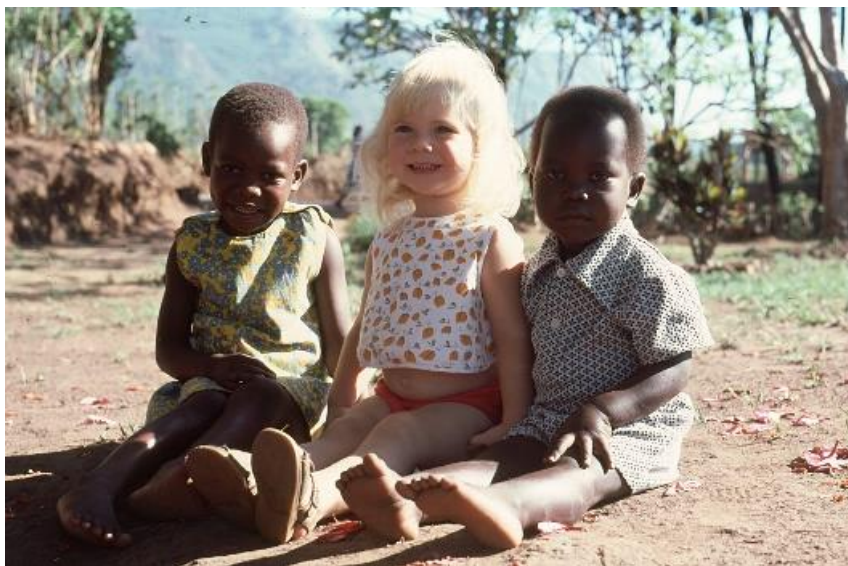
Frankston stayed with us for our whole adventure in Malawi – just over two years. He was an outstanding servant; his work was exemplary, and his honesty was beyond question. Many times, we would find a coin that someone had dropped carefully placed on a bed side table

Over the next few days, we gained a 'garden boy' called Sanders Liwangula. He came to us with his wife Fenella and their two children, Christine and Zilli. Our household establishment was complete!

The Liwangula children were great playmates for Elizabeth. Some

expatriates warned us that Elizabeth would pick up disease, but we felt to trust the Lord while taking reasonable precautions. We did have some scares. On one occasion Liz developed a severe cold. We took her to the local clinic and were told she had pneumonia. We were given a script which we took to the local pharmacy. They looked at the script and said: "Yes, this will be here in three days." We took Liz home and asked the Lord what to do. He said: "Lay hands on her and command the phlegm to come out." We did so - Liz vomited up a bucket full of phlegm on the concrete floor of the lounge-room and ran outside and played!

The children got on well most of the time. There were a few altercations: Christine would smack Liz and Liz in turn would smack Zilli. Zilli had nobody to smack, he suffered at the bottom of the hierarchy.



The intrepid trio!

Sanders turned out to be a man of extra-ordinary talents. He had worked as a support worker in many different Government programs throughout Malawi. He spoke seven languages, could make string out of a sisal leaf, and could treat an abscess in a dog's foot with remarkable skill. On the reverse side, he had in recent times become one of Zomba Townships noted drunkards. The reason for this was never clear to us because from the time he came to us he remained sober, apart from one night when he came home the worse for wear crying out: "May you prosper my master" numerous times. John told him to shut up and get to bed! We learned a lot from Sanders about the local culture. When he was sober he was a man of manners. He started growing our vegetable garden but was astute enough to suggest that two people were needed for this project. So it was that we employed his nephew Gladstone whose progress we will report on in another place. One night, Judy went out onto our back porch. She sensed something was there. When she put on the light she found there was a Mozambique Spitting Cobra by the hot water boiler. She cried for Sanders to come. He ran from his quarters, saw the snake, picked up a wooden garden stake and threw it from a distance of about 5m, smashing the snake against the back wall!

It turned out that our vegetable garden was not actually necessary; Zomba had an outstanding market where you could buy meat, fish and vegetables, could get a bicycle repaired and buy many other useful things. It was easily the best market in Malawi we discovered because prior to 1964 Zomba had been the Headquarters of the British Raj; the local farmers had become expert in growing things ex-patriates liked: Irish potatoes, French beans, carrots, bananas, mangoes, and citrus – mandarins, oranges, and grapefruit. Beef meat was 30 cents per pound in those days, and Chambo (Tilapia from Lake Chilwa) were 10 cents

for a meal size fish. Judy soon had particular vendors she bought from – the ‘carrot man’ was her favourite.

Our family started to learn Chichewa, the local language – but the Lord told us not to bother. We presume this was because we were only going to be there for two years. There were eight main ethnic groups in Malawi, all with different, although similar languages; we could not learn them all. Besides, Malawians were keen to speak to us in English the official ‘international language’ of Malawi, one in which the locals were intent on improving their proficiency.

Over time, we did learn a few things about the sounds and idiomatic conventions of the so-called Bantu languages. For instance, we learned that they do not distinguish between the English spoken ‘r’ and ‘l’. When Gladstone came to the back door with the news that there was a ‘lat’ in the shed we were non-plussed. This proved to be a cane rat, a large rat which Malawians eat with relish; especially Gladstone who before he joined us used to spend his days making snares for catching cane rats in the bush!

Malawi under President Banda was free of major crime because crime with violence was a capital offence. Petty crime, on the other hand, was common place, especially in the wet season when people were hungry. Theft from the *masungu*’s (white’s) houses was the name of the game for many people. We were advised to get a dog and were fortunate enough to get the best dog in Zomba: Sally, a Rhodesian Ridgeback/Labrador cross. She had been the property of the Vice-Chancellor of the University Campus in Zomba. He finished his contract soon after we arrived and gave us Sally.

Sally was an incredibly well-trained dog. Her size was important; the Africans called her the Hippo Dog. We had no burglars after we got

Sally. This contrasted with the experience of our neighbour, a Scottish missionary, who refused to have a dog. He had unwelcome visitors nightly. They would use poles to fish his clothes out through the burglar bars. There were no fences between our properties. Sally would see the burglars and wake us. We would see the burglar at the neighbour's window and ring him. By the time he came out 'all guns firing,' they were long gone.

Judy had a man come to the back door one day. Fortunately, the screen door was bolted for the man became aggressive. Sally was on the front porch where Steve was studying his correspondence course. Steve reported that Sally woke from her sleep and quietly waddled around the back of the house, came silently up behind the man and nipped him expertly with her incisors on the back of his thigh. Judy said the man went white with pain, and when he turned and saw Sally he went even whiter! He fled and we never saw him or anybody else for that matter at the back door again. Except for a patient from the Mental Hospital which was just up the road from us. That man came into our yard completely naked. For some reason he draped himself over the bonnet of our car. Sally ignored him and after a time he went away.

We had a boiler on our back porch to heat water for the house. One Saturday afternoon the flu of the boiler caught fire. We put it out but, as it was a Government house, we thought it would be good to get the fire brigade to check it in case the house burnt down later, and we got the blame. John rang the fire station and they said they would send someone to check the flu. Twenty minutes later we heard a siren. As John went outside to meet them, he saw a Land Rover with four firefighters sitting in it speed past our gate and disappear up the road. We heard the siren getting softer for a while before it ceased. Half an

hour later we saw the Land Rover limping back. John waved to the men. The siren was re-started, and they roared into our yard with 'six guns blazing.' Actually, it was axes they held in their hands. When they dismounted, we had to stop them from chopping down our back door. We explained why we had called them, they inspected the flu, declared it safe and quietly returned to base. Exciting stuff!

Life at Kalimbuka for the Potters quickly settled down to a routine. John spent five and a half days at the Land Husbandry Training Centre. Audrey spent five days running the ETF Office. Judy ran the household and travelled the sixty kilometres to Blantyre when we needed to get our car serviced at the CATCO garage or pick up boxes of ETF literature from Chileka Airport. In the afternoons after work John would spend time making sure that supplies for ETF were ordered and other things. In the evenings there was no TV so we would sit in our lounge watching geckos catching unsuspecting insects on our lounge walls and sausage flies climbing up the wall before launching themselves into the air with a loud buzzing noise and land unceremoniously on the floor.

Mornings at Kalimbuka were interesting. Across the road from our house was the Zomba prison garden. At precisely 7am, a contingent of prisoners would march out of the prison compound and along our road, three abreast. At the back would be the guard with a prisoner on each side of him, one of whom would be carrying his rifle!

Soon after this, wailing noises would be heard coming from the General Hospital, which was on the main road, a stone's throw from our house. A small contingent of nurses in uniform would appear. The one at the front would have a tray on which would be the body of a child that had succumbed over night to some preventable disease like

measles. They would march past our house to the cemetery with all due ceremony. Sadly, it was a daily event. The Zomba District Hospital did the best they could with limited resources. They had a big TB section with multitudes of patients in striped pyjamas walking around spitting into tins hanging around their necks. As we mentioned, the Zomba Mental Hospital was just up the road. We had all the necessary services close to us!

Zomba had a number of sporting facilities which Judy, Mike and Steve used from time to time. There was a Gymkhana Club left over from the Protectorate days. This had tennis courts, a cricket ground now used for soccer, squash courts, and a restaurant. There was also a nine-hole golf course. John used to play golf, but he was too busy to play in Zomba with all of his other duties.

On Sundays, we were often in the villages attending church and bush camp meetings. On the Sundays when we were home, we met in the ETF Office with a number of locals – whites and Africans.

John had a piano accordion in those days which provided music for our little meetings. John did a little preaching too, and we broke bread using a common cup. Occasionally, people from other mission groups would join us and sometimes we had visitors from Australia, South Africa, and the UK.

These meetings provided a sense of community for people who were a long way from home. One regular was a woman with two children from Guyana, South America. She had married a Malawian while at University in the UK – when they returned to Malawi, he became an alcoholic and died, leaving her stranded and penniless.

Doreen, Richard, and Beth Field became part of our family for a



Portion of our Sunday gathering at the ETF Office in Zomba Township season. More of them later.

THE HOUSE ON MOUNTAIN ROAD

The house at Kalimbuka belonged to the University of Malawi. One year after we took it over, they asked for it back and we were advised by the housing committee that we were being shifted to a house at No. 9 Mountain Road. This house was big. It has 10 rooms with 14ft ceilings and two bathrooms. The property was three acres in extent with an established garden, four servant quarters and two garages. It also had three South Australian Red Gums growing outside our bedroom window to remind us of home!

There was a large patch of Jamaica Red bananas. The fruit was about

30cm long, red in colour and tasted like fruit salad. We also had a patch of Tamarillos (tree-tomatoes) from which we used to make fruit pies and jam. We had only one avocado tree, but it was 10m high and produced about 600 avocados each year. They were of the black variety and had an excellent flavour, great on toast for a simple lunch. To top it off, we had passion fruit and Himalayan gooseberries growing wild in the forest behind us, and strawberries brought to our back door by small boys ten months of the year for 70c a punnet.



No 9. Mountain Road, Zomba

The house had a long khonde (veranda). We used to take our tea there after work. In the wet season, storm clouds would build up just above us and at about 5pm the bottom of the cloud would fall out and we would get 30-50mm of rain in an hour or so. From the khonde we could see 80km across Malawi into Mozambique. Rather than watch geckos and sausage flies, on Mountain Road we used to watch the

lightning strikes over Mozambique during the wet season. We would see anything up to eighty or so strikes at one time and watch sheet lightning lightening up the sky like daytime.

Frankston had his own kitchen near his quarters; it was just a square concrete floor with a roof over it but to him it was a luxury. He would leave our house with a bowl of chicken entrails, light a fire and boil up some kind of chicken soup, chuckling to himself the whole while. Mind you, he was a careful man. When he was given fat from the kitchen to cook his meals, he would always ask what was in it. His concern was that it might contain pig fat. One day we asked him what his concern was with pig fat. He told us: "They are too much like us"!

The transformation in Frankston when he left our house and when he entered it was quiet amazing. He lived by different rules in the house and out of it. This became apparent one day when Judy left a pair of her knickers to dry in one of the bathroom windows, and they disappeared! Frankston was told about it and a different Frankston emerged!

By this time we had nineteen Malawians living on our property. They were accommodated in the four servants quarters and in one of the garages. When the knickers disappeared, Frankston called a general meeting for the men. We were not part of the meeting but we observed it from a distance. When Frankston shared the problem all the men deferred to him as the man with authority. Frankston made a speech about honesty and related things, and everybody listened intently. The meeting dispersed and the missing knickers mysteriously re-appeared later that afternoon. We were impressed with the Nyanga way of doing things!

A bad thing happened to Frankston in 1979. He had taken on a private

project to improve his English. Any English literature material we discarded he collected, and on his days off he would study them conscientiously. One Sunday he headed off for a walk into the pine forest behind our house, taking with him a Christian magazine that Steve had read and discarded. We should add that he had on his oldest clothes for the occasion; actually a pair of Stephen's worn out pyjamas.

Frankston settled himself and started to read the document, running his finger across the pages as he read. Unbeknown to him he was seated directly over the Army Ordinance Camp. An officer saw Frankston and wondered what he was doing; he was particularly concerned that Frankston appeared to be writing on a piece of paper – spying on the Ordinance Camp! He left the barracks and climbed the hill to Frankston's position and asked Frankston what he was doing. Frankston said he was reading a magazine but the soldier refused to believe him; seeing Frankston's dress he took him to be a suspicious person. He arrested Frankston and took him down to his base. Frankston was questioned at length by a senior army officer. Frankston kept insisting that he was the Potter's house servant, so they brought him to our house to find out if this was so. They arrived at about 6pm. We were quite surprised when Frankston arrived in an army vehicle but were quick to assure the army people that Frankston was indeed our house servant. They left him with us but we were going to a meeting so we advised him to stay in his room. We arrived back at 9:30pm to be told that an hour after we left the army had returned and taken Frankston away.

Frankston was in gaol for two months, despite everything Judy did to get him released, even visiting him in prison. The Police assured her that they knew Frankston was innocent; it was just that the paper work

had to go up the ladder and come down again, and this took time. Frankston was finally released. He was half his former weight and full of stomach worms. It took him months to fully recover.

RELAXATION

There were lots of things in Malawi for *Masungus* to do for relaxation. Occasionally we would travel to Lake Malawi; it was about a two-hour drive to Club Makakola, where we could relax and take a swim with friends and visitors. Another worthwhile visit was the Liwonde National Park, half an hour's travel north from Zomba. Fairly primitive but particularly good animal viewing.

There were a number of missionaries in Zomba that reached out to us. Rose Klob was from upstate New York. She had been in Africa for twenty-five years; first in Northern Malawi, then in Liberia, then back to Malawi at Zomba and later Limbe. Male AOG missionaries from the USA tended to treat women missionaries as second-class citizens but there was nothing second-class about Rose Klob, either in her work or in friendship.

Bill and Blanche Wester, Southern Baptist Missionaries from Georgia USA, also became our friends. They had a duplicating machine that they kindly loaned us to print our Monthly Newsletters. We enjoyed great times of fellowship in their home.

Seven miles down the road to Blantyre, at a place called Thondwe, was the Namikango Mission founded and run by a Church of Christ congregation located in South Houston Texas. The Wilks and Shelburne families became our close friends and remain so to this day. Our initial meeting with them was over an evening meal at their Mission Station one Saturday evening. After the meal we went into

the living room and sat down for a chat. The senior missionary lent forward and said: “Friends, this is not a meeting, so the ladies may speak tonight.” What! Yes, in the worship meetings in this strict New Testament Pattern Church, the ladies could not even ask for a favourite hymn, they would have to get one of the boys to ask for them! BUT, in every other way, you could not meet better people than these honest souls from Texas. When our vehicle broke down, they were quickly at the door with one of theirs for us to use.



Rose Klob (left) and the Westers

When it came time to leave Malawi in September 1979, we spent time on the khonde reflecting on the outstanding times we had had in Malawi, particularly at No. 9 Mountain Road. We were especially thankful for Sally who adapted to the new house with consummate

ease and commitment. She would locate herself on the front steps, pretend to be sleeping, but actually watching for Malawians approaching up our long driveway. There was a place that Sally knew to be 'the place of no-return'; when an unsuspecting person reached that place Sally would launch herself at great speed with ears flapping and the victim would have to climb a tree to avoid the Hippo Dog. One of the bravest people in Zomba was the garbage collector who would have to face Sally every Tuesday morning. It became routine for Frankston, if he heard the trash collector coming, to grab Sally's collar and hold her until the rubbish was collected.

Groups of Vervet monkeys used to visit our allotment regularly. Sally hated them! They used to tease her by staying in the trees just out of her reach. Sally would launch herself vertically into the air continuously, barking all the time, until one of us would rescue her to prevent her having a hreat attack.

We had one extraordinary experience with Sally. She was sleeping on the floor in the kitchen one day. She had an abcess in her front foot and Lizzie stepped on it. With a cry of pain Sally woke and grabbed Lizzie around the face with her enormous jaw. She would undoubtedly have crushed Lizzie's head if she had not realised who it was. She released Lizzie and there was not a mark on Lizzie's face. A miracle we called it. Mother Audrey, who was in the kitchen along with Judy and Frankston at the time, reacted to the incident by calling Sally bad names. Sally slunk out of the kitchen in disgrace.

A little later we found Frankston patting and talking to Sally quietly outside the back door, assuring her that everything was OK. What a beautiful caring man! For two years he faithfully cared for our house, never uttered a cross word, never resented anything that was said to

him. There was never an incident in which Frankston's service was not appropriate or anything less than his best. In the conduct of his duties behind the scenes he was always unobtrusive. The quality of his work was his testimony.

We caught him once or twice consoling Lizzie after she had been in trouble and spoken strongly to by Judy. He would lift her in his arms, pat her and say a few 'there, theres'!

Frankston was a man of considerable ability. When he first came Audrey was not keen on him preparing our food. When she went home on furlough, Judy had Frankston prepare our main meals. We had never seen salads so well presented anywhere before or since. The incident with the stolen knickers proved that Frankston had a lot in reserve that we never saw. He demonstrated a rare commodity – in all things he was a contented man. He was abused and suffered at the hands of officious policemen and army officers, but he met all this without complaint – like Jesus before Pilate! He was untroubled that his life was set in the background of other people's activities. He never felt the need to inflate his ego by telling everybody about the things he could do. He kept these things to himself, only producing them when the circumstances required him to do so.

We do not know what happened to Frankston, When we left John gave him his suit. It was a dark suit which John had been asked to bring with him in case he was called to the President's office. That never happened so John never wore the suit during our time in Malawi. When John gave the suit to Frankston, he expressed his thanks with his usual soft chortling. He was an exemplary man. We salute him!

MR NGOLEKA - IN THE SHADOW OF THE RAJ

When John started working for the Malawi Ministry of Agriculture, he was forty-three years old. He was surprised when the Deputy Principal of the Land Husbandry Training Centre, a Malawian called Allard Malindi, greeted him with the words: “I heard there was an old man from Australia coming to join us!” The bulk of the incumbents in Government jobs in Malawi were young. To them, John was old apparently!

Independence had come to Malawi in 1964, thirteen years before our family arrived on the scene. Prior to that Nyasaland (as it was previously called) had been a Protectorate under the British Government. The brief history of European involvement in this part of the world is as follows.

In 1861 David Livingstone sailed his boat up the Shire River to Lake Nyasa (Lake Malawi). He was joined that same year by Bishop McKenzie of the Universities Mission. They set up a joint base at Magomero, just south of present day Zomba. McKenzie died of malaria within six months; Livingstone survived until 1873. Following Livingstone’s death, the Free Church of Scotland sent a team to Malawi to set up a mission base in 1875. They originally settled at Cape Maclear on Lake Malawi, but more than half of the team succumbed to malaria in the first few years. In 1881 they shifted the base to Bandawe and finally to Livingstonia in what became the Northern Region of Malawi. The malaria (bad air) problem was solved because they were at 4 000ft, and above the mosquito line. Dr Robert Laws ran that mission for 52 years.

In 1876, the Church of Scotland sent Henry Henderson to Nyasaland where he and a freed slave set up the Blantyre Mission in the Southern Region. In 1889, the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa sent Andrew Murray's brother William to establish a mission at Nkhoma, due east of Lilongwe in the Central Region.

Concomitant with this mission development, in 1878 some Scottish Businessmen set up the African Lakes Corporation to advance David Livingstone's objective of seeing Africans adopt Scottish farming methods. John and Fred Moir were appointed as managers. They set up tobacco plantations and introduced agricultural machinery to Malawi. In 1889 Cecil Rhodes visited Nyasaland and set up joint operations with the Moir brothers. Finding the slave trade still operating and interfering with agricultural operations, in 1891 Rhodes paid the UK Government to send Sir Harry Johnson to Nyasaland to deal with the slavers. This took a few years to accomplish but in 1907, when the last slaver had been dealt with, the UK government declared that Nyasaland was a Protectorate. This arrangement continued until 1964 when Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda's Malawi Congress Party was successful in gaining independence for the country under the name 'Malawi', a name taken from the name of the main tribal group, the Maravi (note the interchange of 'r' and 'l' and the "w" which sounds somewhere between 'v' and 'w').

Two sub-groups of the Maravi, the Achewa and the Anyanga are dominant in the Central and Southern Provinces of Malawi. The people in the Northern Province of Malawi are a mixture of Atumbuka, Ankhonde, Atonga and Alamba. Banda was Achewa and he declared that Chichewa would be the official African language in Malawi, along with English as the 'international language' – not without some rumblings from the Atumbuka people!

Each of the Reformed (Presbyterian) Mission Stations set about educating the local people. First there had to be some language compilation followed by literacy training. It was only in 1909 that Blantyre Mission started a genuine school, and this at a basic level. The view was taken that there was no need for higher education; there were no jobs for Malawians apart from basic labouring and elementary clerical work. As the missions became more established there developed a need for teacher's aids and local evangelists, but these people needed only basic language and numeracy training.

The only other employment at the time was for farm workers on the African Lakes estates and they needed little education. Eventually a few of them were appointed as foremen and overseers on farms and the Protectorate Government District Commissioners developed what became known as Local Area Education (LEA) Schools. The curriculum was basic literacy and numeracy.

In time, Missions needed nationals to become schoolteachers and ordained ministers, so they set up secondary schooling for their more promising primary school graduates. Robert Law's Livingstonia Secondary School was particularly influential in this regard; many of the political and educational leaders, post-independence in 1964, were educated at that School.

President Banda was a medical doctor, who spent 45 years out of the country in the USA and the UK. Despite the massive health problems facing his people, Banda's post-independence priority was **education** and **food** production. One of the first things he did was to seek aid packages to develop schooling across the country. He established hundreds of primary schools in the main population centres; students were encouraged to attend on payment of a fee of K5 (= \$5 in 1977).

These schools were in addition to the LEA Schools. To advance this program Banda set up basic primary teacher training programs.

The next stage was the development of Secondary Schools at strategic locations. This development was expensive and slow; it never caught up with the number of students graduating from primary schooling. In 1977 when we arrived, 36 000 students were graduating from primary schools each year but there were only 3 600 places available for them in Government Secondary Schools. A number of private schools were established in Malawi during the 1980s, but their fees were high; they were out of the reach of the bulk of the population. Since 1977 the population has tripled, from 7 million to 23 million, and the ratio of primary to secondary student remains the same. Still only 10% of students completing primary schooling can access secondary schooling in Malawi if they cannot afford private schooling.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

Immediately after independence, the British Overseas Development Department (ODD) told Banda he needed a university. They loaned him the funds to build the initial infrastructure at five centres: Chancellor College at Zomba, a College of Medicine at Blantyre, a Nursing College at Lilongwe, a Polytechnic at Limbe and a College of Agriculture at Bunda.

To get things underway the ODD organised and paid for the initial academic staffing. Few Malawians could afford to pay fees, so students boarded at the facilities and attended lectures at Government expense. This worked well while the buildings were new, and staff were expatriates sustained by UK Aid funds; problems began when the University was encouraged by the ODD to move into a 'localisation program'. Malawi graduates were helped to undertake

post-graduate studies in the UK and the USA and returned to Malawi to replace their UK expatriate counterparts. When this process was completed, the ODD said: “There you are President Banda, you have a University staffed by your own people. Well done!” Well done, but not necessarily good. Now the Malawi government had to pay staff salaries, which it could not do. In 2001, John took a group of Australians to Chancellor College for a symposium. There was no electricity working; the power company had turned off the switch when the bill got to K19 million! The University is still operating but continues to have its problems!

When we arrived in Malawi in 1977, there was only one person in the country with a Doctoral Degree, Dr Dalton Mkandawire, a graduate of the Livingstonia Secondary School.

FOOD

Maize is the staple diet of most Malawians. In fact, the word ‘maize’ is equivalent to the word ‘food’ in most places. If a Malawian has not eaten maize porridge (*nsima*) he considers he has not eaten. All the rest: beans, tomatoes, and pumpkin leaves, is called *indiwo* (relish)!

Banda put a lot of effort into getting the people to grow maize. They grow and prefer to eat the flint type, white maize; it tastes better and keeps better than yellow dent maize in an outside storage facility.

The traditional way of preparing maize for eating is to pound the grain in a large wooden pestle; these days there are electric mills scattered around the country, so some of the ladies get it easy these days.

Give Banda his due, he got the Malawi men to join the women in preparing the maize garden. We never encountered any other place in

Africa where that happened. Prior to independence it was unlawful to grow maize in a town. Banda told the people this was nonsense; you can grow maize anywhere – the people must be fed!



Malawi women returning from the local maize mill

Malawians grow vegetables under their maize crops. They use the old varieties of tomatoes that taste like tomatoes are supposed to. We always buy a bag of tomatoes from a road-side stall when we arrive in Malawi and have them for our breakfast on toast! We should mention that some people in Malawi use cassava as a staple. Others, along the Lake, grow and eat rice. Red beans are also extremely popular.

The soil in Malawi is loamy sand, and the rainfall is good; you can grow just about anything, from cashew nuts to Himalayan gooseberries in Malawi. Groundnuts are grown extensively and provide an important protein food supplement. Thyolo and Mulanje

are famous for bananas, and mangoes grow wild throughout the country. There is even a big patch of citrus west of Blantyre.

COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE

Apart from getting the people to feed themselves, Banda was well aware that he needed to develop commerce. He encouraged the established estate holders to keep on producing tobacco and tea and developed new commercial operations under the name The Press Trading Company. Recognising that the people living in the villages could not manage a commercial operation, he developed his own estates. The people were glad about this because it gave them jobs, albeit for the incredibly low pay rate of K1 per day!

The tea estates in Malawi were established in 1906. The plants were brought in from Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Tea is made from the leaves of the shrub *Camelia sinensis*; you pick 'two leaves and the bud' on the end of each shoot. Tea needs to be picked every one or two days; if you leave it longer than that the leaves harden and become useless. For best results you need continuous rainfall all year around to grow tea. These conditions are found in Malawi at Mulanje and Thyolo.

In 1976 Banda set up a Small Holder Tea Corporation in which selected Malawians were each given a hectare of tea plants to look after. He built a factory at Mulanje and produced tea which one year brought the highest price on the London tea market. In 1979 John was called down to the Small Holder Tea Corporation Offices. They had a problem: the Malawians were not picking enough tea to keep the factory going. John met with the staff, expatriates and locals, at a round table meeting. The expatriates had all sorts of ideas about the problem but there was no consensus. When they broke for tea, John approached the Malawians who were standing in a bunch and asked

them what they thought the problem was. They said: “The farmers only pick tea when they need money for school fees or a new pair of shoes. Otherwise they would prefer to go to funerals and drink beer”! It was a cultural problem, and we are not sure that they solved it! *Masungus* (whites) are focused on making money; Malawians are focused on community!

In recent times, tea plantations have diversified to grow coffee. Malawi Arabica coffee is sensational. They grow it extensively in the Northern Region. We usually pick up a packet or two of coffee beans when we are there.

Tobacco grows well in Malawi. It is still Malawi’s highest earning export crop. A tobacco estate owner asked John whether he had ever smoked. At the time he, and everybody around him but John, was puffing away. John told him he did smoke for a time but gave it up. The whole bunch of them turned and looked at John with screwed up expressions. They all wanted to give up smoking but were finding it difficult. One thing tobacco is good for is employment; you need a lot of people to grow a tobacco crop. One thing tobacco is not good for is the amount of wood it requires to cure it; extensive areas of indigenous forest have been destroyed for this purpose in Malawi.

In addition to tobacco, President Banda set up sugar plantations at Nkotakota on Lake Malawi and in an area adjacent to the Shire River in the Shire Valley. Malawi white sugar straight from the crystalizing plant is brilliant to eat. Why do we refine it further?

Malawians do not have ample meat supplies. They have traditionally run small African zebu cattle, but these are not for eating; they are for wealth and prestige and paying the bride price. Banda developed a Government Ranch at Kasungu and imported improved cattle breeds,

but these were not made available to people in the villages. In the Southern Region, the maize gardens are touching over much of the area – there is nowhere for domestic animals to run, or wild animals for that matter, apart from cane rats and mice. The latter are much sought after as a meat supplement. On one occasion when John was staying at the Rest House at Ngabu in the Shire Valley, he noticed the meat on his plate had small bones. When he asked the waiter what the meat was, he was told: “Ah! But it is chicken Sir!” John was not so sure, but it tasted OK.

The Malawians’ main protein comes from fish. There are two hundred and forty species of fish in Lake Malawi – most of them are small and colourful, ideal for aquariums. The best fish for eating are six species of native *Tilapia* which the locals call ‘Chambo.’ Excellent eating! Lake Chilwa is the main source of Chambo for Blantyre and Zomba. They come into the market fresh in Zomba, but the Malawians prefer to buy them sun-dried as they keep longer.

Malawi grows excellent timber. The local hardwoods are superb for building furniture. Mulanje cedar, *Widdringtonia whytei*, is much sort after; it has a pleasant fragrance. The main commercial timber is *Pinus patula*, a pine species ex Mexico. It grows well at high altitudes. The Viphyra Forest in Malawi is located 2400m (8 000ft) above sea level. British foresters planted 50 000 hectares of pine there just before independence for a proposed pulp mill. There are smaller commercial pine forests at Dedza and on Zomba Mountain.

So far, we have given you a run down on the physical and educational development of Malawi. Such developments do not materialise miraculously, they appear as the result of a multitude of people making choices and taking appropriate actions on a day-to-day basis.

What fascinates us is how different people respond to the over-riding influence and pressure from societal persuasive voices and the legal-rational actions of governments. His erstwhile colleagues at the Land Husbandry Training Centre (LHTC) in Zomba provided John with some interesting examples of responses that we would like to share with you. But before we do that, we must first share with you the context of life created in Malawi in the 1970s by the government of the Ngwazi, the Life President, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda.

SOCIAL CONTROL

Dr Banda knew what his country needed economically. He had a clear agenda, and he ran an honest government. The World Bank said that Malawi was the only country in the world where they knew where their money was spent. To do this Banda introduced strong social controls.

In 1977 when we arrived in Malawi, we discovered that the police force was everywhere at once. You were constantly stopped on the main roads - required to present documents and asked where you were going. There was a permanent police road block at Thondwe, 10km south of Zomba. We must have driven our V8 Holden Brougham through there a hundred times. The police knew us, but we were always required to stop and follow the procedures!

We had a few amusing incidents with police. We came into Zomba at dusk one evening. There was a queue of vehicles on the road. When the officer reached our car, he said: "Open the boot." When he went around the back of the car, he noticed a sticker on the rear window which everybody in Zomba knew. He gasped audibly, saluted John and cried in a loud voice: "Mr Potter, Sir, you may go ahead Sir"!

A friend of ours was driving from Lilongwe to Bunda College one evening. It was very dark. Suddenly, a police officer stepped out with from behind a bush, his reflective jacket shining like the day. My friend jammed on the brakes and finished up in a ditch by the side of the road. The police officer approached him with measured tread and said: “Good evening Sir. Did you see my jacket Sir.” “I did officer,” said our friend. “It is new Sir; you may go ahead Sir”! A funny story but make no mistake, the Malawi police knew what they were doing!

In addition to the police, Banda organised the Malawi women into a Women’s League. The woman across the country were all given a uniform with Banda’s portrait on it. Wherever and whenever Banda travelled, the women were transported to meet him at strategic places to spend the best part of a day dancing and singing songs which declared that President Banda was a very good bloke! At the Land Husbandry Training Centre (LHTC) where John worked, they knew about these happenings because their government vehicles would be confiscated for the day to transport the women.

In between social activities the women became Banda’s eyes and ears, reporting to him people who made critical statements about him and slashing skirts with a razor blade they thought to be too short. Banda was big on dress codes for women and hair length for men!

The other group that Banda organised were the unemployed youth in the villages. He gave them all a red shirt and they became the Red Shirt Brigade. He stayed connected with them via daily radio messages. Radios were cheap and most people in villages had one. If a criminal was on the run, they had nowhere to go. The Red Shirts were everywhere.

Banda set up courts in addition to the customary village courts. His



The Women's League in action!

boast was: "In our Malawi courts we have justice; we do not allow criminals to escape on technicalities!" Sadly, it was well known in the 1970s that a lot of people were imprisoned on prison farms without trial and without any hope of release. This fact had a salutary effect on behaviour across the country, especially amongst the growing educated elite. Just before we arrived in the country it was discovered that the Vice-President had secretly imprisoned just about all the intellectuals in the country. They were arrested at 3am and taken away to undisclosed destinations. Fortunately, Banda came to hear of it, the prisoners were released, and the VP was hung. The incident left a lot of people being especially careful what they said and did in day-to-day interactions in their work and public recreation times.

Zomba was the seat of the UK Protectorate Government during its time in Malawi. After Independence in 1964, Banda declared

Lilongwe to be the capital because it was central and close to his home village. He was wise in maintaining a close friendship with South Africa. South Africa responded by building Banda a magnificent set of government offices in Lilongwe. In 1973 South African President John Vorster and Foreign Minister Pik Botha visited Malawi for the opening of these facilities. They stayed a night at State House in Zomba, previously the home of Sir Glyn Jones, the last Governor of the British Protectorate of Nyasaland.



Government Offices, Lilongwe, courtesy the South African Government

The story goes that the South Africans were taking breakfast on the balcony the next morning and noticed a white woman running around the garden in rubber boots. Somewhat astonished they inquired: “Who is that woman.” “Oh!,” said President Banda, “That is my gardener.” What followed could well be described as a pregnant silence! Annabel Shaxson was indeed Banda’s gardener. Apparently, she was an

outstanding horticulturalist as well as the author of the famous “Malawi Cookbook” which has recipes for cooking grasshoppers as well as more orthodox meals. It was her husband that set up the Land Husbandry Project in Malawi.

THE LAND HUSBANDRY TRAINING CENTRE

The Principal of LHTC was an English ex-patriate who had come to Malawi straight from university in the UK. He was in his early thirties when we met him. He had had several contracts with the Malawi Government and knew the place well. He had a wife and two children and wore a Gustav Mahler tee shirt on his days off from work. He ran the Centre with a minimum of fuss. He was friendly but reserved, keeping himself at a distance from John and the rest of the staff. He never invited us to socialise with him or his family during the two years John spent at LHTC. He was slightly defensive in the light of John’s twenty years in the land husbandry business and his being a ‘Christian’.

The Principal frequently declared himself to be a Darwinian evolutionist. John recalls the day when a visiting English student asked him what he thought about Noah’s Flood. The Principal heard the remark and said: “Anybody that believes in Noah’s Flood is an idiot.” “So, what are you going to do with the Flood?”, John said. “I am going to ignore it,” said the Principal. “Oh,” said John, “that’s what the apostle Peter said you would do, you would be ‘willingly ignorant’ of the Flood” (II Peter 3:5). “I object to the word ignorant!”, said the Principal. “Fair enough”, John said, “But you said it.”

The Principal was well informed on African life and manners and was careful to preserve the protocols relating to President Banda’s control of the country. John only heard him make one error of judgement.

One day in a lecture he said: “We could do this until we were black in the face... (oops) or blue or green...!” We knew of another case like this. A friend of ours was preaching in a church in Zomba and spoke of people who came to church with ‘a black look on their face’!

Allard Malindi, the Deputy Principal at LHTC was typical of the new elite developing in Malawi. He had been taken from a village into the education system, had done well, gained a Bachelor Degree in Agriculture, sat through the LHTC training program and spent two years as a Land Husbandry Officer in a remote part of the country. Now he was Deputy Principal at LHTC, had a *masungu* house in Zomba and had every hope of achieving high office if he kept his head down and played the game. We gather he received a scholarship to study in the USA after we left, returning with a PhD, and finishing in a senior position in government. Typical of his kind, Allard found himself abandoning much of his African culture in favour of a quasi-masungu culture. This culture is ill-defined; for Allard and his mates it consisted of weekend parties drinking Carlsberg Greens and not much else. One day early in John’s time at LHTC he was waxing eloquent about something good he saw the President doing. After a while he noticed Allard’s face. It was frozen into a sombre expression with pinched lips. There was no way Allard was going to be caught talking about the President – you could easily be reported for doing so and disappear. Allard played the game and received his reward.

Another important member of staff was Mr Kadzibwa. He had a Diploma in Agriculture from Bunda and was in charge of the daily paid staff. Mr Kadzibwa was in every way an African who had not abandoned his culture. He was polite to John but kept his distance. He lived in a government house in a section of town that ‘suited his station’. John recalls an incident that gave him some insight to how

Kadzibwa thought. He had been away for close on a week. When John inquired why this was so, he was told Kadzibwa was attending a funeral. When he returned, John greeted him and inquired how the funeral had gone. He responded enthusiastically. “Mr Potter, we sang those Christian hymns all day for three days.” “Yes,” John said, “but why did you sing them?” John knew that Africans sing songs at funerals, not to glorify Jesus, but to sing the spirit of the dead into a place close to Malungu (God), so that they can enter into the duties of an Ancestor and look after their descendants back on earth. Kadzibwa said nothing, just looked at John with a look which said, “What does this *masungu* know?” Without a word he walked away. Such people did not have a problem with President Banda’s controls; they were a threat to no-one and by staying within the bounds of their culture they were immune from trouble.

We will only mention one of the labourers, a man we only knew as Mwala. The wage for a labourer at LHTC was K11 per month. This had to cover accommodation and food, but the reality was that it covered neither. Mwala, and his co-labourers were always hungry and perpetually in debt. The debt problem occurred because in a crisis, like a funeral that had to be attended in a far distant place, or a health problem, the labourers would have to borrow money. The only place they could borrow money was from a loan shark who lent money at 50% per month. Labourers were paid on Thursdays and the loan shark would be at LHTC on pay-day, hidden behind a bush in the front garden. Mwala would have to repay what he owed and starve for the next week. Mwala sometimes functioned as the staff man when John was surveying. It was normal for him to occasionally fall sideways in a dead faint if John did not give him some food just before they headed out on assignment.

One of the first things John learned at LHTC was that senior staff did not drive government vehicles. People were employed for that job. The Centre had two vehicles, a Bedford Van, and a Land Rover.

Mr Nakamu drove the van. John never knew his first name; for some reason drivers were always referred to as 'Mr'. Nakamu was a Muslim and seemed to be scared of no-one. One day the President came up in conversation and Nakamu said: "Mr Potter, that President is like those meeses (mice). The meeses come at night and chew your toe; you start when they nip you, but the meeses blows on your toe, and you relax. In the morning you find that the meeses have eaten away half your toe. This President is like that Mr Potter." Nakamu was never arrested to our knowledge. We think he must have been so unimportant that no one considered his ravings a threat.

The other driver was Mr Ngoleka. He drove the Land Rover. Mr Ngoleka had been conscripted into the Kings African Rifles during the Second World War and fought in Myanmar (Burma). It was there that he learned to drive a vehicle. Of all the people we met in Malawi, nobody was as much his own man as Mr Ngoleka (first name unknown). He knew what he believed, and he stood by it absolutely. Under Banda's rule everybody had to have the Ngwazi's picture on the wall in their office and in their dwelling. In the Ngoleka house there was a picture of 'her Majesty' on the wall with a picture of Banda underneath it!

John travelled with Ngoleka in the Land Rover for a week once, all the way to Karonga in the north where John was due to train people working in a World Bank Project. They had great conversations on the way and stopped at a Rest house on the Viphya Plateau one night. Ngoleka dropped John off with a salute and John was comfortable

with the fact that Ngoleka would know how to find a place both to eat and sleep. Everything in Ngoleka's life was ordered. There was nothing to worry about, he knew exactly what he was doing.



Mr Ngoleka and the Land Rover

When you jumped into a government vehicle in those days, the driver would do nothing until you gave the signal to go ahead. The Chichewa word for 'start-up' was 'ti-en' which means in Chichewa 'we go'. Bambo is the polite Chichewa word for 'Mr'; when you got into the Land Rover with Ngoleka you had to say "Tien Bambo" if you wanted the vehicle to start. With Ngoleka at the helm, you would settle back, knowing that for a brief time at least you were in the hands of a man who knew his job, was certain of his calling and contemptuous of the disruptive influences around him. We salute you Mr Ngoleka! You were that rare being, your own man in Malawi!

BESTER KHWALALA – LIVING ON THE EDGE

Bester (B.J.) Khwalala was lying on a grass mat in his hut. He had not slept much in the night. He had not taken food for two days and hunger was gnawing at him. He was alone. Fanes, his wife, had gone to her father's village, with the three children, to get food.

Three months previously, Bester had had a job teaching in a Local Education Area School. His salary had been \$7 per month. Just after the school year closed in late June in 1978, he was approached by a man from Migowi who was starting a transport business; would Bester like to work for him at \$25 per month? Bester jumped at the chance to earn a decent wage. He started his job of company secretary in early July.

The business collapsed after two months, and Bester was out of work. He re-applied for a teaching job, but the school year had already started and there were no vacancies. Bester and his family were in a desperate situation; they had no maize reserves because Fanes had health problems and could not manage a garden.

Bester had eaten last at mid-day on the previous Sunday. He had been asked by a group of local churches to translate for a visiting speaker from Australia (John) and had shared in the community meal. Since then he had exchanged his jacket, his spare shirt and his socks and shoes for food. Now he had only one shirt and a ragged pair of trousers left.

As he lay there, he remembered that the churches he had met had asked if he would do some teaching. He knew they could not pay him, but he decided he may as well do something rather than continue lying helpless in his house. He got up, picked up his file, and headed out to



B J Khwalala in better times

a nearby village church to offer his services as a teacher.

WE MEET MAKUNA

Soon after we arrived in Malawi and were settled into our house we were joined by Bill and Gwen Kirby from the Press in South Africa for a week. Bill and Gwen were English AOG missionaries. They came to Malawi to help us register the Emmanuel Tract Fellowship with the Malawi Government. This was necessary because John was busy with his government job during business hours.

Gwen shared with us that she had been in contact with a man in Malawi called Damson Makuna. Makuna had asked her to contact him when she came to Malawi, so she had written to him and given him

our telephone number. The evening after they arrived in Malawi the phone rang, and a voice said: 'Come to the Clinic at 8 o'clock in the morning'. That was all!

The next day was Sunday, so John was free to take the Kirbys to meet Makuna. But where was this clinic? The only clinic we knew of was the Queen Elizabeth Clinic in Blantyre. Gwen had a photo of Makuna so we decided that the best we could do was to drive to Blantyre on the off-chance Makuna was at that clinic. We arrived just before 8am and to our great surprise there was Makuna! He jumped into the car, pointed down the road and in imperfect English said: 'We go to Mulanje.' When we reached the Mulanje Township he directed us north to Phalombe and we finally pulled up in front of a house in the Migowi Township. Makuna jumped out and ran into the house. Ten minutes later he and four other men came out of the house and jumped into the back seat of the car with the instruction: 'We go'!

We drove around the northern end of Mt Mulanje on a very rough track to a place called Nkulambe. There we found a church building and about forty people gathered. It was a case of excited handshakes all around before John found himself invited to preach to an attentive congregation, most of whom had no English. John started by thanking the people for welcoming him to their church. Makuna translated what John said (we think), then launched into a long exhortation which resulted in eight people coming forward 'to repent' and five coming for healing prayers. Afterwards Makuna said to John: "We Africans know how to get people to repent!"

When they returned to Migowi, John and the Kirbys were invited into the house where they sat quietly while the pastors (all of them ran small congregations) went into deep discussion. After a while, the

householder, Daison Khoromana, who was the chair of the group, turned to John and said: “It is agreed. You are now our missionary. Here is a list of the camp meetings for the next year!” To say the least John was a little surprised! What was this all about?

THE FREE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The following week we prayed about this missionary business and concluded that the Lord wanted us to connect with this group. We discovered that they were the seventh split-off from an original Church of Christ Mission that came to Malawi from the USA in the early 1950s. They went under the name The Free Church of Christ (FCC). There were nineteen congregations in all, scattered between Phalombe and Lake Chilwa.



From left standing in front of Khoromana’s house: our friend John Simon Nantapo; chairperson Daison Khoromana and his wife and child, Miriam, Damson Makuna and his wife and child, and John’s mother Audrey

Over the next eighteen months we travelled many Sundays to preach at various congregations of the FCC and monthly camp meetings when the whole group came together. This required us to drive our car over impossible roads with the result that our car had to be taken to Blantyre for repairs most Monday mornings after a village trip. One congregation was located on an island in the middle of Lake Chilwa. A visit there was an interesting exercise!

Each time we arrived at a camp meeting we were handed small pieces of paper with the following information on them:

NJULI Sunday 14th April	
Attended	43
Repented	8
Healings	2

Not knowing why this information was given to us, John would look at the notes, nod wisely, and put them in his pocket. It was only later talking to David Newington who had worked with Willy Burton in the Congo that we learned that UK missionaries in Africa sent African preachers out each Sunday and paid them when they returned on the basis of their report! Our not doing anything with these notes was to have repercussions down the track!

Daison Khoromana was an extra-ordinary man. He was completely illiterate and had only one message which we heard him preach many times: 'Let us all be one'. This call was always well received. Africans understand and appreciate community.

The people in the churches were Elomwe, part of the great Makua-Elomwe complex of nations. They had spilled over from Mozambique into Malawi during one of their ubiquitous skirmishes and now

numbered over one million in the Mulanje District.

For the first year of our visits to the churches, Makuna was our interpreter. We used to pick him up at his home and drive with him to the meeting place. One day Makuna was missing – we were told he had TB and was in the Zomba General Hospital. We were introduced to a new interpreter by Chairman Khoromana, a man named Bester Khwalala. We found him to be an excellent interpreter; he had been a school- teacher we were told.

The next Friday John was looking through our bank statement and noticed an amount of 100 Kwacha (= \$AUD 100) with the notation: ‘for John’s interpreter’. We withdrew the K100 and took it with us the next Sunday to Migowi where the meeting was to be held. When we arrived, we noticed that Bester was looking the worse for wear, so John said to him: “what has been happening to you?” Bester told us how he had lost his job, how his family had left him and how he had decided to step out and teach in the churches. John said: “What day was that?” Bester said: “Last Tuesday.” John said: “Bester, on the very same day, five women praying in Adelaide, Australia, were instructed by the Holy Spirit to send you K100, and here it is”. One tear ran down Bester’s cheek.

INDEPENDENT CHURCHES IN AFRICA

After eighteen months of travelling over rough roads and preaching useless sermons John said to the Lord; ‘What is all this about, Lord?’ That was on a Wednesday. The following Saturday at mid-day, the phone rang. When John answered, a voice said: “Is that Mr Potter.” “Yes,” said John. The voice replied: “My name is Harold Turner. I am interested in Independent Churches; could we catch up for a chat about your experiences with them.” “Most certainly” John said. An

hour later *the world authority* (!) on African Independent Churches, Dr Harold Turner, a New Zealander working out of Aberdeen University in Scotland, was sitting on our front porch opening up to us the story of the Independent Church Movement which to that time we had been experiencing first-hand but without understanding.

Independent African Churches got that name because they were founded and operate without input from Western Missions. Turner found that there were 7000 such denominations registered with African Governments. The biggest of them, and one of the oldest, is the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth (Kimbanguist) with Headquarters at Nkamba in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It was formed in 1921 by Simon Kimbangu whose followers believe to be a special envoy from heaven. Today the denomination has 22.5 million members. It has a congregation in Kinshasa which performs Handel's Messiah each year with a two-hundred-piece orchestra! You can see them on YouTube.

Nigeria has a number of large independent denominations. One of the oldest is Moses Orimbade Tundase's 'Cherubim and Seraphim' founded in 1925. It is something to see the C&S coming at you down the street dressed in white clothes and waving palm leaves as John did in 1985! C&S currently has 5 million members. Out of C&S came Josiah Oshitelu's 'Church of the Lord (Aladura)' in 1930, currently with 3 million members. Aladura and C&S hold to orthodox views. Not so O. O. Obu's Brotherhood of the Cross and Star located in Calabar, Nigeria, which has 4 million members and holds to doctrines with messianic connotations for the founder! More recently in Nigeria (1952), Josiah Akindayomi founded the Redeemer Christian Church which now has 14 000 congregations and 5 million members in West and South Africa and the USA. RCC doctrine is orthodox. We were

impressed with members of the RCC that we met at our house in Adelaide, Australia, many years later.

South Africa has the biggest number of registered independent churches; three thousand in all. These are mostly Pentecostal churches that arose following the ministry of John G Lake in South Africa in the early 1900s. They are small in size apart from the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), based in Polokwane in the Limpopo Province, which has 6 million adult members. The ZCC holds an Easter Convention each year; it is amazing to see one million people milling around in a field as John did in 1988! ZCC preaches passivism; some people believe that a blood bath was prevented in South Africa in 1994 because of the considerable number of ZCC members. When senior South African politicians like Pieter Botha, F.W. de Clerk and Nelson Mandela were called to pray at Polokwane, they came!

Malawi is not without a mega-church. The fastest growing church in the world is Shepherd Bushiri's Enlightenment Gathering Church. Born in Mzuzu, Bushiri has congregations in Malawi, South Africa, Ghana, South Sudan and the USA. EGC also registered an NGO in Adelaide, South Australia recently. We suppose they will use this registration to run meetings, but Bushiri's personal wealth is \$150 million after operating for less than ten years, so we expect that money making might be on the agenda also.

So began our introduction to the literature relating to Independent Churches world-wide: authors like Turner, Sunkler, and Daneel to name a few. The most useful books we read were written by Mennonite missionaries Edwin and Irene Weaver from Elkhart, Indiana, USA. Their account of interactions with the Ibo churches at Uyo in Nigeria and the Prophet Doe's healing ministry at Kuku Hill in

Ghana, exactly mirrored our own experiences in Malawi. We were particularly struck by their report that Independent Church Groups all want a clinic.

THE CLINIC

At the conclusion of our second meeting with the Free Church of Christ, several children were brought out for prayer. They had tiny lumps on their bodies. John said to the pastor: "What is this", and the reply was: "It is smallpox." We were a bit surprised at this reply because the World Health Organisation had just announced that smallpox had been eliminated from the earth. In fact, these children had measles. The spots look entirely different on dark skin than on white skin. We spent the rest of our time in Malawi recommending vaccination against measles, because many children with measles get pneumonia and die. To our great shame we failed to immunise our own daughter for measles, and she caught it; to the great delight of a resident English missionary doctor because he could show his Malawian students what measles looks like on white skin! Forty percent of children in Malawi die before they are five years old, from things like malaria, measles and gastro-enteritis. TB is the biggest killer of adults in Africa; children die of preventable diseases and disorders.

When we asked the pastors what they were doing about their children's health they were quick to tell us that they needed a clinic. We had no funds to build clinics, so we thought no more about it. A year later, in 1978, a friend in Australia, Wilf Bowen, wrote to us saying his Rotary Club had \$3000 to give to a worthy cause; could we use it? We were reminded of the clinic request.

We had had conversations with Malawi Health officials and one of the

things they were strong about was that missionaries were always building clinics, but most often placing them in places that did not fit in with national health planning. The missionaries would leave the country and the Health Department would have to take the clinics over, despite the fact that during the wet season a river in flood would stop people accessing them. We determined to do better and asked the Lord to give us the right contacts.

The next Sunday we called to pick up Makuna. He ran out of his house holding his ear crying: “I have an insect in my ear – take me to the hospital.” He directed us to the Catholic Mission Hospital at Phalombe. It was a sunny day with not a cloud in the sky. We pulled up in front of the hospital verandah and Makuna rushed inside to get attention. Judy stayed in the car while John stepped out to wait on the veranda. At that moment there was a crash of thunder and heavy rain began to fall. There was no way that John could get back in the car without getting soaked. A door opened and a white coated man stepped out to light a cigarette. Seeing John he said: “Can I help you.” John said: “I need to know who to contact about building a clinic.” He said: “You need to see Dr Malenga at the Government Hospital at Mulanje.” With that the rain stopped, Makuna appeared free of insects in his ear, they both jumped into the car, and we continued on our way to the meeting.

The next week John met with Dr Malenga in her office at Mulanje. He told her he had \$3 000 to put towards a clinic and inquired where in her plan the next clinic was to be built. She said: “We are in the process of building a maternity clinic in Migowi.” (Exactly where our churches wanted it!). She told him further that the District Officer’s office had the plans; the people had made the bricks; and local tradesmen were ready to do the construction under supervision. All

they needed was the roofing iron, some window frames, and doors and \$3000 would be sufficient to buy them! “Ok,” John said, “but who will work the clinic once it is ready.” Dr Malenga said: “We have trained nurses ready to start work there.” We contacted Wilf in Australia. He and his wife Barbara and two of their children caught a plane to Malawi and presented an international draft to the chairperson of the Local Committee on the 26th of December 1978.



Wilf Bowen hands the draft to the Migowi Clinic Committee

Some years later John travelled to Migowi and found the clinic completed, operating, and serving a population of 250 000 people!

TRAINING FOR BESTER

We left Malawi in September 1979. Back in South Australia in 1981, John wrote a distance learning Bible study course called Kingdom

Principals for a community of young Christians that the Lord put around us. We had stayed connected with Bester by mail and, recognising that he had no qualifications to teach in the FCC churches, we suggested he do the course. He did it and passed with flying colours!

But local recognition for him to teach in Malawi was important so we wrote to a missionary friend from Australia called Rick Ford who was a Lecturer at the Likhubula Bible Institute (LBI) in Blantyre asking if people from independent groups could study for the Diploma in Theology. The reply was positive, so we told Bester we would sponsor him to do this course and he jumped at it.

Bester ensconced himself at LBI with consummate ease. He graduated in three years with his Diploma – topping his class. We were privileged to attend Bester’s graduation service at LBI in 1985. Bester returned to the Free Church of Christ and began setting up training programs. The church could not pay him so we began to send Bester a retainer on a regular basis.

While in Malawi, we did three other things to assist Bester in his teaching program:

- We looked around for an Elomwe Bible for him to work with and found that the Rev Walter Saukila from Thyolo, south of Blantyre, had translated the Bible into Elomwe and published it in 1979. It could not be called the ‘Holy’ Bible because the the word in Elomwe for ‘holy’ is the same word as for ‘white’!
- We met with Walter and arranged for him to translate our ETF Tracts and Bible courses into Elomwe. He completed this in 1979.

- Our Texan friends at the Church of Christ at Namikango found an old Elomwe Hymn Book which was out of print. We had this reprinted by the Emmanuel Press in South Africa and distributed copies amongst the FCC Churches and into Mozambique.



Elders and Pastors of the Free Church of Christ – Bester at back with collar

Bester Khwalala is a man of exceptional intellect, born into poverty with no opportunity to advance himself economically. When he found himself at ‘the bottom of the pit’ he did not despair – he offered himself to God to advance His purposes. The Lord was not slow to meet Him more than half way! We have kept in touch with Bester over the years; he became a Trustee for the Emmanuel Tract Fellowship in Malawi for a time, stepping up as an interpreter in some community meetings we held at the Sadzi Training Centre which Byson Mpinganjira founded in the year 2000.

We count it a privilege to have played a small part in helping Bester bring a genuine Christology and genuine Christian practice to village people who are hungry for God’s intervention into their lives. As

Harold Turner used to say: 'Independent Churches are the result of Western mission activity – we cannot abandon them just because they want to rule over their own destiny.' The Lord certainly showed us that He agreed with this by bringing us alongside of the FCC for two years. We learned a lot!

We learned that Independent Churches are not so much focused on theology but on practice; and they learn practices by observation. For instance, their meeting places have two doors – one at one end for the ordinary people to enter, and one at the other end, on the side for important people to enter. When we attended meetings we were greeted and first taken to a house for a warm Coca Cola. Then, at the appropriate time, we would join the pastors and march ceremoniously through the side door into the meeting hall, to sit in the chairs provided. The people below us would be sitting on hard benches made of packed earth. Sometimes the village headman would turn up late and one of the pastors would have to step down to give him a seat; it was quite a sight to see the troubled looks on faces as they decided who should do this!

In front of the chairs there was always a rail. We asked about this but never received an answer. We concluded that they had seen it in a Western church and felt it must be important, even though they did not know what it was for.

There was always a little table located on the side of the meeting place, at which a man would sit and write things on small pieces of paper. During a service, perhaps during a hymn, he would tip-toe up to the chairman and give him a piece of paper. The chairman would look at it and nod wisely and the man would return to his seat. One time John was able to see what was on the paper; there was nothing on

it! The whole procedure was aping a ritual that someone had seen in a Western church!



A Village Congregation near Migowi, Malawi!

The FCC practiced Holy Communion. Judy noticed that the men were served first so she did not take the bread when it was offered to her. She thought they would come back to her when the women were served but they didn't. The next week John had a group of pastors gathered around him before the meeting started asking: "We noticed that Mrs Potter did not take the bread, was it the wrong type of bread?"

One day we were in brother Carrot's church (yes – carrot!) and the Holy Spirit prompted John to go down and shake hands with the people sitting on the pews. He did so and there were smiles all round. The next week the pastors told us they had never seen such love!

Speaking of love, one day John noticed a strange woman at the back of the church with her head bowed, down looking at the ground. She stayed that way throughout the meeting until there was a call for prayer. Then she sprang up and bounded forward over the pews. John asked Bester to enquire what she wanted. She said: “I have committed adultery!” Remembering the story of Jesus, John said to her: “Go, and sin no more”. Her face lit up like a light and she ran out the meeting like a gazelle!

One day in a place called Thuthua, a middle aged man came for prayer. When John asked him what he wanted he said: “I am a pastor of the Ethiopian Church but I would like to join your church”. John said: “Who do the Ethiopian Church worship”, and he said: “Nimrod”! This was the first time we had come across the Ethiopian Church in Malawi. It demonstrated two things: Nimrod was known in Africa to have been a real person and a black man. This was confirmed to us later in discussions with people from the Southern Sudan who readily acknowledged they were Cushites (Genesis 10:8).

The FCC people, like the rest of the people in Malawi have a daily battle with sickness and disease. We recall Judy’s mother, Muriel Solomon, who visited us along with her husband Les in 1979, saying to us: “That woman that I shook hands with had no fingers on her hand”. “No”, we said, “She has leprosy”. The look on the mother’s face reminded us of Malcom Muggerridge who we saw on TV holding it as a privilege to follow in the steps of Jesus and take hold of leprous hands when he was told the same thing.

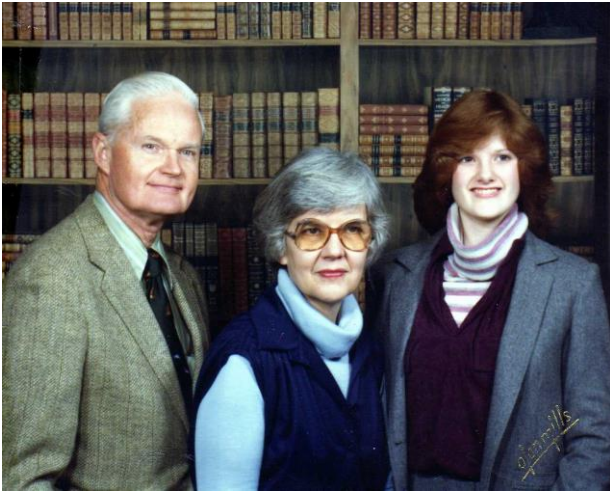
We do not tell these stories to belittle our Malawi friends and brethren. We report them to demonstrate that the Independent Churches are a genuine mission field – people whose hearts are open to

the Gospel and who know about community. It is a common experience in Malawi villages to see an old man sitting on his khonde (front porch) reading a Bible in the morning sunshine. We have experienced more genuine reverence for God in one prayer time before a meal in a Malawian home than we have in a month of Sundays in Western churches.

You will recall that we did not know what to do with the little report notes that we received. It turned out that the reason we were appointed as FCC missionaries was to get financial support for the pastors. They were patient about this but in the end, when no salaries were forthcoming, we were quietly ex-communicated. We only learned this because Bester told us. It did not concern us. We were content in the knowledge that we had supplied them with a clinic and other things they needed, backed up by Bester Khwalala, Bible Student and interpreter par excellence!

JOSEPH HOPKINS – THE BENEFIT OF CLERGY

We met The Rev Dr Joseph Hopkins, his wife Lois, and their daughter Elaine in 1979. Joe and Lois were in Malawi for six months ministering to Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) student ministers in theology and church music at the Zomba Theological Seminary (ZTS). They were impressed with our Christian literature program, the Emmanuel Tract Fellowship (ETF), and we became good friends.



Joe, wife Lois, and daughter Elaine, 1979

Joe retired from his position as a Professor at Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania in 1983 and began a nine year stretch of service at the ZTS. In 1989 Joe was returning for his final term and as part of the deal he wanted to pick up a Toyota 'bakkie' (utility) in South Africa, free of value added tax. His intention was to drive it to

Malawi, where he would be able to import it duty free as the property of the CCAP Blantyre Synod, a charitable entity. John knew the location of Toyota in Johannesburg and had agreed to help Joe pick up the vehicle.

As it happened, Joe's arrival time coincided with the arrival of John's mother Audrey and Robyn Light from Australia for a visit. Joe's call to say he was in town and ready to pick up the bakkie came just a few hours before we were due at the Jan Smuts (later Oliver Tambo) airport. It was going to be a bit of squeeze, but John collected Joe and drove him to the pick-up location. The paperwork was completed, and the vehicle was duly handed over. They had a ten-kilometre drive on the N1 Freeway to the place where we were staying. John said to Joe: "Watch me carefully; I do not want to lose you." They set off with John keeping one eye on Joe behind him. At the first off-ramp John was shocked to see Joe turn off the highway and disappear! Joe did not know Johannesburg, he did not have a map, and his passport and wallet were sitting on the dash of our car!

John drove home and picked up Judy, and we drove to the airport in a rush because Audrey's plane had landed. When we arrived, we found Audrey and Robyn sitting in the airport, looking totally lost. We sat down to explain the reason we were late in collecting them and how entirely shattered we were at the loss of Joe. At that moment Joe walked through the main door of the airport and waved to us!

We tell this story to indicate what sort of a man Joe Hopkins was. The only information he had when he exited the freeway was that we were going to the airport after we had him safely at the place where we were staying. He left the freeway on the west side of a city of six million people. The International Airport was on the eastern side. Joe

found his way there by the simple strategy of continually asking people if he was on the right road to the Airport. Johannesburg is not a good city to talk with strangers – Joe clearly had an angel or two on his side. He made it without incident.

ZOMBA SEMINARY - MALAWI

In 1977, Malawi's main claim to fame was that it had the biggest number of church denominations per head of population in the world. There were sixty-four mission-based denominations and one hundred and fifty-three so-called Independent (African) Church Groups registered with the government. Most mission operations had their own training works, small Bible Colleges, all teaching something different.

The doctrinal differences between churches were significant. For instance, one USA based mission group was teaching that there was a second blessing after conversion in which the recipient experienced a 'body felt salvation', deliverance from the temptations of the flesh. John met their senior minister once and asked him when he received this blessing and what had changed for him. He said: "I have not had the experience myself, but I know someone who has"(!)

The same denomination impressed upon graduating students two important things: (1) they must not start preaching without being 'called' by the oversight; (2) they must not serve two masters, God, and mammon. We met one of their graduate students; his name was Fredson Mchona. After graduating from Bible School Fredson waited eighteen months, observing both demands, to the point that he and his wife were starving. His mother-in-law suggested he start a little house meeting in their village. When the denominational oversight heard of this, they ex-communicated him for not waiting!

There was a strong Catholic presence in Malawi. This was initiated by French White Fathers in the nineteenth century. We met impressive Catholic workers in our first years in Malawi. John met a White Father in the Musuku Hills, in the far North of the country who worked entirely on his own and had never been home in forty-seven years. In the mid-1930s, Marist Brothers from the USA arrived in Malawi and set up schools in the north of the country. One evening in Karonga John met a Marist brother who had taught in a boy's secondary school for forty years. He had been home on leave recently and had heard about the Charismatic Movement. He was intensely curious about this Movement and pressed John to tell him what he knew about it. When John did so he thanked him most profusely, saying over and over again: "Oh Brother John, thank you so much for helping me." John was sitting in a lounge chair, and the brother was sitting on the floor. In John's view, anybody who had slaved for forty years giving Malawi students a basic education was clearly a better man than him. A beautiful humble brother in the Lord!

The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Synods in Malawi are located in the Northern, Central and Southern Provinces of Malawi at Livingstonia, Nkhoma and Blantyre, respectively. Until 1977, each of them had their own training work. The Anglicans also had a small training work at Malosa, just north of Zomba, but were finding it hard to get lecturers. A first move towards unity began when the Anglicans approached the CCAP with a view to the two denominations linking their seminary training. Fortuitously, at the same time, two missionary families from Belfast, the MacMullans and the Campbells, arrived in Zomba to develop a Theological Faculty at the University of Malawi Chancellor College Campus, in Zomba. The result was the development in 1977 of the Zomba Theological Seminary (ZTS), a short distance down the road from the University, with the Anglicans

and all three CCAP synods participating.

The trend towards unity did not stop there. By 1983, six years after the Seminary was established, all of the 'old' denominational missions were sending their trainee ministers to Zomba Seminary for at least part of their training. Even Catholic theologs took courses there.

There was also a move towards unity amongst the Evangelical Denominations at this time. Quite a few independent churches began sending their trainees to the African Evangelical Fellowship Training College in Blantyre as we did with Bester Khwalala. This was a natural trend because most of the Independent Churches were split-off from evangelical missions. The Texan Church of Christ at Namikango continued their private training work but the overall trend was towards rationalisation - the coming together of the church in Malawi to considerable unity. All of which might be conceived a miracle in the light of the situation that existed prior to 1977.

The beginnings of this movement were concomitant with the development of the ETF tract and Bible Correspondence Course program that we set up and ran during the years 1977-79. The contribution of ETF was that the independent churches in Malawi and beyond were introduced to a genuine Christology. It was a case of: 'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all people to Myself' (John 12:32).

PATRICK M'BANGA

As part of his duties at ZTS, Joe Hopkins took his turn at preaching at the Zomba CCAP Church. He started preaching in the English service but soon was asked to contribute to the Chichewa service, a task which required him to set about learning the local language with serious intent. To assist him with his Chichewa sermons, Joe enlisted

the services of Patrick M'Banga whom he had met at our ETF office in 1979. Joe would write out his sermon in Chichewa and Patrick would correct the spelling and idiomatic presentation. The relationship became more than a matter of convenience; it became an open door for Patrick to find economic security and a place in Malawi society.



Joe in Malawi with the 'bakkie' in Zomba

Patrick's story, as far as we were concerned, began in late 1977, when we moved the ETF operation from our house in the Zomba suburb of Kalimbuka to a building in the Zomba Township. Soon after we shifted in, Patrick turned up at the office seeking employment. He was eighteen years of age at the time; his father was dead, and he was the oldest son of a family consisting of his mother and three siblings.

When he arrived at our office door the whole family was starving. We felt impressed to employ Patrick. It proved a good move; he was highly intelligent, capable, hard-working, consistent, and a person of integrity. We paid our staff the amount prescribed by the Malawi Government for clerical staff. It was a pittance in our eyes but a life-saver as far as Patrick's family was concerned.

After a time, because his village was a long way from town, we invited Patrick to live with us on our rented property, No. 9 Mountain Road, during the working week. Patrick took up residence in one of the servant's rooms. He was the first of nineteen Malawian ETF workers and their family members that came to live on the property while we were there. We invited the Malawians to join us for meals, but their diet was significantly different from ours. They thanked us for the offer but told us they preferred to cook and eat their food in the open. Fortunately for them, we had two boilers at the back of the house to heat hot water, one of which was a cast iron stove ideal for cooking food. While we were eating inside the house, we would hear their excited chatter. After the meal was eaten, they would turn to prayers and singing Christian hymns and choruses.

Patrick, together with some other young people from Zomba, was filled with the Holy Spirit at a meeting in Zomba one evening. Before we left in September 1979, we baptised him in the Mulungusi River. We also appointed him as Office Manager for ETF, and built him a house in his village, Malonje, as he was due to marry Miriam, the daughter of a Traditional Court Judge. When we returned to Malawi in 1985, six years after we had left, we were invited to Patrick and Miriam's house for a meal and a meeting. We found that they were running a weekly home meeting using the exact same format that we had used and singing many of the same choruses that we had sung in

the heady days of 1977-79.

After we left Malawi, the Emmanuel Press team in South Africa could not believe that Africans could be entrusted to manage the program; they decided to shift the ETF office from Zomba to Limbe and brought in a couple from New Zealand to run the business. Patrick lost his employment, but thanks to his experience with ETF he obtained a clerical position at Chancellor College. His salary was sufficient to feed his growing family and for him to attend secondary school after hours. He continuing to perform well in his job at Chancellor where Joe Hopkins found him when he returned to Malawi in 1983. Patrick matriculated in 1984.

During the time that Patrick was helping Joe prepare his sermons, Joe suggested that Patrick should undertake ministerial training at the ZTS. Before that could happen, the Church saw it necessary that Patrick and Miriam should be married in the church, for their marriage had been solemnised by the village headman but had not had the ‘benefit of Clergy’! So it was that Patrick was given a dark suit and Miriam was given a white wedding dress and they were married with due solemnity in the presence of their four children! After that, Joe organised support for the family from the USA and Patrick was enrolled to study for the CCAP Ministry at Zomba Seminary in 1990. He graduated top of his class in 1993 and was appointed to run a parish church near the Shire River in Southern Malawi.

After serving that congregation for seven years, Patrick received a scholarship to undertake Theological Studies at Chancellor College for the Bachelor of Theology Degree. He graduated three years later, top of his class, and was appointed as a Junior Lecturer at the ZTS. After a brief time there, he received a scholarship to undertake studies

for a Master of Theology Degree in Toronto, Canada. He returned to Malawi two years later and was appointed a Senior Lecturer at ZTS.

Patrick's career did not stop there. Soon after his return from Canada, he was appointed as Chaplain to the Polytechnic, a campus of the University of Malawi in Limbe on a salary of MK 2 million per annum; a bit of a change from ETF days when he earned K25 per month! But more was to come. In 2013 Patrick was appointed Associate Minister, and later Senior Minister at St Michael and All Angels, Blantyre, the biggest CCAP church in Malawi. This was the church attended by President for Life, Dr H Kamuzu during his time in power.

What had begun tentatively one morning at the ETF office in 1977 had become all joy in later times, thanks to ongoing conscientious work by Patrick and the long-term intervention and support of Joe and Lois Hopkins. John was invited to Patrick and Miriam's house in Zomba for a meal in 2007. Their house was full of white goods and other furnishings donated by folk from Joe's home town of New Wilmington; and the meal was right on the button for a *masungu*. They had come a long way in thirty years. Their three boys and their daughter were now grown and educated and finding employment. For one couple in Malawi, the abundant life promised by Jesus had come!

MORE GOOD STORIES

Patrick was not the only ETF employee to find economic advancement after we left Malawi. Here are some of their stories.

Jessie Kaulamu was our first staff member. She and **Fanny** (staff member number three) were both girls who had managed to get pregnant before they were married. This made them unmarriedable in

the local culture. Their only hope of leaving their parental homes was to become the second wife of some man who had sufficient income to take them into his establishment.

Missionaries frowned on such an arrangement, but it seems to us a better solution than the alternatives - living on prostitution or brewing and selling a deadly concoction of home brew beer. In our time, the Abraham Church in Malawi had a bad reputation with Western missionary groups because they accepted people with two wives. Our Church of Christ friend from Houston Texas, G B Shellburne III (he had no names, only initials) called on the leader of the Abraham Church. He found that their policy allowed a man who had two wives when he became a Christian to keep them; for, as they said: 'where else would they go?' If a man had no wife when he became a Christian, he was encouraged to take only one wife. What was wrong with that?

A complicating factor that contributed to the two-wives problem was that in Malawi culture divorce is regarded as a bad thing because it breaks down societal structures. So, if a man has a wife but finds he is attracted to another woman, rather than divorce the first and leave her without support, it is culturally better to take two wives. Missionaries saw it all as lust, and in many cases it probably was. But we see the problem and are not too quick to judge. Jessie and Fanny survived as second wives. In fact, Jessie, who had a forthright character, became a Member of the Zomba City Council for several terms and did quite well in that office we gather.

Elita Banda was our typist; slow but accurate enough for official letters when we needed one. She had a husband who was a house builder; her financial security was never in question.

Macford Chipuliko had a job with the Statistics Department before he joined us. He had a Junior School Certificate (Grade 9) and was a brilliant translator from English to Chichewa and vice versa. We would sing a chorus and he would sing it straight back to us in Chichewa! He left us in 1979 to undertake theological studies in the USA. He returned in 1982 to take charge of the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM), a denomination with 900 congregations in four countries in Central Africa. Macford was the first Malawian national with whom John had a completely open relationship. We did not fail to note the coincidence that the founder of PIM, John Chilembwe, was the first contact and co-worker of Joseph Booth. Booth was a missionary from Derby, UK, via Australia who set up the first Industrial Mission in Malawi in the 1890s (see later Chapter). Macford, was John's first friend and co-worker in Malawi!

Ruth Chipuliko was married to Macford during our time in Malawi. She was a conscientious worker at ETF and a good friend to all the team. She constantly faced the disappointment that she was not getting pregnant. When Macford received a message that he was required to attend Bible School in Tennessee, Judy, knelt in front of him and wept, saying: 'Macford this is not good for your marriage.' Macford went to the USA and raised the necessary funds for Ruth to join him. It is hard to imagine the trauma that a simple village girl from Malawi would experience flying to the USA via the UK by herself and landing in a place completely foreign to her. Ruth stayed in Tennessee for three months but spent most of the time in a mental institution. The diagnosis was 'extreme home sickness', which we might interpret as feeling completely lost and out of place. Ruth returned home and Macford divorced her a year or so later. John's mother Audrey helped Ruth obtain a certificate in Office Practice and she obtained a job at a Tea Estate near Thyolo. We visited her there in the early 1990s. She

was now attached to a certain Mr Nkumbalambi - pregnant and smiling!

Thom Mleya hailed from Karonga in the far north of Malawi. He was in Zomba for secondary schooling when we employed him to mark Bible Studies in 1979. After we left, Thom obtained a job in the Chancellor College kitchen. He married a lovely girl called Fanny and they had three children. Sadly, Fanny and the children were killed in a bus accident. We never saw Thom again, which is a pity because he was quite a character. When Mother Audrey asked him to share something at the ETF office morning-prayer time, he turned up in a white laboratory coat and supported his message with actions like jumping on and off a desk.

Charles Jikah was seven years old when his mother was killed in a house fire in their village. As he stood there crying, people said to him: 'Do not worry, these people are not your parents. Here is your mother!' His mother turned out to be an unmarried woman who kept herself and two daughters by prostitution and selling beer. It turned out that when Charles was born, the mother's sister was married but had no children so, following tribal customs, Charles was given to the sister so that she might have a child. Finding his real mother did nothing for Charles general welfare. When he came to us he had nothing beside the clothes he stood up in. His first job with us was to manage the front office and book shop. He also came to live with us at No 9 on the mountain, and after a time was joined by a young woman he had gotten pregnant, and had been forced to marry before we employed him! Charles was a great friend to our daughter Elizabeth. Before we left Malawi in 1979 we built Charles a small brick house in Zomba. We never saw him again, but we were told later that he had made a remarkable success of a business selling meat to the army

camp in Zomba. The last we heard was that Charles had become the Regional Chairman of a major political party in Zomba.

Byson Mpinganjira was another young man undertaking secondary schooling in Zomba whom we took on in 1979 to mark Bible Courses. He had shifted to Zomba from his village with his parents after his mother's sister, who was a witch, had tried to kill him. The aunt had no children of her own while, contrasting with this, Byson's mother was producing children every two years in the African manner. In fits of jealousy, the witch proceeded to kill off her sister's sons when they reached the age of two years. When Byson was two, he collapsed one day and was carried to the Black Witchdoctor (*sangoma*) who declared that the problem was not physical but spiritual, and that the aunt was the cause. The witchdoctor called the aunt and ordered her to take the spell off Byson or he would kill her. Reluctantly, the aunt did so, and Byson recovered. His parents decided that enough was enough and moved to Zomba where his father became a night watchman and never slept in a bed at night for the next 25 years.

After ETF closed operations in Malawi, Byson had a series of other low paid jobs before he was fortunate enough to access a teacher training course. Soon after he graduated, he was appointed as a Primary School Headmaster in Bangwe, near Limbe. After that he joined a Malawi Government Training Organisation and gained a Certification in Business Management. That experience encouraged him to think about building a Private Secondary School. In 2000, with our help, he obtained funding from the Australian Aid Agency AusAid, and built a Secondary School and Training Centre at Sadzi, just south of Zomba Township. In 2006, John attended a graduation ceremony at Sadzi and presented certificates to thirty-eight students who had completed a course in tailoring. We are glad to report that all

of those students either obtained employment or set up a successful small business as a result of their training. Byson and his wife Edna have good business skills and they continue to do well financially, with the Training Centre, a shop in Sadzi Township, and maize growing on land inherited from their parents.

Rabson Kaombe was an interesting young man. He had two passions: developing small-scale food production businesses and evangelism. Unfortunately, the two occupations did not mix well. Just when a good stand of lettuces was close to harvest, someone would call Rabson to join them in conducting evangelistic meetings in some place far from home. The inevitable result would be that the lettuces would have been stolen or died by the time Rabson arrived home. We provided the finance for Rabson to start six small businesses before we excused ourselves from further philanthropy. While we were in the country Rabson had a job marking courses for ETF, so he did not starve. We used to receive regular letters from Rabson with regard to new business opportunities for which he required capital, but we had become fixed in our view that Rabson's business enterprises were a poor investment.

When we visited Malawi in 1992, we were surprised to find that Rabson was now the Senior Pastor of a large church in Mzuzu in the Northern Province of Malawi. Soon after that he shifted to Blantyre to head up the biggest congregation in the country of a denomination called Living Waters. This group had a connection with the Rhema Movement and through this connection Rabson completed a Master of Theology Degree and regularly tripped off to conferences in places like South Africa and the USA. Rabson is a capable and innovative man. We are pleased that he found an occupation that suited his temperament.

Now we wish to introduce you to **Gladstone Mchoma**. Gladstone worked in our house garden during the time we were in Malawi. When he came to us, he had only completed five years of primary school education, having dropped out to live a more adventurous lifestyle chasing cane rats and other small animals in the bush. When he came to us, we encouraged him to complete years 6-8 at primary school each morning. This requirement was applauded by his uncle, a government public servant, who became responsible for Gladstone's welfare after his father died. Gladstone had almost completed Year 8 when we were preparing to leave.



Gladstone in his bedroom at University in the UK

In discussion with Uncle Roderick, it was decided that Gladstone should become a truck driver, which required that he go on to Secondary School and obtain his Junior Certificate (Year 10). As it

turned out, Gladstone did well at Secondary School and went on to gain a Year 12 Malawi Certificate of Education. Then, wonder of wonders, Gladstone was offered a place at Chancellor College to study Geography. He graduated in 1987 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Geography and obtained a position in the Malawi Lands Department based at Mzuzu. Two years later he was offered a scholarship to study Town Planning in the UK. He graduated in 1991 with a Master of Town Planning Degree and returned to Malawi to take-up the position of Deputy Commissioner of Lands!

There is one more ETF staff member we need to report on – her name was **Eunice**. One night in 1979, John’s mother Audrey came home from the ETF office complaining that she needed another worker in the office. When we asked if she had anybody in mind, she told us that a nice girl had called at the office that morning looking for work. We said: “Well, why not employ her.” The next day when John called into the ETF office, he found the young men looking very grim. When he enquired as to the reason, they explained that when the politicians came to Zomba for a Parliament meeting, certain young women were called on to provide certain personal services. Eunice was one of these young women and the boys were finding her presence in the office difficult. “A person like her should not be working in a Christian office”, they said. But Eunice proved to be an excellent worker. We dismissed her just before we left the country because we were leaving the work in the hands of Patrick and Charles, and it was uncertain that they could manage a girl like Eunice. Thirty years later John was walking down the road near Sadzi one afternoon when someone called out in a loud, excited voice; “Mr Potter!” It was Eunice. She shared with John that she had married and lived with her husband in the Shire Valley until he died. She had raised children with success and all together her report was one that denied her unfortunate past. John

rejoiced to see her again and we were sad to hear a year or so later that Eunice had died of tuberculosis.

So ends our report on the lives of a few uneducated, young people that the Potters took off the street to run a Christian literature ministry that blessed the whole of Central Africa by introducing them to Jesus of Nazareth.

ETF REVIVED

In 1989 we received a note from Joe Hopkins suggesting that it was time to revive the ETF. In late 1989, Wilf Bowen and John visited Malawi, and plans to resurrect a new ETF were developed in Joe's house in the Old Naisi Estate in Zomba. Joe was now 70 years old so under Malawi regulations he was too old to be a Trustee. Brother M J D Mulele was appointed chair. The other Trustees were Patrick M'Banga, Byson Mpingangira, Bester Khwalala, and a new man recommended by Joe, Stanley Ngwira.

[The origin of the name Old Naisi is interesting. We used to think it was a Chichewa name, but we later learned that the name came about, when a British expatriate lady was taken to the site to see if it was suitable for a housing development. She said, we gather: 'This is nice!' So, Naisi (nice) became its name.]

The new Board had a problem. It did not have in its hands the ETF constitution, the registration certificate, or the seal; and nobody had any idea of where these articles might be. The next day, Byson and John headed to Blantyre to consult with the Registrar General's Department. They discovered that the ETF was still registered, but with the original Trustees' names. Forms were obtained to change the Trustees names, but the Department had no knowledge of the missing

artefacts. The next day John left the country.

Time passed until one day we received a letter from Byson Mpinganjira telling us that he had been woken one morning with a clear message from the Holy Spirit that he should go to the Assemblies of God Printing Press in Limbe immediately. When Byson arrived at the Press he asked the management team if they knew anything about the ETF material. They said that they did not, but there was a room full of old boxes that were due to be burnt that very day; he was welcome to look through them. In the very last box he looked in, Byson found what he was looking for. We visited Malawi the following year and the new Board was appointed.

Joe made two outstanding contributions to the on-going success of the ETF in Malawi. He motivated us to get things going again in 1989 after its demise in 1983, and he recommended Stanley Ngwira to be a member of the Board. Stanley became the Chair after Brother Mulele died in 1999. He has done an outstanding job of guiding the work over the past 24 years.

Joe continued to work in Zomba until 1992. At that time there was a stirring of discontent with the Government of Life-President Dr Banda who was now well over ninety years old. The problem was not so much with Dr Banda but with his friend and ally, Jonathan Tembo. Tembo was the long-time Minister of State and President of the Reserve Bank of Malawi. Tembo had not always operated in a manner that benefited the people of Malawi. One case that was exposed was Tembo's use of World Bank Funds to build a tourist hotel in Swaziland in his own name. The funds were repaid but the damage had been done. There was a growing sentiment that if Banda would not deal with Tembo then his government must go.

Most Malawians were afraid to speak out publicly against the Banda regime. It was risky to do so. Many people had been arrested and gaoled for life in rural compounds without trial in the thirty years of Banda's reign. Senior churchmen became the spokesmen for the masses, the Catholic Bishops and Dr Joseph Hopkins amongst them.

One day Joe was called to the office of the CCAP Synod Secretary in Blantyre. After they had exchanged pleasantries, the Secretary got up from his chair, shook Joe's hand and thanked him most sincerely for the work that he had contributed to the work of CCAP over the past nine years. This was his polite way of telling Joe that his time in Malawi was ended. It was not politic for the CCAP hierarchy to have someone in their ranks speaking out against the President and they were concerned that it was dangerous for Joe to do so. Joe left Malawi in 1992. Elections were called in 1994, and the government of Dr Banda was defeated.

Joe has continued to support the work in Malawi to the present time. He remains alert as ever despite being 100 years old and is ever ready to lend a hand to support the ongoing mission effort of the United Presbyterian Church in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania; especially when it is directed towards his beloved Malawi, the Warm Heart of Africa.

M J D MULELE – THE CONTENTED MODERATION OF THE ANCIENT MANNERS

We were in Johannesburg in 1996. John was working at the University of the Witwatersrand, when we received a letter from Byron Mpinganjira in Malawi asking us to assist him set up a Private Secondary School in Zomba. We prayed about it, and it seemed to us and the Holy Ghost to be a promising idea, provided we added a Training Centre.

Byron was qualified to head up both a School and a Training Centre through his previous employment. Over the next few years, we worked with Byron to secure aid funding from the Australian Government to build a suitable facility in a suburb of Zomba called Sadzi. John visited Malawi in 2000, soon after a piece of land had been allocated to Byron for the project by the Zomba Town Council. This land was dedicated to the Lord's work, in the presence of the local MP, by pouring oil on it and declaring that it belonged to God.

The aid funds became available that same year. Byron found a builder and the buildings were erected in time for a visiting group of Full Gospel Businessmen from Australia to join in dedicating the Centre in a public ceremony in July 2001. Later that year the Australian High Commissioner based in Zimbabwe visited the site and was impressed with both the building and the welcome she received from the local community. Malawians are good at public relations, particularly the ladies when they get to singing and dancing!

Over the next twelve months Byron and his wife Edna set up several training programs. We sent them six desk top computers which enabled them to offer a course in basic IT. A local business woman set

up a Small Business Management Course, covering business registration, licencing, taxation and book-keeping. But the course that attracted the most attention was a course in Tailoring. John was privileged to hand out the Certificates at a ceremony in 2006 when 38 aspiring tailors graduated. The women made dresses and entered the auditorium singing a song especially written for the occasion. Every one of the tailoring graduates either started a successful business or found a rewarding job in tailoring. To further assist the program, we sent Byson a container of goods including a car, heaps of text-books, and sundry other items.



Sadzi ETF Training Centre: Opening Day Ceremony 2001.
Byson speaking, Bester Khwalala interpreting.

TRADE TRAINING IN MALAWI

The Scottish missionaries brought the Gospel, literacy, and western medicine to Malawi. The African Lakes Corporation brought in business. It was left to Joseph Booth, a Baptist who originated in

Derby in the United Kingdom, to come to Nyasaland via Melbourne, Australia, to introduce the first Industrial Mission to Malawi.

Booth's idea was to setup self-supporting missions like those that William Carey had pioneered in India, combining both general education and training leading to commercial activities. Strangely enough, the impetus for Booth's mission came from a public debate with an evolutionist in Melbourne in 1891. Booth won the debate but was challenged when his opponent asked him why he had not sold all of his goods and gone to Africa to feed the poor. Booth's response was to accept the challenge. His wife Mary Jane died before he departed but he and his daughter arrived in Nyasaland in 1892 under the auspices of the Zambezi Industrial Mission which Booth founded, with headquarters in Australia.

As mentioned above, Booth's first contact was a man called John Chilembwe. John nursed Booth through six attacks of malaria during the first year he was in Malawi. Joseph and his daughter survived but his son, who was in school in the United Kingdom at the time and joined the mission in his school holidays, did not survive an attack of malaria. All of this was no hindrance to the mercurial Booth. Over the next ten years he established a number of different mission programs to satisfy his changing doctrinal stances and his inability to get on with Mission Boards. The Seventh Day Baptist work in Malawi is attributed to him. Later he attempted to establish Watch Tower in Malawi – this led to his eviction from Nyasaland and rejection by the World Society of Jehovah Witnesses! The Australian based Zambezi Industrial Mission survived and is still operating.

Booth's fragile theology and inability to collaborate with Mission Boards was not the only reason for the failure of his vision in Malawi.

Booth made a trip to Britain and the United States in 1897 and took John Chilembwe with him to study in Virginia to become a Baptist Pastor. While there, Chilembwe was adopted by a Black Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island, and the elders of that church persuaded him to abandon Booth and go back to Malawi under their covering. When John returned to Nyasaland, he established the Providence Industrial Mission (PIM), independent of Booth.

A mission backed by Black people in the USA was not well received by the Protectorate Government and the established Missions. Chilembwe had to find local support from village Malawians and amongst them he found an affinity with political dissidents who were plotting to get rid of the Western influence in their country.

In 1915, Chilembwe took part in an uprising. One night, the farms of European settlers at Magomero and Mulanje, and the Blantyre Arsenal, were attacked simultaneously. John Chilembwe's platoon attacked and murdered John Livingstone, David Livingstone's nephew, on his farm at Magomero but, overall, the attack was unsuccessful. The dissidents were rounded up, tried, and hanged, John Chilembwe amongst them. PIM had built a large church building at Chiradzulu, just north of Blantyre. The British arrived with cannon after the hanging and blew it up.

PIM was revived in 1930 by a certain Dr Makala from Rhode Island. He rebuilt the church building at Chiradzulu. Our John stood in the pulpit of that church one day and marvelled at African ingenuity; the huge building had been built without a plan! Sadly, PIM had no industrial arm; it became another evangelical church planting exercise, although it was successful at that. By 1978, they had nine hundred congregations scattered across four countries in Central Africa.

In the period 1964-1980, trade training in Malawi was provided by institutions needing tradesmen for routine operations like house construction and maintenance. For some reason that we never understood, government workers in Malawi retire after fifteen years of service; as a result, you can find retired tradesmen living in most villages in Malawi. Some of them continue their trade as a means of supporting themselves. Such a man was Allan, a man referred to us when we were looking for someone to make some office furniture for the ETF in late 1977.

Allan (we do not remember knowing his family name) could create a presentable piece of furniture with basic hand tools like an adze, complete with dove-tailed drawers and varnish. He used local hardwood timber which polished to a brilliant finish. We are not sure where Allan learned his trade, but he was certainly good at it – see photo. Allan's main competition in the villages were an innumerable number of coffin makers. They had a good trade in a country under



Allan with a freshly finished ETF desk, at our house on Mountain Road

threat from a bagful of mortal diseases.

AFRICA MEETS THE WEST

Let us think a moment about how the West has engaged with Africa.

The Missionaries

In Nyasaland, and much of the rest of Central and East Africa, the first glimpse Africans had of *masungus* was in the form of missionaries. In the case of Malawi, it was David Livingstone and Archbishop McKenzie followed by Henry Henderson down south and Robert Laws in the north. These people were benevolent, caring, considerate and patriarchal. They told stories from a book which had little to say about Africa outside of Egypt. There was benefit in knowing these people and doing what they said, you had regular supplies of food, improved health care, prestige and expectations of a good life in material terms if you accepted a teaching or pastoring role within the mission operation.

For the first fifteen or so years (1875-1889), Christian witness in Nyasa was fairly uniform: the model of Christianity was Presbyterian, theologically informed by the Synod of Dort (1618-19). The Catholic influence was present from 1889 when French White Father Peres Blanc arrived on the scene, but his influence was minimal in the early days, being confined to a small area around Lilongwe and in the far north in the Musuku Hills. Booth appeared in 1892 but he presented no serious threat to CCAP orthodoxy. It was only after the Second World War when Nyasaland saw a huge influx of Evangelical Missions from the USA that sectarianism became a problem in Malawi. By 1979 there were 63 missions operating in Malawi, each with their own denominational brand and doctrinal emphasis, and 157

registered Independent Churches resulting from breakaways from mission churches.

The current (2018) religious demography in Malawi is Protestant Christian 33.5%, Roman Catholic 17.2%, other Christian 26.6%, Muslim 13.8%, traditionalist 1.1%, other 7.7%. Thus, Malawi may be defined as a Christian country, but the notion of what constitutes a Christian life is badly fragmented and severely disputed: anything from obligatory confession and the mass on Sundays to syncretic African churches like the Zacchaeus Church that meet sitting in trees and Adam Churches which meet stark naked!

Pentecostals in Malawi are not free from sectarianism. Amongst the Western Missionaries we met in the 1970s were Isobel Duncan and Doris Lapka of the Apostolic Church of Pentecost, British Columbia. This church is classified as a 'Jesus only' denomination because they baptise in the name of Jesus only (Acts 19:5)! Based in Limbe were our good friends David and Jean Le Page, ex Jersey Island. David was the head man for the US Church of God, first in Malawi and later for the whole of Africa. Soon after we arrived in Malawi, David rang to invite us to a meeting at their house. John asked whether it was a Charismatic prayer meeting and David replied quite dogmatically: "No it is Pentecostal!" What the difference was we never discovered. When we attended the meeting, we were talking to Isobel Duncan after the meeting when Jean le Page went past and hissed: "Be careful, she is Jesus Only!" The next day we received a letter from Doris Lapka with K100 in notes inside wishing us well in our ministry. What was wrong with that?

In 1979 at Easter, the Pentecostal leaders in Malawi were encouraged to hold a combined service. But there was a problem: at whose church

would the meeting be held? Some leaders thought: ‘If the service goes well some of our people may leave us and start attending that church!’ Brother and Sister Guthrie, Pentecostal Holiness missionaries, who served the Lord in Malawi for forty plus years, sat on our front porch one Sunday afternoon, and told us about the coming meeting at Easter. They were worried: “It is not the Pentecost we know, Brother Potter.” Heaven help us when we ‘strain at a gnat’ and miss the big picture. Thankfully, we think much of this went over the African’s heads. They, particularly pastors, act pragmatically, changing their denomination any time they were promised a better financial deal.

When John visited Malawi on later occasions, he usually attended the English service at the main CCAP Church in Zomba. He enjoys seeing the Elders sitting in a semicircle at the front and hearing the choirs sing – there are always two of them for some reason. The preaching is usually supplied by an incumbent of the Religious Studies Department of the University of Malawi or the Zomba Theological Seminary. We have known several senior CCAP pastors; they are all good men, but we sometimes wonder if they are still Africans or now part of a new elite? They seem to suffer from the same cultural schizophrenic syndrome as Shirley Sebekwana.

Shirley Sebekwana was a colleague of John’s at Wits University in South Africa in the 1990s. She was from the BaPedi tribe in Sekhukhune, north-east of Pretoria. Shirley had a PhD in Education from Cambridge University and was a brilliant lecturer. She recognised that John, being older than other staff, and having had experience in the real world, had things to contribute. She often invited him into her lectures to share some happening in life that illustrated what she was trying to present to her students.

John said to Shirley one day, “Shirley, do you ever go home to see Agogo?” Shirley said: “Of course, I go home to my village every three months. I take off my Western clothes, kick off my shoes, put on an African dress and sit on the dirt floor and talk with the other women for three days. I do this because that is who I am John!” The last John heard of Shirley she was in charge of training for the whole of the South African Public Service. We are sure she is doing an incredibly good job, but that is not who she is! The question in our mind is why should a highly intelligent person like Shirley Sebekwana have to spend most of her time being something she would prefer not to be just to put bread on the table? In South Africa, the Afrikaners behave as Afrikaners, and the people with an English background act in the English manner. It is only the Africans that have to be two persons in one – and it is their country!

The RAJ

The Raj arrived in Malawi forty-eight years after Livingstone. That was because Nyasa had no mineral wealth. The Raj turned up early in those areas of Africa that had mineral wealth. They were designated colonies.

There is a story told about the coming of Europeans to the Buganda people in Uganda. By some extraordinary coincidence, a Scottish Calvinist Preacher and a Catholic White Father arrived in the court of the Paramount Chief (the Mutesa) on the same day. Now the Mutesa was a person to whom it paid to show respect. It was his practice to never sit in a chair but always sit on the back of a crouching page-boy. He never looked around when he sat down, the page was expected to anticipate when he was required to provide that service.

When the two preachers arrived the Mutesa was quite interested to

hear what they had to say. He permitted them to preach to him for many days and was especially amused when they contradicted and disagreed with one another. Eventually, he tired of the whole thing and sent them both packing. A few weeks later the Madi from Sudan visited him and hearing of the episode with the missionaries, he warned the Mutesa: “Be careful, for a while these *masungus* will tell you good things but after a time they will tell you, you must put away all your wives but one. If you do not do it the soldiers will come and force you to do it.” Undoubtedly, this is how it must have seemed to the Africans in the case of extra wives and many other things.

Most of the ex-patriate men the UK government sent to Nyasaland were young. Many of them never returned home – malaria and dysentery took their toll. If you go into the Zomba cemetery you will see their graves.

There is a gap between the two parts of the Mulanje Massive. It goes by the name Fort Lister Gap because the Raj had a camp in there for soldiers charged with watching out for slavers. There are graves there. One of them says “Here lies Captain John Stephenson – he was just, brave and true.” This soldier was Robert Louis Stephenson’s brother; he was eighteen when he died at Fort Lister. We found this sad. These men were a long way from home; they had to wait six months for a letter from home to arrive. They were ‘just, brave and true’ indeed.

The root and ground of the mixed-culture problem in Africa is undoubtedly perceptions relating to wealth. John was talking to a Xhosa School Principal at Wits University one day. She told him: “For a long time, I thought that, if I wished to get out of poverty, I needed to embrace the white man’s culture, for they all were rich. It has taken me a long time to find the good in my own culture.” The

whites, on their side, particularly many missionaries, have operated on the assumption that their culture is all good. John has discussed the problem of syncretism in his book 'The Way Things Are.' Not that syncretism which results from Africans misinterpreting things, but the syncretism that the whites bring with them – things like Christmas trees.

It is not well known, but a Bantu African baby is not black at birth. The melanin in their skin builds up over a period of one or two weeks. We have spoken to Africans about this, and they tell us that many of their people believe the change in skin colour is a sign of 'evil coming in'. In Bantu languages, the word 'white' is synonymous with the word 'holy;' and white people are called *masungu*, meaning 'a god.' Putting all this together, Africans are disadvantaged when it comes to holding to a sensible self-esteem when they come into contact with white people.

In our first term in Malawi, we worked at close quarters with many Malawian government agents. They were good at their work, mentally capable and competent. There was only one thing wrong, all of them had a permanent glow of sweat on their forehead. This we interpreted to be the result of having to be someone who was 'not them'! The best time of their life was when they retired to the village, put away the façade, and got back to the things taught to them at their mother's knee. We know we are making a gross generalisation and that there are plenty of exceptions to the case but for most Africans what we are saying rings true. This leaves us with the final question: is there some way an African can develop his personal economy without becoming a *masungu*? Looking across the continent, at the violence and corruption practiced by the likes of a Mobutu Sese Seko or a Mugabe, one could be excused for saying the problem is hopeless. In our time

in Malawi, we met one man who gave us great hope: M J D Mulele!

THE ETF BOARD

We met Mr M J D Mulele for the first time in July 1977. It was the first meeting of the newly constituted Board of the Emmanuel Tract Fellowship (ETF) in Malawi. Bill Kirby from South Africa had found and appointed the Board members and was present to help us get things under way.

There were five Board Members: the Rev E Katsulukuta, Bible Translator of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Nkhoma Synod; the Rev D P H Mbewe, Independent Assemblies of God; Mr M J D Mulele, Clerk of the Court, Ministry of Justice, and Member of the Evangelical Church of Malawi; with Bill Kirby and John Potter making up the number. We regret that we do not have a photo of the occasion to share with you.

Rev Katsulukuta was the person who translated the Emmanuel Press tracts and Bible course into Chichewa under Bill Kirby's direction. We were told later by our ETF Malawi staff that he has done an excellent job with one exception. A major heading in course three of the Wonderful Life series was: 'Grow'. This had been translated by Katsulukuta as 'Corona'. We should have seen it but missed it for a time; 'corona' means 'crown', not 'grow'!

The Rev Mbewe appealed as a humble brother in the Lord. Unfortunately, he was not with us long. He was appointed to a position in Salisbury, Rhodesia (now Harare in Zimbabwe) a month after our first meeting and we never saw him again. The denomination that Mbewe belonged to, the Independent Assemblies of God, came about because a senior missionary was found by his African brethren

to have medication against malaria in his possession. The power of God to heal was a major emphasis for African Pentecostals at the time. It was the boast of the pastors that they took neither *masungu* medicine nor African medicine of any kind. This was a carryover from the stand adopted by independent church men all over the developing world in the face of the 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic. Those who survived interpreted their survival as God's mark that they were chosen vessels to go forth and build 'the real church' of God. Many believed them, and huge denominations came into being – see above. The Maori Ratana Church of New Zealand is another outstanding example.



M J D Mulele with the ETF Board 1991 with Wilf and Barbara Bowen
(Australian visitors) and Joe Hopkins

Our memory of Mulele is strong. He was short, about 155cm and he always wore a suit with a waistcoat (see photo above), The most noticeable thing about him was that he always presented himself as being in complete control of his life and circumstances. We never saw

him troubled or uncertain. He must have been on some occasions, but we never saw it. He seemed to us to be the perfect type for the job of Clerk of the Court. Lawyers and Judges might exhibit uncertainty, but not Bambo Mulele! For most of the time we were in Malawi in the late 1970s, Mr Mulele lived and worked in the Shire Valley at Bangula. John preached at the CCAP Church there on one occasion.

Mulele was a conscientious member of the Evangelical Church of Malawi. We are quite sure he had abandoned ancestral worship, witches and witchdoctors, and to some extent herbalists. He read his Bible, had his family in order and lived according to Biblical principles. But, at home he demonstrated that none of this had caused him to forsake the good in his primal culture.

John had cause to visit Mr Mulele at his home on one occasion. When you visit an African at his home, two things can happen. One way is that you are welcomed, taken to a chair on the front porch, and invited to conduct your business in a good spirit and handshakes and smiles. You can leave with your business completed satisfactorily but **you have not been received!!**

The other way is that, when you arrive you, will be taken into the house. There you enter a world that you could not even guess at if you conducted your business on the porch. First of all a certain chair is indicated for you to sit on. Then the welcome begins. Each member of the family comes into the room to greet you with a handshake and a gentle word. The women come in on their knees! You are then given something to eat and drink. The family sit in silence while you consume these offerings. **You are being received!**

In 2001 John took a group of Full Gospel Businessmen to Malawi.

One evening they met with the ETF Board in the CCAP guest house on Zomba Mountain. John asked Joe Day, an Indigenous Australian brother, to share a testimony. Joe had brought with him a number of tee-shirts with the Australian Aboriginal Flag imprinted on them. He told how he had marched for Aboriginal rights in Australia and how he had believed at that time that the black on the flag represented his people and the red on the flag was the blood of the indigenous Australians that had been killed by white settlers. Later, when the Lord found him, he realised that the black was the sin of the entire world, and the red was the blood of Jesus. He further shared that, during his three days on the mountain in Malawi, the Holy Spirit had shown him the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:10-12). He thought this was significant, and John agreed with him! At the conclusion of his talk, Joe distributed tee-shirts to the ETF Board members. There were two women in the group; when Joe gave them a tee-shirt they both knelt to receive it. There was an anointing on the happening that blessed John's soul.

The next morning, John spoke with one of the Australian visitors. He said: "Did you notice how the women knelt down when Joe gave them a tee-shirt?" "I did," the brother said, "I thought to myself, it will be a long time before Australian women kneel down!" Sadly, that is true, Western women have long since departed from the ancient manners.

There is great power in a woman kneeling down. We had a friend in Australia called Jessie whose husband had had a bad car accident which left him physically slow and dithery. When Jessie asked him to do something, frustration would rise within her when he took an age to complete the task. Recognising this, she would immediately kneel down in front of him and say: "Darling, forgive me, I was getting frustrated with you. Please pray for me." We trust you can imagine

how the husband would respond to such an action. His own incapacity, which he was very much aware of, was cancelled out, and buckets of love would burst out of his heart as he prayed a short prayer and lifted Jessie into his arms. All good!

It was clear to us that the Mulele family did not object when Bambo Mulele ordered them to do something. On the contrary, they accepted without question that he was the head of the house and responsible for making sure that the tribal ways were maintained. When the women knelt down, they did so with glad hearts, and a rich sense of satisfaction that they were doing something in the way that ‘we Malawian’ do things.



The Mulele Family at home

During the 1980s, Mulele was encouraged to prepare for ordination in

his denomination. He advised us by mail that he was going to undertake studies towards the Diploma of Theology at the Likhubula Bible Institute in Blantyre. We responded by sending him his first-year fees. A month later, we received a letter from Mulele telling us that, in honour of the gift, he had planted a forest near his house; it would be called the “J.S. Potter Memorial Forest”! Mulele always had the last word!

M J D Mulele died in 1997. We miss him, both as the Chairman of the ETF Board, and as a friend and brother in the Lord.

WINDS OF CHANGE

In May 1979, the Malawi ETF program was in full swing but we were feeling a restlessness that warned us that change was ‘in the wind’. We had forgotten momentarily that the Lord had instructed us that we would only be in Malawi for two years, Acts 19:10. But where were we to go next?

Quite unexpectedly, we received an audio tape cassette from David Newington telling us that he had had a slight heart attack and needed John to take on the Administration role at the Emmanuel Press in White River, South Africa. He said he had spoken to Gerald and Elizabeth Rowlands about this and they were happy. Gerald was away on a preaching trip with World MAP at the time, so we were not able to confirm this, but we prayed about it and it seemed to be the right move. John’s work commitments with the Malawi Government made it impossible for us to leave before September. Besides, we needed time to set things straight for the continuation of the ETF work after we left. September seemed to be the right time – two years exactly from the registration of the ETF in Malawi! Everything seemed to be in excellent working order when we, together with Audrey and Elizabeth, flew out to South Africa in late September 1979.

When we arrived in Johannesburg we stayed at Rheinhard Bonnke’s CfAN Centre at Witfield, while we waited for twenty six boxes of household goods we had shipped from Malawi to arrive. Once they came, we headed for White River. There we found that Gerald and Elizabeth Rowlands had prepared a place for us to stay on Mont de Dieu. They also had a car for us to use. Some initial discussions were held with the Press Directors and John was duly installed as Administrator of the Press.

We were due to go back to Australia to catch up with our support team early in December 1979. We needed to get Stephen our third son into work or tertiary studies; he had spent a year living with the Rowlands while attending Lowveld High School in Nelspruit in 1979. This meant that we only spent two months on the job at the Press before we took leave, but this time was sufficient for the Lord to stamp His authority on John's appointment.

One incident that comes to mind is the day that Mike Harty, our print manager, approached John with the news that paper was being stolen from the store. Mike thought the culprit might be Lucas, the lowest paid African staff member, whose job it was to sweep the print shop floor and put out the rubbish. He had no evidence for this accusation so John suggested that they sat on the problem for a few days. The next Saturday afternoon John was resting at home after lunch when the Holy Spirit ordered him to go at once to the Press. When he arrived there he heard a printing press operating and on investigation discovered one of the white missionaries printing some sheets for his stamp collection without permission. John suggested he stop the machine and go home. John did not report the matter and a few days later, when we were about to go on leave in Australia, as John was saying farewell to the EP staff, this man ran across the room and fell into John's arms weeping.

On the positive side, Roger Smallman and John were convinced that the Press needed a small offset operation. The Press only had large printing machines and small jobs, of which there were plenty, were clogging up the works for major jobs. They thought a small offset machine would be a good investment. They soon found and purchased a good second hand machine but had nobody to operate it. John and Roger handed the problem over to the Lord just before they took a trip

to Malawi to settle in a white couple called Mills from Salisbury (Harare) in Zimbabwe who ‘just happened’ to move to Blantyre to work at a Tobacco Company in Limbe a few weeks after the Potters left Zomba.

The Mills’s were familiar with ETF literature work – they had been part of the support team for the Davies in Zimbabwe ETF. John came in contact with them in Harare when he visited there almost immediately after being appointed Administrator at the Press. We had left our Holden Brougham in Malawi and we needed someone to look after it and use it to freight printed literature to Zomba. The Mills gladly accepted the job.

When Roger and John arrived in Zomba they found the Butcharts from Seattle, Washington State, USA had just arrived in Malawi on a ministry trip. They had with them a young man on his first trip to Africa. When John asked this young man what he hoped to achieve during his visit he said: “God spoke to me to come to Africa to help with printing”. John said: “What kind of machines can you operate”. He said: “I am a small offset man”. John said: “Grab your passport. We are going to the South African Embassy in Lilongwe to see about you coming south to White River. We badly need you at the Emmanuel Press.” There were discussions with the Butcharts that led to us having our small offset program fully operational within two weeks of planning!

The other matter that Roger and John discussed before setting out for Malawi, was plate making. The Press had a camera for making offset plates. There seemed to be a hold up in getting plates to the printers so John investigated and found that the person operating the camera was a farmer’s wife with no formal training. When John spoke to her she

told him that she used to get so stressed trying to make plates that some days she would just lie on the floor in tears begging God to help her. Roger and John discussed the situation and concluded that the Press needed a professional ‘repro man’, as they are called in the trade.

The next Sunday, just before lunch, Gwen Kirby came rushing into our house saying: “John can you lead tonight’s Assembly meeting. Bill was supposed to do it but he has come down with some sickness”. “Certainly”, said John. That evening the local AOG Assembly met in the Press buildings. During the meeting John noticed a strange man sitting at the back. After the service he approached him and asked where he was from. He said: “I am from Johannesburg”. John said: “What are you doing in White River.” The man said: “I felt that God had a job for me here.” John said: “What do you do?” He replied: “I am a repro-man. I operate commercial cameras for print shops”. A little stunned, John encouraged him to call at the Press the next morning because there just might be a job for him!

The next morning the man arrived at the Press and John introduced him to the Directors. Later that day Roger and John flew to Malawi as outlined above. When they returned the repro-man had disappeared. Apparently he was divorced and the Directors were concerned that one of the young women working at the Press might fall for him and wish to marry him against AOG policy. This was the first sign that the literature operation might have a few problems along the way.

A few weeks later we, together with Audrey and Elizabeth, left for Australia. We returned through the USA and New Zealand to visit friends. We had an excellent time with Joe and Lois Hopkins in Pennsylvania before flying on to Seattle. There we met the father of

the young off-set printer who was now working at the Press. He said to John: “John, I have been working in the printing game all my life. I have just retired and am ready to come to any place in Africa you name to print for you. My speciality is Web Offset machines”. Web Offset machines are about thirty yards long. You feed paper in one end and magazines come out the other end printed, folded, collated and stapled. To say the least, we were encouraged!

We flew on to New Zealand via Hawaii and stayed with a young couple from Queen Street AOG in Auckland who were supporting the Press work in White River. Soon after we arrived, the wife said to John: “John, I have a message for you from a Pastor in Wellington. It says your ticket is waiting for you at the Auckland Airport, and the sender will meet your flight.” The flight was for the next day. John found a return ticket at the Auckland Airport and flew to Wellington. He was met by the Pastor of a Baptist Church who explained that a young printer in his congregation was keen on going to South Africa to work in the Emmanuel Press, but the Pastor wanted some assurance that we would look after him and his wife! John gave him that assurance. They had a nice lunch and John flew back to Auckland.

The next day we had a telephone call from a senior journalist in a major Auckland newspaper. He said: “John, I am tired of writing for the secular press; I want to be useful for the Lord. Do you think there might be a place for me in your operation?” John said: “Thank you very much for your call; I will speak to the Press Directors and get back to you.” All in all, the trip home was both refreshing and mightily encouraging that God had big plans for ETF in Africa. We arrived home on the 3rd of December just in time to celebrate Tim’s graduation and his 21st birthday. Tim reported that an agent from a large Construction Company in South Africa had interviewed him

with regards taking a job in South Africa. Knowing we were returning to South Africa to live, and having been separated from us for three years, Tim had taken the job.

Visas were obtained from the South African Embassy in Canberra and return flights were booked for Tim, us and Elizabeth. Our departure date was January 7th. On the 5th of January 1980, we received a phone call from David Newington telling us that **the Potters were no longer required at the Press in White River!**

To say the least we were quite stunned! Being shut-out of the Press created quite a few problems for us, not the least being wondering about our future – where were we to live, what would the Lord have us do. There was also the problem that we were cut off from our twenty six boxes of household goods also – everything from a washing machine to bed-linen and personal items. We never heard a word about what happened to these goods. One box arrived by Post from South Africa; it contained John's Bible and camera and a large teddy bear someone had given Elizabeth. Time to take to heart the New Testament instruction: "Give to every man that asks of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again (Luke 6:30)!"

Further, we were now cut-off from our Malawi ETF team. We heard that Gerald Rowlands had taken over the Malawi work, so we started sending funds to him to pay for the Malawi wages. Then we heard that Bill Kirby and Ron Davies had been sent to Malawi to see how the work was going. They reported that the Malawi team were spending money unwisely and recommended that the office be closed. All the staff, apart from Byson Mpinganjira, were sacked and the Malawi ETF Office moved to Limbe. Gerald recruited a family from New Zealand to manage the work but in 1983 the Limbe Office was closed

and all of our beautiful office furniture sold before we had an opportunity to claim it.

In 1981 Ron and Dorothy Davies visited Australia and wrote to us to arrange a visit. We were happy to have the opportunity to see them again and get a first hand account of what had happened in Malawi, but the Lord brought a strong discipline upon John and instructed us not to meet with the Davies. Gerald and Elizabeth Rowlands visited Adelaide in 1982. We attended a meeting where Gerald was preaching. Our contact with the Rowlands was cordial but John had never felt such a tearing pain in his spirit, before or since, as he did on that occasion.

The tragedy with our dismissal from the Emmanuel Press was that it set in motion actions which led to the complete demise of ETF in Africa over the next few years. ETF had been through a development phase in the late 1970s that had rendered it ready to complete its mission – bringing a genuine Christology to Independent Churches of the Bantu nations from Kenya to South Africa. When the Potters arrived in White River in 1977, the Press had tracts and Bible Courses in translations that met the needs of the southern tip of Africa: English, Afrikaans, Zulu, Sotho, Swana, Shangaan (Tsonga) and Portuguese. Zulu was understood by the other South African Nguni tribes – Swazi and Xhosa; and Sotho covered both the Northern Sotho (BaPedi) and the Southern Sotho (Lesotho) tribes. The Shangaan literature covered the Atonga in Southern Mozambique.

The first regional office was set up in Salisbury, Rhodesia by the Davies in early 1976. They developed a MaShona version of the literature for Rhodesia and Manica Province in Mozambique and used the Zulu version for the Matabele. In late 1976, Bill Kirby developed

a Chichewa translation for Malawi. In mid-1977 our family settled in Zomba, Malawi, While there we arranged for translations in Bemba (Zambia), French (for the Congo), ChiTumbuka (Northern Malawi), Elomwe (South Eastern Malawi and Northern Mozambique). In partnership with the Gulls, we produced KiSwahili courses for Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania where KiSwahili, a contrived language combining Bantu and Arabic, is the *lingua franca*. **The Bantu language groups were covered from the Luo in Kenya in the north to the Zulu's in the south.**

In conjunction with these literature developments, by 1979, regional offices had been established in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Lesotho (the Gemmels from Scotland), and Swaziland (the Rowlands). In 1980, the Kirbys shifted from South Africa to Kenya (although they never set up an ETF Office there). In 1981 the Butcharts registered an ETF office in Tanzania and enlisted the Cooks from New Zealand to run it. Each of these front-line operations had their own support teams who supplied the finance to make things happen.

By 1985, the headquarters operation at White River had imploded and the Press buildings had been sold; the ETF work had been reduced to practically nothing. The Tanzanian office was the only national office in existence. Vale, ETF. We were left wondering how a group of mature Christian men, most of whom we looked up to as our spiritual superiors, could so badly miss God's purposes. We came to conclusion that dark spiritual forces must have been at work but at that time had no understanding about these matters. More of that later.

FRESH BEGINNINGS

In the early 1980's we were led to develop a discipling work in Blackwood, South Australia. We were involved in this project for

seven years (1981-1987). The work grew to nearly one hundred people. We called ourselves the People of the Way. It was a satisfying time but the call of Africa did not leave us. We continued looking to the Lord for direction.

On the 18th of February 1985, John was sitting at his desk in his office in Blackwood. At exactly 9am the Lord spoke to him: “Lay healing hands on the nations of Africa”. John thought: ‘What does that mean?’ He knew that our fellowship had funds in a mission account - perhaps the Lord was asking us to send someone some money. But that did not seem to be it. An hour later a brother rang John to say that the Lord had spoken to him that morning: “Count today as the first day of the first month of the first year.” Did John know what that meant!

The brother’s word was speaking of new beginnings – what new beginnings and why on the 18th of February 1985? John knew that the 18th of February was the 3rd day of Adar in the Hebrew calendar, and that the restoration temple in Jerusalem was completed on that day (Ezra 6:15). He took it that the Lord was saying that something was completed and something new was commencing. But what? Sometime later, he saw a video of the opening of Reinhard Bonnke’s tent in Soweto – also on the 18th of February but a year earlier in 1984. Reinhard commented on the Ezra reference at that meeting.

John did a little more homework. He knew that the Exodus from Egypt was in 1445 BC, 30 Jubilees before the commencement of the Ministry of Jesus in AD 25 ($30 \times 49 = 1470$ years – Lev.25:8). And (surprise) he found that 1985 was exactly 40 Jubilees after the commencement of the Ministry of Jesus ($40 \times 49 = 1960$ years). Could it be that the Times of the Gentiles were now fulfilled (Luke 21:24)?

Could it be that we would no longer have to put up with ridiculous church structures and apostate church practices! Praise God – can it be that we are finally going to do things God’s way! John was encouraged. Apparently, our job in the new dispensation was to ‘lay healing hands on the nations of Africa’ – whatever that meant!

THE SECOND SPY TRIP

To investigate the matter, we decided to take a second spy trip to Africa to see where God would lead us. A friend heard we were going and sent us sufficient funds for our air fares. We set off in May 1985. The trip lasted almost four months. John went first to Nigeria to catch up with Anthony and Christine Moore, then to Kenya to the Kirbys where Judy met him. From there we visited Allan and Shirley Cook in Tanzania, then Malawi to catch up with our old Malawi team and mission friends, and finally to South Africa to see our son Tim and other people we knew. On the way we passed through Zimbabwe and caught up with Peter and Cheri Irish.

NIGERIA

In 1980, after returning from our first three-year jaunt in Africa, we were staying with Kevin and Libby Moore in Coromandel Valley, South Australia. John was sitting at the dining room table writing one day when Anthony Moore, the Moore’s eldest son, approached him to say that the Lord had spoken to him to go to Nigeria after he had married Christine Warry at the end of the year. A powerful sense of awe came over John. He got up and knelt down, recognising that he was in the presence of something quite extraordinary.

Anthony discussed the matter with his parents and us. We concluded that this was indeed a call from God. But what to do about it? Our

only contact with Nigeria was with Dr Harold Turner, the world authority on African Independent Churches, but the last we had heard of him, was that he was living in Scotland. John wrote to Harold, and he replied that he was going to be in Sydney shortly and would love to catch up with us. So it was that Anthony and John travelled by car to Sydney and met with Harold. Recognising that the Lord would want Anthony and Christine to spend the first year of their marriage out of the battle field, Harold suggested that they came to him and assisted him in his projects at the University in Aberdeen for a year. This is what they did, later moving to Birmingham when Harold moved his operation to the Selly Oak Colleges. While there, Anthony applied for work in Nigeria; he was a qualified architect, and he procured a job at the University Technology College in Port Harcourt. He and Christine moved there in 1982.

In 1985 John travelled to Nigeria via London. His Air Nigeria flight landed in Lagos at 6am. John stayed on board the plane because the same plane was taking him and about twenty other people to Port Harcourt. As he sat there half asleep, he heard someone speak to him: “For this cause, you were born John.” John was instantly awake – where had that come from? “Lord” said John, “If that was You, please give me a confirmation scripture.” Immediately he received Psalm 24:1: ‘The earth is the Lords and the fullness thereof, the world and all they that dwell therein.’ John was aware that this word had come to him immediately after he touched down in Africa. But what did it mean? Like the ‘healing hands’ word, this word has been something we have been caused to inquire into many times during the years that have followed.

Anthony met John at the airport and transported him to his home. Over the next week he shared with the Moores: power failures, water

shut-offs, hostile ‘yellow fever men’ (traffic directors), Christian fellowships that sang one chorus 52 times, a Saturday afternoon engaging in spontaneous visits to friends and contacts of the Moore’s (which is the Nigerian custom), and policemen who stopped the car, stuck their head through the window and said: “What have you got for me today.”

They travelled out of town twice. Once to Calabar in the Rivers State where they inspected the tomb of famed Scottish missionary Mary Slessor. On the way to Calabar they passed through Uyo, the town where the Weavers, Elkhart Indiana Mennonite missionaries, worked with an independent church and wrote a book that greatly encouraged



With the Moores at the Mary Slessor tombstone, Calabar, Nigeria us when we read it in 1980; their experience with Independent Churches proving identical with ours in Malawi. On another trip they visited Aba where Nsema from the Congo Republic was in Bible

College. [Nsema had arrived in Nigeria the year previous and had his passport and money taken off him by the police at the airport. Some how he made it to Aba where the Moores met him and adopted him, paying his College fees and keeping him until he graduated.]

Anthony and Christine will tell their own story when the time is right. Nigeria proved not to be John's idea of a pleasant place to stay. Our admiration for what the Moores achieved there knows no bounds. Christine had three babies in a clinic where people count you twice each day but otherwise provided you with no services.

KENYA

We met up again in Kenya. We stayed at the Pentecostal Bible College, with Bill and Gwen Kirby. They had a flourishing work in Kenya. Amongst their Bible students were Watutsis from Rwanda, the ethnic group that had been slaughtered by the Hutus in 1994. We were surprised that they were of average height; in the Deborah Kerr/Stewart Grainger film *King Solomon's Mines*, the Watutsi were all about 7ft tall!

While in Nairobi, we visited the East African Headquarters of African Enterprise (AE) and met up with Dr Daniel Serwanga and his wife Pernina. AE is an Anglican Mission founded by South African Theolog Michael Cassidy. We never met Michael, but John felt a strong connection with him when he read his biographical book; Michael reported that he had received his commission to start AE while sitting in a plane on the tarmac at Lagos, Nigeria, on his way home from Bible School in the USA! The Ugandan Bishop Festo Kivengere, who authored the book 'I Love Idi Amin', was a key figure in the AE East Africa setup in 1985.



Bill and Gwen Kirby with Judy and Watutsi students

Daniel and Pernina had studied theology in Australia, so we had much to talk about. Pernina took us to a refugee camp where we were introduced to people who lived in plastic bags. We also met the AE training guru, Dr Michael Simwinda. He told us a story that stuck with us. The Anglican Bishops in NE Congo asked him to teach their people about money management. Michael travelled the 2000km journey in local African buses. The trip took four days and he arrived exhausted and covered in dust. The Bishops were astonished; why had he not caught a plane? “No,” said Michael “We have to manage money carefully.” Lesson No. 1 completed! In conversation with Michael, John mentioned his experience with Independent Churches. Michael offered John a job on the spot – teaching basic theology to

pastors from Independent Churches in East Africa! It was a genuine offer and attractive; the East African Orthodox Church, just to name one group, had four million members.

Our visit to AE proved significant. In 1986 our son Michael and his wife Dani, received a sovereign call from the Lord to work as teachers in Kenya. Their first contact was with AE, where Daniel introduced them to several schools, including Cavina School where they were employed for twelve and a half years (1988-2000).

TANZANIA

In 1978, Wayne and Alice Butchart from Seattle, Washington State, USA, visited Malawi. We introduced them to the Malawi ETF program. They were impressed with the results and said they would like to set up a similar work in Tanzania. This seemed to be a promising idea, so we offered to help them get underway.

Ron and Betty Gull at the Emmanuel Press in South Africa had spent time in Tanzania. They had connections there and arranged to get the ETF literature translated into KiSwahili. In 1979, there was a block on mail from South Africa to Tanzania so all the mail between the Press and the Tanzanian translator had to pass through our Malawi office. The job was completed before we left Malawi in 1979.

The Butcharts set up a base in Arusha, Tanzania in 1980 with a view to getting the ETF Tanzania program underway. While there, Alice developed heart problems. She needed treatment she could not get in Tanzania, but she insisted on staying on with Wayne until the registration of an ETF office in Tanzania was secured. In 1981 they returned to the USA for a season. Somehow, they connected with a couple called Alan and Shirley Cook from the Christian Church, in

Palmerston North, New Zealand; it was arranged for the Cooks to manage the Tanzanian ETF project. By this time, we were back in Australia; the Cooks visited us in Adelaide on their way to Tanzania to get our advice on running the ETF program. June 1985 was the first chance we had of visiting them in Arusha.

The Cooks met us in Nairobi and took us to Tanzania in their Land Rover. A strange thing happened as we crossed through the border gate. We both spontaneously looked up - we were aware that there was a black cloud above us, yet the physical sky was completely clear. This was our first experience of Islam in Africa! Tanzania is the major Islamic centre in eastern sub-Saharan Africa. The black cloud remained with us for the remainder of our brief visit to Tanzania.



With the Cooks and their team in Arusha, Tanzania

Alan and Shirley had set up an excellent operation in Arusha, doing the same things we had done in Malawi, with the same results. We

had a wonderful time with them. We had excellent views of Mount Kilimanjaro from our bedroom window! What a brilliant mountain!

We never revisited Tanzania, but in 1986, Shirley contacted us in Adelaide, telling us that patients at the Moshe Hospital, just down the road from Arusha, were having their wounds wrapped in newspaper because there were no bandages. Our Adelaide fellowship sent bandages to the Cooks for several years, along with basic medications like scabies ointment.

MALAWI

We returned to Nairobi, courtesy of the Cooks and Kirbys, and flew to Malawi. There we spent a week catching up with missionary friends and former ETF staff members.

We caught up with our erstwhile ‘garden boy,’ Gladstone Mchoma. He had recently graduated from the University of Malawi with a BA in Geography! As reported above, he later gained a scholarship to the UK where he completed a Masters in Town Planning and returned to Malawi to assume the position of Deputy Director of the Lands Department.

We enjoyed catching up with Sanders Liwangula. Sanders attached himself to us as ‘our garden boy’ when we first arrived in Zomba in 1977. Sanders spoke seven languages and knew everything there was to know about African life. He had fallen on tough times when we met him in 1985. He was eking out a basic existence by manufacturing and selling a few basic household items. He had built a one room house in Malonje Village and died there in the late 1990s. Vale Sanders. You were a great man!



Sanders!



Sanders' house in Malonje Village

We had a nice visit with Byson and Edna Mpinganjira in Blantyre. Byson was a school principal at Bangwe just outside of Limbe at the time. They had two children. Byson became our main contact person in Malawi from 1996 to 2015.

The Malawi visit was a time of catching up with developments since we left in 1979. We did not sense that we were being re-called to work in Malawi at this time.

SOUTH AFRICA

We spent three weeks in South Africa. Tim had been there since January 1980 and had married Dianne Hoult in 1984, but we had not been able to attend the wedding. This was the first time we had met Dianne.

Tim was a remarkable child and teenager. First of all, as Judy always says: "Tim was no trouble." More remarkably, his relationship with John taught us about sonship (John 5:19). Everything John believed, Tim believed, whatever John thought Tim thought, whatever John said, Tim said. And his views were not superficial – he and John were

both exploring the scriptures in those days, and they spoke to each other in King James Bible English! Tim even had a voice like John!

Tim stayed in Australia studying while we were in Malawi. In late 1977 he came to visit us. On the way he called into the Emmanuel Press in White River, South Africa. Someone heard him speaking in the corridor and said: “What’s John Potter doing here?” They were surprised when they turned and saw Tim! Tim was invited to share a word at Calvary Assembly the next Sunday. He shared a short message that John had shared eight months earlier; the folk were stunned!

Tim has now been in South Africa for over forty years. He will tell his own story when the time is right. Sufficient to say, the Lord anticipated the action of the misguided people at Emmanuel Press who stopped the return of the Potters to their place of calling in South Africa. God took our first fruits (which was His right) and sent him off to speak the same things John would have said, with the same conviction. Tim is presently a founding Director and Chief Engineer for the Motheo Construction Group and an Elder in an active and effective church community in Johannesburg. The Lord separated him from John so that he could become his own man.

We also spent time with our friends the Brodricks. Harry Brodrick had retired from working at the Pelindaba Atomic Energy Commission in 1984 and he and Marina, their daughter Lynne, and Harry’s Mum from Rhodesia, were running a resort at Uvongo on the South Coast of Natal called the Costa Cabana in 1985. We stayed there for a week.

The South African visit was a special, relaxed time. While there we felt we may be called to return to South Africa in the future, but we received no definite leading from the Lord at the time. Judy headed



Tim built the South African Embassy in Maputo, Mozambique

for home. John had two more visits on his agenda.

RETURN TO MALAWI

The Butchart continued to be major financial contributors to the Tanzanian ETF program. Before we left Adelaide we contacted them to let them know we were going to visit the Cooks. They replied that they would be in Malawi for a few weeks at the time we were in Africa and asked if we could visit them there. We could not meet with them at the time we had set to visit Malawi, so it was agreed that John would return to Malawi after South Africa to join them in a week of ministry to local churches.

A couple of days before John was due to fly back to Malawi, he ran into what seemed like demonic attack. The pressure increased as the day of his departure approached. John's mind was running amok! Was

he supposed to be going to Malawi? He barely made it to the airport. By the time he reached Malawi he was convinced he had done the wrong thing going there. The Butcharts met him, and he shared his experience with them. John was all for getting a flight out of the country, but he agreed to sleep on it and see how he felt the next day. The next day he was fine, subdued, but ready to settle down and participate in the program of ministry that Wayne and Alice had organised. What was this all about? The Lord showed him Ezekiel 46:9-10:

‘When the people of the land come before the Lord in the solemn feasts, he that enters in by way of the north gate to worship, shall go out by way of the south gate; and he that enters in by the south gate shall go out by way of the north gate; he shall not return by way of the gate by which he came in, but shall go forth the opposite way’.

When we visited Malawi some weeks earlier, we had entered from the north and left by the south – so far so good. This time John was entering from the south and intended to leave by the south – this, apparently, was wrong, and the Lord had gone out of His way to show John so. The Lord said nothing more, so this was one of those things that you hide in your heart, awaiting revelation on another day.

[The same thing happened to John in 1986. A brother asked him to inspect a building in Adelaide that he believed the Lord wanted for an outreach centre. They entered the building from the back and made their inspection. When they left by the front door, John said: “Let’s go back through it again.” They turned and bumped their heads on an invisible screen that stopped them dead – they could not re-enter the building. John was reminded of his Malawi experience but had no

further light on what the principal was all about. We know that it has something to do with the end-time purposes of God and the building of temples for the Holy Spirit across God's land, for that is what Ezekiel Chapters 40 to 48 is all about. Beyond that we simply share the story and leave it with the brethren for their adjudication].

ZIMBABWE

By now John had completed his planned spy trip visits. He flew from Blantyre, Malawi to Harare, Zimbabwe to catch a Qantas flight back to Australia. In Harare he caught up with Peter and Cheri Irish. Judy had stayed with them when she arrived from Australia and later when she left for home. Peter was employed by the Standard Chartered Bank in Harare. He had come to Zimbabwe to support the ETF literature program there. John had met him when he visited there in 1979, and we renewed our contact with him when he came to Australia on a visit in 1981. It was good to catch up with him and his wife Cheri, an American mission couple's daughter. They went out of their way to make us comfortable and blessed during the time we were with them.

John was not allowed to spend the whole time resting. He was asked to speak at an AOG Pastor's get together one morning. Most of the time was spent encouraging a young Pastor whose wife had walked out on him. He had re-married a few years later but there was a prevailing view in the AOG that such a relationship was adulterous as long as the first wife was alive. The Pastor was under tremendous condemnation when John met him and totally uncertain as to what to do. John did not meet the new wife but he was sure she was not going all that well either! John shared with the pastor that God was very keen on new beginnings but he did not seem convinced. We have met

up with this doctrine in Australia a few times and walked with men who have had the same problem. The Holy Spirit made it abundantly clear on each occasion that a person whose spouse leaves them needs to spend a year trying to re-build the relationship. At the end of that year we have seen the Lord release them to develop a new relationship and build a new Kingdom household.

The other job John had while in Zimbabwe was speaking to students at the Acts Bible College which was founded by Gerald and Elizabeth Rowlands in 1981. The students were a lovely bunch of young Christians who went on to serve the Lord in Africa with distinction. John remembers tracing with them the development of the church at



The Acts Bible College Principal (left) and student body 1985
Ephesis as outlined by the Apostle Paul (Acts 18-20). There were several Malawians amongst the student body. Two of the Malawians later developed a denomination called Living Waters which grew a

number of large congregations in Malawi. As mentioned above, Rabson Kaombe, one of our erstwhile staff at the Malawi ETF office in Zomba in 1977-79, became a pastor in that denomination.

The last challenge John had on this spy trip came on the Saturday morning the day before he took off for Australia. Peter Irish said to him: “Well, John, are you satisfied you have seen everything God wanted you to see?”. John said: “Yes, I think so, although I would have liked to have seen what is happening in Mozambique”. (Mozambique had recently opened to visitors and missionaries were pouring into the country). Peter said: “There is no problem about that, I can easily arrange for someone to take you into Mozambique”. John said: “Unfortunately my air ticket cannot be altered otherwise I would take up your offer”. When he went to bed that night John said to the Lord: “Lord, you know I would go to Mozambique if you wanted me to go.”

The next day John and Peter and Cheri attended a church service. After the meeting a man approached John and welcomed him to Zimbabwe. He asked John what he was doing in Africa so John told him about his sense of calling and the current spy trip. The man thought for a moment and then said: “John the Lord is telling me that you should be going to Mozambique before you go home”. John made some feeble excuse but left in a quandary. He struggled with the Mozambique thing for the rest of the day – should he or shouldn’t he go there? He got on the plane still wondering about it! They took off with a massive tail wind. The trip to Perth normally took 9.5 hours but in this case the plane arrived in 8.5 hours having travelled at over 1200km/hour most of the way. On the way the Lord finally spoke: ‘ts OK about Mozambique John. You will go there one day in My timing!; John was relieved and blessed to know that God was

overseeing his life; it was He who had arranged the funds for the air ticket for this trip, and He is a God of order. There had been no mistakes. John recalled meeting Howard Jones, the African American Associate Pastor in the Billy Graham Billy Graham Association, in 1976 at the Swaziland Independence Celebrations. He remembered him spontaneously pouring out how he had struggled to know if his trip to Africa was really the Lord or just a good idea. John thought: Howard was a senior trail-blazing evangelist, if he could have doubts along the way it was probably OK for me to have a few struggles over guidance from time to time.

REVIEW

What were we to conclude from this second spy trip? We had no clear word of direction about a future return to Africa, but we did have two sovereign words: (1) one directing us to lay healing hands on the nations of Africa; and (2) one telling John that he was born for some particular purpose. This left the questions: what ‘nations’ and ‘what purpose’?

The visit to Nigeria was enormously instructive. It seemed like ‘hell on earth’. John remembered how pleased he was to find himself on a Pan American flight to Kenya. Clearly, Anthony and Christian Moore had opened a door into West Africa via a relationship with us but we did not feel that we were called to be part of it. We felt a strong connection with the Bantu speaking nations that occupy the land from Kenya in the north to South Africa in the south. Subsequent events, like the calling of our second son Michael and his wife Dani to Kenya, and our eventual ministry into Mozambique confirmed it.

Psalm 24:1 speaks of God’s ownership over ‘land and people’, in that order. This verse references the first statement in the Lord’s prayer:

‘Thy Kingdom come...’ As an Agricultural Scientist John had expertise and extensive experience in land management. Was God asking us to help him get His land back under His government, or was the primary call still on helping African people find the New Covenant relationship? Time was to tell.

CHARLES (CHUCK) STEPHENS – NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD!

We returned to Blackwood and the People of the Way Community in September 1985 and heard nothing further from the Lord about Africa until the 26th of December 1986. Robyn Light was living with us and knocked on our bedroom door at 6:00am one morning saying: “John and Judy, we need to pray”. In the lounge room we received the word: ‘I want John and Judy *to stand against the persuasive voices in South Africa.*’ Five days later we heard on the news that President Botha in South Africa had called an election because he needed ‘a mandate to deal with the persuasive voices in South Africa’ – his exact words!

We booked our tickets to leave late February for a month in the Republic and posted our passports to Canberra for visas. We were mightily encouraged when the passports with the necessary visas were back in our letter box that same evening. How was that possible?

All our other preparations went well but John ran into a sustained spiritual attack over the weeks before our departure. The first demonic whisper John heard in the night was: ‘Did God say go to South Africa?’ That is an old one; John told the speaker to get lost. The next night John woke with symptoms of a heart attack. He knew what to do with that from a previous experience; you put your hands in the air and say: ‘OK, I am coming home Lord.’ Immediately the symptoms disappeared. The battle was deliberate and persistent. It continued from the 19th of January until the day we left, February 25th. But we had the Word of the Lord and stood firm with the armour on.

We spent our month in South Africa looking for an entry point back into the country. We found it when we visited the Africa School of

Missions eleven kilometres north of White River, on the road to the Kruger National Park. We were invited to join the staff of ASM and could use the connection to gain our residence permits.

Soon after our return to Australia we heard that Pieter Botha's National Party had achieved an amazing election result – an overwhelming majority of 75%. The persuasive voice parties had been crushed. We were encouraged!

We planned to leave Australia in December 1987. In October that year John had an extraordinary experience. He stepped out of bed in Blackwood one Saturday morning and found himself looking straight into the countryside at Mont de Dieu. In front of him was the land behind what had been the Rowland's house on Mont de Dieu. He could see beyond the property to Nelspruit below as clearly as if he were there. It was easily the most remarkable vision John ever had; the grass was waving in front of him. Clearly the Lord was saying that Mont de Dieu was important in His scheme of things. We were left wondering how this fitted in with our commitment to work at Africa School of Missions.

BOOTCAMP

Backing up a bit, we need to tell you that in 1986 the Lord had given John a dramatic introduction to the demonic forces He called 'the persuasive voices'. We were pressing into constructing a building at Blackwood and needed to have some engineering design work done. As John left his office he received a signal from the Lord which he now recognises as the battle alarm. By the time he hit the bottom of the Old Belair Road demonic spirits had hit him so hard that he was driving around in complete confusion. He made it to engineer's office but returned home completely battered.

A week later John headed off to Adelaide to pay the comprehensive car insurance. Halfway down Unley Road the persuasive gentlemen hit him again. He pressed through but finished up in a bad snare. The next morning it was so bad that he thought he would try to do something to release himself (a mistake!). ‘Perhaps the Lord wanted us to have only third-party insurance on the car’, he thought? ‘Maybe, if I reduced the insurance to Third Party Property the devil might let up on me’ (wrong!). The young woman at the Insurance Office was understanding, and the insurance policy was reduced to third party - but the snare stayed exactly the same! By the next morning John had talked himself into thinking about cancelling the insurance altogether (a religious spirit). This required a letter that he duly wrote and posted. But by the following day he was in the bottom of a pit you would not believe and still going down! John began to realise that there was no way of placating the devil; he does not play by our rules. The next morning, John asked the insurance office to ignore his letter and reinstate the comprehensive insurance and he was through the battle. Lesson: **There is definitely no coming to terms with the persuasive voices. When they hit you, enter into the rest and win!**

Following these first-hand experiences, the Lord showed John the pattern behind the onslaught. He saw it in the Spirit sitting at the kitchen table one afternoon, had it again in a dream, and it was confirmed in a conversation with a brother who in 1979 had been shown that the persuasive voices are **the demons that rule over our education systems**, crushing and destroying our beautiful children by teaching things which are contrary to their family culture.

Persuasive voices are the result of demonic forces operating through two characteristics of the human flesh: Pride and Incurability. By

the latter, we mean that attribute that causes people to be incapable of being persuaded to a different point of view, even in the face of overwhelming evidence.

Out of this ungodly pair rise two external characteristics: Self-Righteousness and Alliance. One without the other is not much use. You can be full of ideas you want to promote, but you cannot do so if you have no opportunity to express them. Archbishops, Members of Parliament and regular contributors to the media have the opportunity to push their ideas to a remarkable degree, and this is the reason that many of them seek such office.

The scriptural reference for the persuasive voices is found in the names of the Five Kings of the Amorites listed in Joshua 10:5.

Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem: This name means literally the Lord of Righteousness. This king came from the same Salem's hill as Melchizedek, the King of Righteousness (Genesis 14:18-20), but by now the King was an Amorite, corrupted from living in the Lord's righteousness to living in the doctrines of demons.

Hoham of Hebron: Hebron means 'company' - hence an Alliance. This king was probably a son of Anak, and a giant. If you form an alliance, it is best to choose someone or some entity that is big - the bigger the better!

Piram of Jarmuth and Japhia of Lachish: Both names speak of height, which by interpretation means the elevation of the flesh against the Lord. Japhia speaks of pride; Piram, the wild ass, speaks of the incorrigible spirit.

Debir of Eglon: Debir means a speaker, none other than the prince of

lies speaking into the flesh of a human; a wraith of iniquity, a powerless fraud but nevertheless a full-blown battle demon which it took Joshua all day to defeat; and a long day at that as the sun stood still. The lesson of scripture is that the persuasive voices are tough, We should not underestimate them.

BACK IN WHITE RIVER

Together with Elizabeth our daughter we arrived at Africa School of Missions in late December 1987. Early in 1988 John was appointed as the Administrator of the School and a Member of the Leadership Team. Judy took over the running of the Campus Office. As Administrator, John discovered he was required to operate in an environment characterised by:

Crisis Management: Not just a lack of planning but a strong resistance to planning of any kind, even to not having drawings for major building projects!

Relegation of Maintenance in favour of Development: Nothing was being done about sewage effluent finding its way into the water supply dam. The general level of maintenance of buildings and roads was bad. Nothing was fixed unless absolutely necessary.

As a member of the Leadership Team John faced further problems. There was:

An Academic Free for All: Courses were planned without proper assessment of staff and facilities. One mission group was promised a course in Zulu in the morning and the cry went around the campus in the afternoon for someone to find a schoolteacher who could teach Zulu! There was no academic counselling for students, let alone any

attempt to fit courses around student's needs arising out of their sense of calling, although such was advertised. Numerous students lost sight of their original calling and took on programs more suited to course availability. It was either that or fail to accumulate the required credits.

A Poverty Spirit and Unrealistic Faith: There was nearly always a financial crisis. The ministry lived hand to mouth. A great deal of effort went into promotion, including visits to churches to promote the ministry. There was a deliberate program of begging food from local farmers, business houses and even the South African Army! This was strangely in opposition to the idea being constantly pedalled that 'the Lord will provide'. Many students were encouraged to come to the College without concrete financial support. No one was encouraged to work for pay; this would be 'going back to Egypt'. The result was a financial crisis for the College; and those students who had no supply had a mental battle: 'Am I really called of God if He is not supplying my needs.' Many students left the College in serious debt.

A Complete Lack of Rest. Students were sent out on week-end ministry trips, arriving back at 3am on Monday morning and expected to attend lectures at 8am. Students were required to attend eight lectures each day and to complete two major assignments each week. One lecturer announced at 8:30 one evening that the students were to read the book of Joshua overnight and take a test on it in the morning! A visiting preacher shared a word: SLOW DOWN! But the Leadership did not listen.

ASM had a good vision but there was clearly something wrong in its execution. John's attempts as Administrator to bring a little sanity to

the campus were largely ineffectual, while Judy's job in the office became more and more demanding. The phone system was inadequate; Judy had to run around the campus finding people when a call came in for them. John did a little lecturing in Practical Theology and both of us engaged in counselling students, most of whom were young and a long way from home. John was called upon to teach at the YWAM base at Delmas from time to time – enjoyable times off campus!

Apart from that, we built a house for ourselves on campus and occupied it in August 1988. In October 1988, we received our Permanent Residence Certificates from the South African Government. This was significant because it meant that we were no longer required to remain on the ASM campus.

In 1989 John taught a module on Church Structure to final year students. As an exercise, he got them to survey the students to see who they referred to if they needed advice. The sociograms they constructed showed that the two couples most referenced on campus were the ASM Principal and his wife and the Potters – about half each. The students concluded that the campus was about to split down the middle and were not persuaded when John explained that it was simply a sensible distribution of the available labour; one couple on a campus as big as ASM could not manage all the counselling work.

The results were passed to the Leadership Team and a rumour went around the campus that the Potters were about to leave and take half the students with them. We were never consulted or given an opportunity to deny the rumour. We were branded Public Enemy No.1 *in absentia*. The students were forbidden to talk to us, and we

were commanded to stay in our house or leave the campus. All of this came to us through third parties. John was called to one meeting of the Leadership where he tried to establish what they had against him, but the charges were never made explicit.

Eventually we left the campus. Our house, built and paid for largely with our own funds, was confiscated, broken into and occupied without compensation. We were left wondering how the Leadership Team with whom we had worked for nearly eighteen months and called our friends could be led to take such action against us. Then the Lord brought to our attention that the five men on the ASM Leadership Team exhibited the exact same traits of the Amorite Kings. We shall call them the brothers A to E:

Mr A was Mr Self-Righteous: He had an incredible need to force his views on others. He could not rest until he had convinced you that he was right. His main technique for doing so was to probe your emotions until he found a weakness and provoke you into saying something that you did not intend to say. Then he would use that statement against you at every opportunity.

Mr B was Mr Alliance: He demonstrated an unusual need to hang on to his relationship with the College, but, at the same time, was careful to keep his personal ministry separate from campus operations. He was using the ASM connection to access the best students and draw them into his ministry team.

Mr C was Mr Pride. This brother developed an overwhelming need (passion) that people must submit to the leadership.

Mr D was Mr Incurable: This brother preached that Christians have the mind of Christ and should never change their minds. His

hero, often mentioned in his sermons, was Mr Wobbly Man of Noddy fame, the character with the weighted base that can never be knocked down.

Mr E was an empty sanctuary: He had allowed himself to be robbed of personal vision, becoming wraith-like with nothing to contribute.

All we could say in response to this revelation was - what an amazing thing! More particularly, on thinking back to the Directors of the Emmanuel Press who sacked John in 1980, we realised that those five men had shown the same attributes as the ASM team. How had both groups of Christian leaders been led to act in this way?

RETURN TO MONT DE DIEU

When it became clear that there was no future for us at ASM we began to seek guidance for the days ahead. There were a number of Australians from our Blackwood Fellowship on campus, so we met together to pray into the situation. The word came that we should consider buying the Mont de Dieu property. This brought to mind the vision John had had of Mont de Dieu in Blackwood in October 1987.

Wilf Bowen and John were commissioned to visit Mont de Dieu to inquire whether the current owner would be interested in selling the property. When they knocked on the door the son of the owner came out to greet them. When they asked whether the property might be for sale he was amazed. He said: "My father is in Nelspruit right now talking to a land agent about selling the property!"

John met with the owner the next day and they shook hands on a deal for us to buy Mont de Dieu for R500 000. We contacted the

community in Blackwood, asking them if they would agree to us selling a house attached to the Community Centre and using the funds to eliminate the community debt and finance the Mont de Dieu purchase. They agreed to this proposal and sold the house for \$295 000 in November 1989. After paying out local costs and property debt, \$150 000 was forwarded to our team in White River.

At this time, South Africa was offering Financial Rand on funds coming into the country. That is to say, they were giving double the usual exchange rate on imported dollars. At four Rand to the dollar, we were due to receive R600 000 for our \$150 000! We teed this up with the local bank and told our Australian team to send the funds. On the night that the funds were sent the Deutsche Bank in Germany made a run on the Financial Rand - the only time in their history that they did so, we found out later. The exchange rate on the Financial Rand fell to three Rand per dollar; we lost R150 000 overnight! Notwithstanding, we arranged for the short fall in the funds needed for the Mont de Dieu purchase and rang the owner to set up a meeting to settle. He apologised and said that his wife was not happy about leaving the property and he was pulling out of the deal! Not surprisingly, we were left wondering what this was all about!

The feeling that the Lord still wanted the property never left us, so we pressed on with registering a charitable educational institution called Mont de Dieu with the South African Government. We only did this after checking with Oscar and Nancy Röttcher that the use of the name was OK with them. We submitted our request to the appropriate authorities and a few weeks later John was summoned to Pretoria to meet with two officials. He found that they had read all kinds of subterfuge into the application that we have never understood from that day to this. It took five years for them to process the 1990

application. In 1995, a year after the change of government in South Africa, when we had given up on ever seeing an approval, we were surprised when the registration arrived. By this time, we were living in Johannesburg.

Soon after this we met a Canadian couple called Stephens at a friend's place in White River. We developed a close friendship with this couple. They were looking for a property to set up their ministry, so we directed them to the right people and inspected a number of properties with them without result. In 1998 we left South Africa to return to Australia. Early in 1999 we received a message from Chuck Stephens: 'Eureka, we have found it'. The Stephens had discovered Mont de Dieu!

This time the owner of Mont de Dieu was ready to deal, but the price had shot up to R1.3 million and the Stephens only had R1 million available. Chuck asked the seller for two years to pay the shortfall, and he agreed to that, again on a handshake. Once again the seller reneged, but, finding that he could not sell the property at a better price over the next two years he eventually advised Chuck that he was ready to sell. By this time Chuck had found the additional finance. Mont de Dieu was purchased. This time without a handshake!

John was still the Board Chairman of the Mont de Dieu Education Institution on paper. He was in South Africa late in 1999 and an Annual Meeting was held in the Methodist Church building in White River. This was the founding meeting for the training ministry that developed on the campus that had for so long evaded us. The property was occupied three months after this meeting. John returned the following year, and a further meeting was held, this time on the property. At this meeting John passed the baton to Chuck Stephens

with considerable satisfaction. We continued to visit the property from time to time over the next ten years. Sadly, we never had the financial resources to assist in the development of the property, but we have continued to carry the vision in our hearts to the present time.

CHARLES (CHUCK) STEPHENS

Charles (Chuck) Stephens's father pioneered a one hundred bed hospital in the Congo in the 1950s. Chuck was born there and spent his early years amongst African people. Chuck is definitely a Canadian but in another way he is definitely an African. It is not for me to write Chuck's story; that he will do himself one day because it has been an interesting ride to say the least. The bare facts as we know them relevant to this chapter are as follows.

After years spent in Canada in schooling, Chuck married and spent some time farming before heading back to Africa with his wife Heather and their three children. They took themselves on mission to Angola during the Civil War there. They 'did it tough' but learned to speak the Portuguese language fluently. The family returned to Canada for a time and then moved to Zimbabwe with World Vision. John met Chuck briefly for the first time while he was living there, providing management training to charitable non-government organisations across Africa.

Chuck has a client centred approach to training that is much appreciated by African aid workers. He starts a new group with the question: 'What traditional principles of management do you people practice?' The initial response to this question is invariably shock and silence; no *masungu* had ever asked them such a question! Chuck waits patiently for a response. In time, one brave soul will mention something and in minutes there will be an explosion of excited

conversation leading to fruitful outcomes. People leave Chuck's sessions with a heightened sense of self-esteem, and this automatically leads to a belief that the organisation they represent has something valuable to contribute to nation-building.

In time Chuck and Heather moved to South Africa, but only after the 1994 change in government. When we met them, they were domiciled in White River, waiting for Home Affairs to grant them permanent residency. They waited four years for this to happen!

Chuck is a gatherer of men. Soon after we met him in White River, he founded the Nehemiah Network, a group of around twelve senior, independent missionaries and aid workers who were looking to do something constructive during their time in Africa. When Chuck and Heather found Mont de Dieu in 1999 it was to some of these people that they turned, in addition to their own constituency in Canada, to contribute the funds necessary to buy the property

Over time, Mond de Dieu has been developed as a training centre. The constitution that we developed satisfied the registration requirements, but the work needed a more appropriate name. Chuck started the operation as The Lowveld Centre for Life-long Learning (C4L for short) and gathered a Board of Trustees with a good representation from his African contacts. In 2006 he received the Archbishop Emeritus's permission to change the name to The Desmond Tutu Centre for Leadership.

The training offered at Mont de Dieu is not traditional Bible School training. The emphasis is on young Africans finding a place in the economy; courses like plumbing and installing clean energy devices have been developed.

In addition, Chuck has kept a close watch on the developing political scene in South Africa and has been an active commentator on unsavoury political events and rampant corruption at the local and national levels. These activities have not been played out behind closed doors; Chuck has ‘stuck his neck out’ on numerous occasions. That can be a dangerous business in modern South Africa.

The search for on-going funding for the Centre led Chuck to discover considerable corruption in the distribution of government funding and a number of litigations have been necessary to get a just conclusion. In all of this, Chuck has shown a remarkable resilience and persistence. We are proud to call him our friend.

All of the above is on the surface. Over time we learned that the battles John encountered in White River at Emmanuel Press and the Africa School of Missions, and the difficulties Chuck has endured over the past twenty years or so have really been with **spiritual principalities and powers**.

LEGOGOTE

Immediately after our dismissal from ASM, the Lord showed us the spiritual reality behind the problems that we had encountered at the Emmanuel Press and ASM. We were directed to consider was a mountain a few miles north of White River called Legogote. This mountain has a rock on the top that looks like a lion that provides clear evidence of a major demon in the area.

The key to the mystery of Legogote is the name. ‘*Lego*’ is the root word of *logos*, i.e. ‘a word.’ Not a simple word like *rhema*; *logos* refers to a concept, an idea, or a person. In John’s Gospel Chapter 1 the apostle refers to Jesus of Nazareth as the Logos, ‘the person who



Silhouette of Legogote

has all knowledge’. This makes the point that the idea and the person are synonymous; ‘I am the truth,’ Jesus’ speaking, (John 14:6). The *pneumatikon* listed in I Corinthians 12:1-11 are also referred to by Paul as *logos*. ‘Gote’ (pronounced ‘got’) is clearly the Germanic for God, so the two sounds together give us ‘the Word of God.’

The person who gave the hill its name clearly knew a lot about antiquity. In the Babylonian Mysteries the Word of God was represented as a lion with a bee in its mouth. The symbolism was clear: ‘*dabar*,’ the Chaldean equivalent of the Greek *logos*, is also the word for ‘bee.’ A lion with a bee in its mouth speaks of a powerful personage with the word in their mouth. In antiquity this personage was referred to as the Enlightener, a personality associated the Moon God of Mesopotamia which Muslims call Allah. Behind all of this is a primary elemental demon, the father of the *persuasive voices*!!

While Legogote had significance as a sign, the Lord revealed to us that the demon spirit **was actually located on the Mont de Dieu property – in the place that John saw in his October 1987 vision.**



The Assyrian Enlghtener = 'Word of God' (by Permission)

The Lord further revealed that this demon had enormous influence not only over the land in the Lowveld Region of South Africa but the whole of the land stretching northwards as far as Kenya. It was **a major demon, a 'principality', a prince of demons over the people that speak Bantu languages, from the Luo and Kikuyu in Kenya to the Xhosa and Zulus in Southern South Africa.**

Now, we were coming to grips with the specifics of our calling: to stand against the persuasive voices over South Africa. We saw that this had two dimensions: (1) diagnosis of the problem; and (2) standing against human agents that choose to come under the demon's influence. Our eleven-year program of mission in South Africa (1987 to 1998) was successful in that we were given grace to do both: standing against the persuasive voices over education in particular. We also had an answer for two previous questions: (1) What nations were we asked to lay hands on (February 1985); and (2) What was the job John was born for (May 1985)? The nations were the Bantu nations. This was confirmed by:

- The Lord placing Tim, John's No.1 disciple, in South Africa immediately after John was sacked from the Press.
- Our second son Mike and his wife Dani being sovereignly called

to East Africa in 1987, marking the northern boundary of the territory.

- Our work in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and our association with the work of the Cooks in Tanzania.

Never at any stage in our time in South Africa were we instructed to cast the Demon Prince at White River off the planet. That is not something any human can do without specific instructions. But we are hopeful that our continued exposure to persuasive voice demonic attack was helpful in softening up the demon. We survived the battles because we had learned to rest in the battle, and we gained in spiritual authority each time we were attacked.

Success minded people see going through the Cross as failure and a bad thing! The opposite is true. The enemy thinks he is crushing you but in God's economy you are rising in authority. Jesus is our example; The Cross led Him to 'all authority is given unto me...'. Our calling is to take up our own cross and follow Him. In the years following 1998, when John travelled to Africa, he was aware of demons running away from him; not because he was anything, but because he had the marks of the Lord Jesus on him (Galatians 6:17). The devils recognised this and avoided him.

We were not able to gain access to the Mont de Dieu property, perhaps because the Lord knew that we would not be able to stand the battle. We visited Mont de Dieu in 2007 and stayed in the Timothy Cottage for two nights. We were meant to stay three nights, but after two days we were at each other's throats and decided we needed to get out of there! The demonic oppression was tangible. We left the property with a profound respect for the Stephens who were living under attack on a daily basis.

Apart from the oppression on Mont de Dieu, over the past twenty years Chuck has had an on-going battle with five individuals exhibiting the characteristics of the Amorite kings. He refers to them in correspondence as 'Mr Wraith' or 'Mr Incurable', etc.

We are now in the second year of the seventh sabbatical since John first visited Mont de Dieu in 1976 and the battle commenced. We and Chuck are believing for a victory that will have profound implications for the Bantu speaking peoples of Africa.

POLITICAL ACTION

In addition to the local battles affecting the land at Mont de Dieu, Chuck has concerned himself with South African national persuasive voices, regularly contributing articles to the national media. We received the following report from him recently:

“The Desmond Tutu Centre for Leadership has been an outspoken critic of corruption and detrimental policy for over a decade. It began by speaking out against the delays in rolling out ARV treatment. Then it was one of the first voices to raise awareness about the January Murders in Mpumalanga. In 2011 it ran a poster campaign against these executions by a death squad. From January 2012 it never happened again.

In 2013, C4L reported corruption in the Community Work Programme run by COGTA in Mpumalanga Province. This case includes civil litigation (which is up for Pre-Trial in 2017) and also some criminal charges being prosecuted by the Hawks.

C4L has been a vocal supporter of the need for incorruptible leaders, for more social space for Civil Society Organizations, and for more proactive inclusion of Youth. It has suspected on a number of occasions the interference of the State Security Agency in its affairs and has vocalized

this concern. C4L supports Save South Africa and SEFSA, a church-based initiative seeking a better future, especially for youth.

On the theme of youth alienation - C4L has taken a stand in favour of raising the drinking age and in only partially decriminalizing prostitution.

Under Chuck's direction, C4L has become a whistle-blower, an NGO deeply involved in public engagement as well as local service delivery. But in Mpumalanga, whistle-blowing is a dangerous vocation. This is evident in the police who seem too afraid of the inherent risks to devote themselves to adequate investigations. As a church leader put it recently: 'we are inches from becoming a mafia state.' We take our hat off to Chuck. He is a warrior par excellence. Only those of us who have been asked to oppose the Amorite forces in South Africa know what the cost has been for him.

DOREEN FIELD – A MINIMUM OF FUSS

Every morning when John and Audrey drove to work in Zomba, Malawi, in the late 1970s, they would pass a grey Bedford mini-bus coming from town on its way to the Zomba General Hospital. The only passenger in it, apart from the driver, would be a *masungu* lady, with her hair in a bun and a fixed look on her face. That woman was Doreen Field, the Sister Tutor in Charge of the Zomba Nursing School.

The Field family were from the UK, but they were living in Rhodesia when civil war broke out there. Doreen decided that she and the children, Richard and Beth, should leave Rhodesia. She applied for and was appointed to the job at the Malawi Nursing School and moved to Malawi early in 1977. We met them six months later when we arrived in Malawi. We became good friends. Richard and Beth were in their early teens. John became their proxy-Dad.

We recall two things that Doreen did in Malawi that gave warning of things to come. On Tuesday evenings she ran a Bible Study program in her home for her nurses. John remembers this because he was asked to be both the speaker and the transporter of a dozen nurses from the hospital nurse's quarters to Doreen's place. It took several trips before and after meetings to get the girls there and back home again!

The other thing Doreen did was to house up to four young Africans at a time in her government home rent free. Paying rent for accommodation was impossible for young people still at school. Doreen made a way for them to study when there was no way.

When her contract expired in early 1979, the war was still raging in Rhodesia, and Doreen had nowhere to go while she waited for her

contract to be renewed, so we organised for the three of them to go to South Africa to visit friends of ours in Pretoria, Dr Harry and Marina Brodrick. We had an ulterior motive in setting up this arrangement. Richard and Beth had little or no formal education while they were living in Malawi; we thought it would be good for them to stay in South Africa and get back to school. This is what eventuated. Harry and Marina welcomed the Fields as family.

Harry writes: “Doreen, Beth and Richard stayed with us at our home for a few months. We had a two-bedroom flat we could let them have but it was unfurnished. We prayed about this, and I explained the position to the elders at Hatfield Baptist Church. They responded



Doreen with Harry's Mom, Harry, Marina, Lyn and Judy in Pretoria

immediately. They spoke to the 5000-member congregation on the following Sunday and gave them my telephone number. There was an amazing response; items started coming in, from the smallest items (cutlery and crockery) to large items like a washing machine. Not a single item was duplicated! I was astounded. The Lord was organising who should give and what was needed. This was totally a God happening. Praise His wonderful name”

Doreen was able to get a nursing position in Pretoria and the children were enrolled in the Pretoria Girls and Pretoria Boys High Schools. They did well, matriculating a few years later with good scores.

In the mean-time Doreen had connected with a Messianic-Jew called Lester Bloomberg. Lester had found the Lord at the Rhema Church in Johannesburg and ‘took off like a rocket’! There is much we could say about Lester, but one story will suffice. In 1987, Lester prophesied that God was going to wipe the mining town of Welkom off the map, and he gave the date that this would happen: April 10, 1988. The prophecy made national TV news, and everyone waited expectantly to see what would happen. April 10 came and went, and nothing happened. Lester was mortified and left the country! Exactly one year later, on April 10, 1989, a fireball came through Welkom; houses were not flattened, they were blown clear away. I am talking about brick houses. South Africans do not use lime in their mortar – they use straight cement. Welkom had house foundations with not one brick left on them! Lester knew about the judgement of God but had forgotten about the compassion of God which delays judgement to clear the way for repentance.

Amongst the Bloomberg team in the 1980s was a BaPedi Pastor called Willie Mashegwana. Doreen felt led to join with Willie and his wife

Flora in their mission Christ for All Nations and left her nursing job to join them. She had no income of any kind. Just joy in her heart!



Christ for All Nations team: Doreen left, Willie on the right

Doreen's move to live in an African Homeland was very much against the apartheid policies of the South African Government and contrasted strongly with missionary practice at the time. Doreen was focused solely on what she felt the Lord was telling her to do. She was oblivious to any thought of physical danger or government sanctions.

While all of this was going on, in late 1987, we returned to South Africa to join the team at African School of Missions. Neither we nor Doreen foresaw what was to be a major adventure in education for both of us.

AFRICA SCHOOL OF MISSIONS

Africa School of Missions was only three years old when we arrived.

There was no house on campus for us, so we decided to build one. While the house was being built, for eight months we lived in two rooms in the student quarters and ate with the students.

After a few weeks at ASM, John was asked to be the Administrator, and Judy took charge of the central office. We also had a teaching job in a Discipleship Training School program for first year students.



ASM Discipleship Training School Staff 1988

We formed some particularly good relationships with students during our time at ASM. Amongst them were Vijay and Sunita Appadoo from Mauritius; we visited them in Mauritius in 1996 and in 2006, and ministered in Peniel Fellowship, the church community they built at Quatre Borne. We have kept in touch with two other student couples: Kobus and Janet van Aswegen and Barry and Julia Funnell both of whom joined the Word for the World Bible Translation team after graduation. They have done outstanding work in that field in subsequent years.



ASM First Year students 1988

While we were at ASM, Liz attended the King's School on campus. They were using the ACE System, and it became apparent to us that this curriculum was only covering about 35% of the South African secondary curriculum.

In mid-1989 we felt strongly that the Lord had other things for us to do in South Africa. We left the ASM campus in May of that year and moved into nearby White River. We were there for three and a half years. During the first one and a half years, we rented a house in Tafelberg (Table Mountain) Street. Then, in late 1990 we were led to buy a house in Impala Street (no translation needed). Both houses had pools which we enjoyed in the White River climate.

THE MONT De DIEU EDUCATION PROJECT

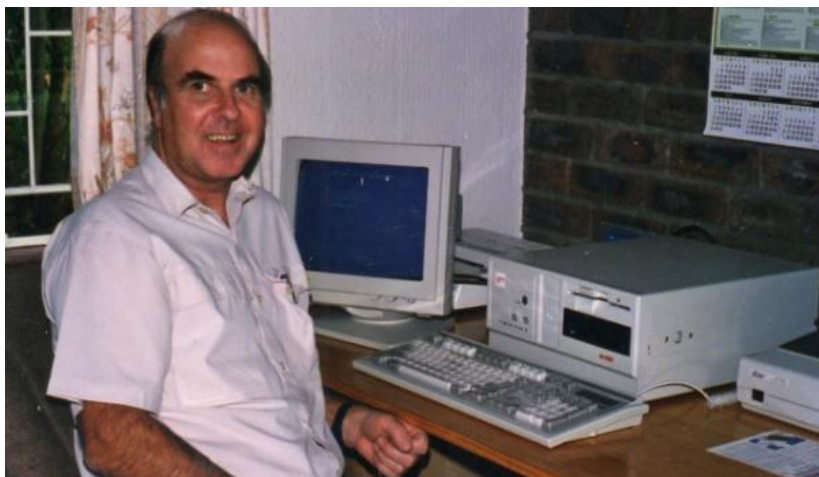
In thinking through what we should be doing while in White River, several things came together:

- The Kings School asked John to develop missing curriculum for secondary schooling in ACE Schools in South Africa.

- Willie and Doreen's Christ for All Nations team at Sekhukhune was developing a school and needed buildings and a curriculum.
- The Lord had quickened to us His desire to repossess the Mont de Dieu property and for us to set up an education program there.

Meeting the King's School need fitted in with meeting Liz's need for a comprehensive secondary education. She could not meet Afrikaans language requirements in a local school, so we decided to home-school her. Tracy Radbone from our home fellowship in Australia had come to teach at the King's School. She was not enjoying the ACE system, so she readily agreed to join us in developing the new curriculum materials. Over the next two and a half years she and John developed a complete curriculum package for the school years 8-10. We called it the Mont de Dieu Curriculum. Elizabeth completed it and went on to Australia for Year 12 studies. She matriculated and returned to South Africa late in 1992 and enrolled at Wits University in the Physical Education program.

Home schooling was an 'eye-opener' for us. It showed us that institutional education is sterile compared with tutoring your child in your home. We found it was not difficult to cater for Liz's social needs and there was an abundance of organisations in easy reach that were only too happy to help her in her studies; like the Tropical Fruit Research Institute in Nelspruit that helped her with a range of subjects from meteorology to entomology (insects). The surrounding countryside was available for physical geography excursions and the local Beavers swimming club in White River was just one of the clubs that catered for Liz's sporting needs. When Liz returned to Australia in 1992, she won swimming races at the Inter-School sports thanks to the techniques she learned while with Beavers.



John at his desk in White River developing curriculum on his first PC, 1989

SEKHEKHUNE

In the meantime, Doreen and her colleagues were setting up a school in a BaPedi African community called Sekhukhune in the Lebowa Homeland. We bought a bakkie (a utility) and John used it to travel regularly to Sekhukhune on weekends to help set up the site for school buildings.

Doreen had left Pretoria and was living on site in Sekhukhune, the sole white person living there. The photo shows her house – one room with no facilities. This is the way that Doreen lived for the rest of her life! One white woman living with a minimum of fuss, bathing in a bowl and eating African food.

WE MOVE TO JOHANNESBURG

Liz returned from Australia to take-up Physical Education studies at the University of the Witwatersrand in late December 1992. In



Doreen's house at Sekhukhune!

October of that same year, we had received a call from a Pastor in Edenvale in Johannesburg asking us if we would assist him set up a Christian Secondary School on the church campus. Several things persuaded us that this would be a good option:

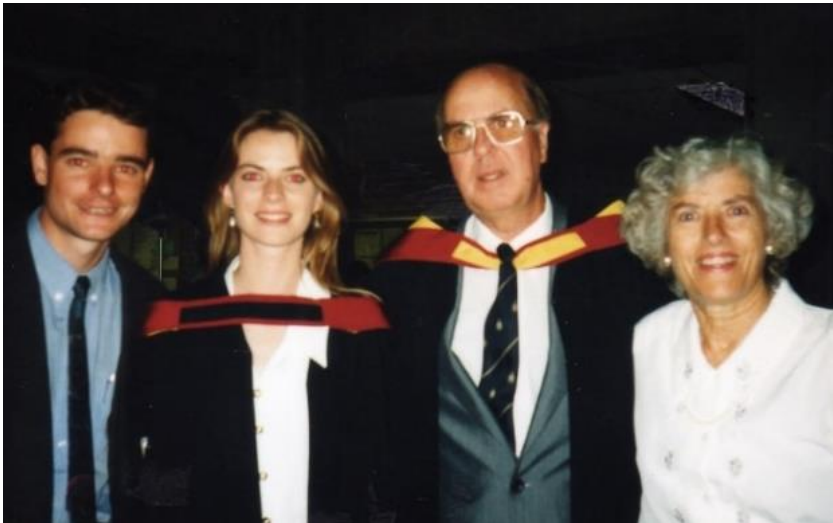
- We would be on site to support and accommodate Liz in J'burg.
- We would be able to evaluate the utility of the Mont de Dieu Curriculum in a school context.
- John would be able to take a course in education at Wits to see what was happening in the South African education system – we were only one year away from the change in Government

We shifted to Johannesburg late in 1992. We stayed a few weeks with our son Tim and his family in Edenvale before the Lord directed us to find a house in Kensington. We found a house near the Darras Centre on the famous Langerman Koppie. It was structurally sound but very neglected. We bought it, ripped out all the carpets and the whole kitchen and bathroom, and employed a few people off the street over

the next year to render the place comfortable. It was convenient to both shops and the University.

We lived in the Kensington house for five years. Richard Field lived with us for a few of those years, taking B.Com. studies at the University of South Africa and establishing an IT business during that time. The inside of the house had to be repainted. Richard was a significant help; he could paint the ceilings without using a ladder! Judy did the challenging work – painting the burglar bars!

Liz and John both enrolled at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits for short, pronounced Vits) in 1993. In 1993 John graduated with a Bachelor of Education, in 1995 he gained a Master of Education and in 1996 a Professional Teaching Diploma. In the meantime, Liz completed the Bachelor of Physical Education Degree.



Liz and John graduate together in 1996 – a new face: David Brown!

In 1994, John spent a year as the Principal and Judy the Administrator of Petra High School at Church on the Rock in Edenvale. In early 1995, John worked for six months as a Grade 7 Mathematics teacher at Bedfordview Primary School, and in July of that year, he started work as a Lecturer in Education at Wits with responsibility for the Advanced Diploma in Education Management. Over three years he had nearly two thousand Black school Principals and Deputy Principals in his care (1995-1998). In the meantime, Doreen Field was developing schools in remote villages north of Pretoria and we spent considerable time helping her and her team with that project.

PETRA HIGH SCHOOL

When Lawrence Wilson rang and asked us to help him develop a Christian Secondary School on his church campus, we said we would be glad to do so, but first we would need to spend time getting to know him and his team. We had learned the hard way that you can go into a project with good intentions but find out down the track that your partners have different objectives and different ideas about how things should be done; and this can result in irreconcilable tensions. We joined with the Church on the Rock congregation and spent a year just getting to know folk while Lawrence and John did a little forward planning. We gained approval from the church leadership to use the Mont de Dieu curriculum and by January 1994 we were ready to go. We called the school Petra High School. The church had developed good facilities, and someone had designed a pleasing school uniform. We had a dedication service in the church. We procured academic gowns for the newly appointed staff, and had the meeting pray for everyone: students, staff, and parents.

We started the school with three classes: Years 8 to 10. The Mont de



Praying for Petra students

Dieu curriculum proved a hit with both staff and students. Everybody, students, and staff did extremely well. Sadly, the Pastors, Lawrence and Margaret Wilson could not handle John's management style. They listened to the persuasive voices, took control of the School, and sacked us in November 1994. Over the next year, their church shrank from 350 to 33 members (Isaiah 16:14).

BEDFORDVIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL

The stint at Bedfordview Primary School was interesting. John took the appointment because he was working with Mathematics curriculum and wanted to understand why so few students in South Africa took Maths in Year 12. The problem seemed to stem from Primary Schooling. John had six months with time on his hands when

he noticed the Bedfordview vacancy in the local paper. He applied for and got the job. Both staff and parents were pleased to see him. Nobody as senior or as qualified as John had ever worked on their campus.

John was given three Year 7 Maths classes and one Year 6 Maths class to teach. The children were from English speaking homes but mixed race; there were Whites, Coloureds (mixed race), Blacks, and one Chinese boy. They were all magnificent human beings. When John first met with them, many children told him: “Please Sir, I am not good at Maths Sir.” To which John replied: “Read my lips, everybody in my classes is good at Maths. We are going to work together to make it happen.” So, began John’s brief career as a Primary School teacher.



John’s students were beautiful people!

Things went well for the first month. The children were short on the

basics, so John started with prime numbers and factors and worked upwards. He was surprised when parents started walking past him in the mornings, with tears in their eyes, saying things like: “Thank you so much for what you are doing for our School, Mr Potter.” And parents ringing him to say: “My daughter has never liked Maths before Mr Potter. Now it is her favourite subject!” What was this all about? The children were getting to school early ‘to get their Maths marks’. John was encouraged that things were going well.

At the end of the first month John showed his marks to the other Grade 6 Maths teacher, to see if they were OK. She said: “Yes, they follow a bell curve, but the marks are too high?” John said: “What do you mean – too high?” She said: “The Department says that the average should be 55% and your average is 79%”. John said: “This is basic arithmetic; we cannot send children out on the street getting every second arithmetic calculation wrong!” She said: “You had better talk to the Head about it.” John met with the Principal the next day. He said: “Your marks are too high. You must pull them down to an average of 55%, and if you do not do it I will have to. I suggest you give them more word problems because it is well known that children cannot do word problems.” John was incensed but, to his great shame, he did give the children word problems and their marks did come down. On the side he did a little research. This revealed that the reason that children could not do word problems was because they did not understand the language; it had nothing to do with Maths. When he left the School after six months, John published three papers on the problem in a distance learning Educational Journal, but he left the bulk of the students once again saying: “Please Sir, I cannot do Maths!” John found the answer to his question but, in submitting to the bureaucracy, he did nothing for the children.

John was the only male teacher at Bedfordview Primary. When the time came for the boys to go on the Veld School Camp, he was appointed to accompany them. All over South Africa there are sites set up for these camps. The Bedfordview group went to Barberton, south-east of Nelspruit. John spent his time eating cake and drinking coffee in palatial quarters while the boys spent nights sleeping on the ground in the bush.

WITS UNIVERSITY

Our contact with University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg began when Liz and John both enrolled for courses in 1993. John did well in his first Degree and continued on to complete his competence in education matters. For his Masters work he chose to look into the value of the Judeo-Christian notion of human ontology (what is a human) drawing on St Augustine's writings. He was a distinction student and after graduating was asked to join the staff to run the Advanced Diploma in Education Management. This put food on the table for our family for the rest of the time we stayed in South Africa. It also meant that Liz and John paid no further fees for their studies.

As mentioned above, while sitting on the stage of the Great Hall watching his students graduate in May 1997, John suddenly found himself pushed through the oppression into an open heaven. Our personal victory over the persuasive voices had been won – entirely thanks to the Lord's interventions. Time to go home!

MOLOTO

In 1995, Willie (pronounced Villie) Mashegwana was asked to set up a school at Moloto, a small township 50 km north-east of Pretoria.

Doreen Field shifted to the new site. She had a slightly larger dwelling to live in, but it was still only one room with no facilities.

The first year at Moloto was spent building classrooms and instructing a small group of students of both primary and secondary age. Chris and Kay de Vries from Australia came to help for a season. Otherwise it was Doreen and one other teacher running the school. Our part was to organise furniture from a school in Johannesburg that had an excess, arrange for some financial support from Murray Roberts Construction where our son Tim was working, and direct an exercise in cleaning up the litter on the school land - the latter project being part of John's Teaching Diploma course.

Doreen stayed at Moloto until the school was registered and properly staffed. Richard and Beth tried to upgrade her living quarters. Finding her sleeping on a mat on the floor, they bought her a bed, but she gave it away to someone she said needed it more than her. Richard's response was to buy his mother another bed and a refrigerator and tell her that these objects were his and he was only lending them to her!

Neither Willie nor Doreen had teaching credentials, so we arranged for them to take a course at the University of South Africa. Their graduation was a cause of great rejoicing!

Once Moloto was up and running, Doreen moved 40 km up the Jan Furse Road to Moteti and started the process all over again. The last we heard, both schools are running well, each one now catering for around 500 students! Extremely well-done Doreen!

Along the way, Doreen developed a special relationship with an orphan, a young man called Mandla. He was 15 years old at the time they met. He is now 35, married with two children, teaching Maths at



University of South Africa Graduation 1995 for Doreen and Willie

the Jesus is Lord School at Moteti and pastoring the church that Doreen founded. Richard and Beth think of Mandla as their brother.

Doreen stayed connected with her children and their families. Richard married Grace and lives in Johannesburg; he was available to call in from time to time. Richard and Grace have four children. Richard works as an IT consultant. He and Grace participate in a local church and work in several outreach ministries including Abortion Care and Divorce Care. Grace is passionate about education and participated in the Moteti school for a time. She has recently completed a BA in English and Linguistics and is home schooling their children. Richard has completed his B.Com. (Honours) and was in the process of enrolling for an MSc in Data Science and Analytics the last we heard.

Beth married Cliff Smith and lived in Durban for most of her married

life. Their home was Doreen's holiday destination each year. Cliff ran a successful industrial shelving business prior to retirement. Beth worked in administration in a medical practice. They have two sons. Malcolm is married to Marlecia; they live in the UK where he is a computer software programmer, and she is a financial systems analyst. Dylan married Jani, a physiotherapist; he has recently been appointed as a lay pastor in a community-based church in Cornwall.

Doreen's focus was always on the Lord's objectives. She trusted the Lord to bring her children into good things. This resonated with John; when he asked the Lord how he should bring up his three sons in the 1970s, the Holy Spirit said: "You keep your eyes on me John and I will bring up the rear". If we need wisdom there is one who has all the wisdom, the Logos; and He is keen to share His wisdom with us!

In 2015 Doreen was diagnosed with cancer. She stayed with Beth and Cliff for most of her cancer journey. She did get back to Moteti for four months and was thrilled to have her 80th birthday there. Beth shares something of Doreen's last days:

"Mum was bedridden for 4 months and weighed just over 30kg when she died. I was with her and prayed with her during her final hours. A few friends came to see Mum and we prayed, sang worship songs, and read the scripture to her. I had to fetch Malcolm and his wife from the airport. In case she passed away while I was on my way, I said goodbye to Mum and told her I would see her in heaven soon. When we got back, my friend Jackie came to the door and said she had just spoken to Mum, but by the time Malcolm, Marlecia and I got to her bed she had passed away. The night before, I could see she was fading, so I called Richard and Malcolm who both spoke to her on speaker phone and said their goodbyes."



Doreen with Beth

In our view, Doreen Field more than qualified as a saint. She maintained her education adventure for thirty-five years; deliriously contented living in conditions most of us would consider very deprived. Doreen never had a missionary organisation backing her; she was just one white-woman putting her hand to the plough; living in an African community to the substantial benefit of countless African children who would otherwise have had little or no education and chance in life. Looking down the corridors of time we can be sure her contribution was enormous.

Doreen died on the 20th of March 2018. She is buried in the Moteti School grounds. A crowd of people estimated as between 300 and 400, attended her funeral. Vale Doreen, you were one of a kind.

LUKE MAJAJI - PERSUASIVE VOICES IN THE CHURCHES

The provincial city of Nelspruit lies three hundred kilometres due east of Pretoria, the Administrative Capital of the Republic of South Africa. The drive from Pretoria to Nelspruit along the dual carriage M4 Highway is pleasant enough. For the first two hundred kilometres you drive through agricultural land on the Highveld Plateau, 1500-1800m above sea level. When you reach Machadodorp you start the descent into the Lowveld, elevation 800-900m.

The Lowveld is sub-tropical and noted for grand vistas, outstanding tourist destinations, and tropical fruit farms. The air is filled with buzzing insects and heady perfumes. After the relevant sterility of the Highveld, the Lowveld brings a sense of excitement, action, and well-being. Nelspruit is the premier town in the region. When we first went there in 1977 it was a quiet provincial town; today it is a thriving metropolis.

Nelspruit Township dates from 1895. It was named after three brothers called Nel who travelled to the area from the Highveld to graze their cattle there in the winter months. We are not sure where the Nel's had their headquarters, but we have seen their *spruit* (stream) in the Lowveld Botanical Gardens. These Gardens boast a magnificent collection of native plant species and have an outstanding tearoom – or at least they did in the year 2000. The Lowveld Gardens are not Cape Town's Kirstenbosch, but they are the second best in the Republic of South Africa and should not be missed if you are in the area. We have memories of buying *peri-peri slap* (potato) *chips* at the Vasco da Gama Café in Nelspruit and eating them with considerable contentment in the quietness of the Gardens.

Nelspruit is less than an hour's drive from the Kingdom of Swaziland, the Kruger National Wildlife Park, and the old gold mining towns of Barberton and Pilgrim's Rest. In recent times, Nelspruit has become the Capital and Seat of Government for the Mpumalanga Province. It boasts a University, an Agricultural College, a major sports stadium, a well-equipped hospital and a number of outstanding schools.

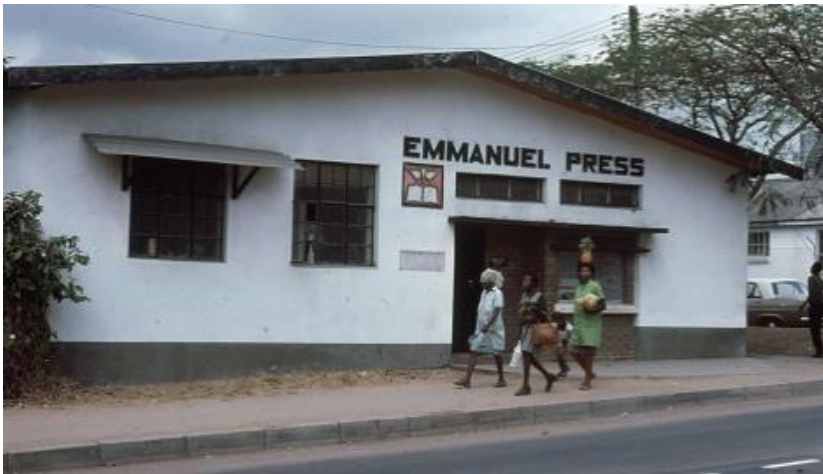
For those of us that knew it in the late 1970s, modern Nelspruit seems a little over-developed. It was great, even in the late 1980s, to drive down from White River to shop at Checkers and have lunch at the Wimpy. The traffic was light, and parking was easy. These days Nelspruit is hustle, bustle and congestion. One thing we are glad about is that they have built a new airport. The original airport was located on the side of a hill and was hazardous; an acquaintance of ours, an experienced pilot, was killed there in 1977.

EMMANUEL MISSION

It was to Nelspruit that British ELIM missionaries Hubert and Jean Phillips located fresh from the United Kingdom in 1928. They established the Emmanuel Mission there in 1929. One of their later projects was the Emmanuel Press, established in 1938, with the help of Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada missionary Austen Chawner, who was operating out of Maputo in Mozambique at the time. Hubert Phillips continued as Chairman of the Press for 34 years. He retired in 1972 and died the following year.

Peter Smith's report (Smith, Peter 2007: *Global Warming: The Fire of the Holy Spirit in World Missions*) says that Bill and Gwen Kirby continued the work of the Press with the support of a few African workers, after Hubert Phillips died.' That is not correct. Bill and Gwen (British AOG) ran a Bible Course program at the Press for a number of years

but it was David and Loreen Newington, ex-Congo missionaries loosely associated with the British AOG, that took over the Press after the departure of the Phillips. We never heard the full story of the takeover, but we do know that the Phillip's son John claimed he was 'pushed out' against his will. Experienced ELIM missionaries Ron and Betty Gull stayed on staff but were relegated to providing art services, secretarial support, and ministering to a local Indian Assembly.



The original Emmanuel Press Building, Nelspruit 1976

PASTOR LUKE

Pastor Luke Majaji was a prodigy of Hubert Phillip's ministry. He was a member of the Atonga Tribe that occupy the southernmost portion of Mozambique around Maputo and spilled over into South Africa in the area south of Komatipoort and along the western side of the Kruger Park as far north as Palaborwa. In South Africa the tribe goes by the name Shangaan.

Luke Majaji planted over one hundred assemblies between Komatipoort and Bushbuck Ridge. If this is not viewed as meritorious, we should tell you that it was accomplished on a bicycle!



Pastor Luke (centre), on the road in 1977; Gerald Rowlands on the right.

PROBLEMS

Problems developed for Luke and the Emmanuel Mission due to some seemingly innocent administrative actions. The first was in the late 1930s when the Emmanuel Mission voluntarily allowed itself to be subsumed under the banner of the Assemblies of God in South Africa. This came about when Irish missionary Jimmy Mullins argued at a leadership conference for Pentecostal Missionaries, that all Pentecostal Missions should come together to register only one denomination with the South African Government seeing that unity

was God's highest objective (Eph.1:9-10). This proposition gained the support of those assembled and it was decided that the denomination should be called the South African Assemblies of God. The senior missionaries were elected Board Members of the new denomination and Jimmy Mullins was elected to be the AOG Apostle. **These men were all good men**, but they failed to see that **a persuasive voice was operating!**

These missionaries worked in isolated places far from home; being called to a national summit gave them a sense of being appreciated, of camaraderie. In that social climate the reference to unity was persuasive. What they did not see was:

- The registration of a denomination is the classical apostate abandonment of process in favour of structure. Why would God be pleased with a display of unity based on doing something he never authorised?
- They were creating a hierarchical structure and dispensing power to certain individuals, cf. Matthew 20:25-28.
- Luke Majaji's Assemblies were re-labeled AOG without his permission. They were no longer under ELIM control.

The subsequent history of the AOG in South Africa shows what happens when a persuasive voice gets in.

Jimmy Mullins ran the AOG for some thirty years. When he reached a mature age he decided he should pass the work to younger men. Three Apostles were appointed to replace him. One from Natal, one from East London and one from Johannesburg called John Bond. The Natal Apostle became a Director of the Emmanuel Press, got distracted by

money making and died. The East London Apostle moved into adultery (as did 60% of the Pastors under his control) and resigned. This left John Bond as the sole Apostle, and he brought a strong top-down approach to his oversight of the AOG. As one commentator noted: John shifted Pastors from town to town like chess pieces. [Did you notice the pattern: the Gold, the Girls and the Glory?]

Jimmy Mullins died three days before we arrived back in South Africa in December 1987. It is of interest that we were solely called to associate with ministries and churches that had left the South African AOG to escape John Bond's authoritarian management style. God wanted to move, and he wanted these people to have an opportunity to join Him. They included the Newingtons at White River who had never allowed themselves to come under John Bond's government, and a large group of churches that left the AOG in 1983 to regroup under the name the Assemblies of God Fellowship with headquarters at Roodipoort in Johannesburg. Africa School of Missions was affiliated with this latter group. The Pastoral team we encountered at Church on the Rock in Edenvale had also left the AOG. Lawrence and Margaret Wilson (nee Onions), along with Margaret's two brothers, had sat under Jimmy and Mary Mullins ministry in Rhodesia. Lawrence had been appointed to take charge of the AOG Bible College in South Africa but found John Bond's strong control counter-productive for his ministry.

We watched with interest as the Lord encouraged each of these groups to adopt a better management style. ASM was invited by the Holy Spirit to move to a Tabernacle of David style management. This was rejected by the Leadership and in three years ASM became weak and feeble; but not before they were warned six times over a few weeks in 1988 via a persistent prophetic word from some staff members and

students focusing Isaiah 16.

Church on the Rock started well but failed because the Pastors moved in heresy. Lawrence Wilson believed he was God's mouth piece to his church. Sunday morning meetings would begin with a good praise time but at exactly eighteen minutes past the hour, Lawrence, using a microphone, would interrupt in the middle of a song to call the assembly to the breaking of bread. His reason for doing so was to move quickly to what was important – hearing what he had to say! Lawrence believed that when he spoke the word, the assembled gathering heard it with their ears and after a while it dropped into their spirit – the exact opposite of a New Covenant operation. Sad. He was not a bad man.

NICHOLAS BHENGU

The second problem that developed for Luke Majaji and ELIM was initiated by a man called Nicholas Bhengu. In 1949, Bhengu, a Zulu, began to preach with such power across South Africa that he earned the title the Black Billy Graham. In East London, in the Eastern Cape, it is reported that through his ministry, all the churches there experienced phenomenal growth, doubling their membership in one night.

The converts did not necessarily find the local churches to their liking and Bhengu received many requests to start his own church. At first he hesitated to do so, but he finally agreed when he found that the churches were not pastoring converts to his satisfaction. As soon as he formed his own congregations, the established churches turned against him. He was pronounced a heretic by one denomination. Rather than be discouraged by this rejection, Bhengu declared that he would build the biggest denomination in Southern Africa. This he did, apart from

the Zionist Christian Church which boasts five million baptized adult members. Bhengu called his movement Back to God. In 1979 Back to God had 3000 congregations across South Africa.

In 1956, Bhengu agreed to join the AOG but only on the condition that the AOG split into four sister fellowships: White, Black, Coloured and Indian. This was in line with apartheid policy at the time and moves were made by the AOG hierarchy to bring this proposal to fruition. Once the administrative structure was in place, Bhengu subsumed all affiliated Black AOG congregations under his authority. **This included Luke Majaji's congregations.** Emmanuel Mission was relatively small in size and had previously seen no need to maintain a separate identity within the AOG. Now to their surprise, Luke Majaji's congregations were moved away from their established missionary connections and placed under Bhengu's Back to God structure and control! Once again, we acknowledge that the AOG leaders were all good men, but **another persuasive voice demon was operating!**

It is difficult for people who did not live under apartheid to understand why good Christian people could agree with classical apartheid policies; in the same way that it is difficult for outsiders to understand how most German Churches remained passive and silent under Hitler. In 1956, the Apartheid Government was viewed by most white people as good at maintaining law and order and the alternative, a chaotic government run by inexperienced Blacks, was beyond consideration. Dividing the AOG into ethnic groups would take a lot of political pressure off the AOG Leadership. What they failed to consider was:

- God said nothing about churches developed by missionaries should be handed over to another authority.

- Bhengu was setting up a power structure for himself, but it was the AOG leadership team that was responsible for putting the administrative structure in place.

This arrangement was difficult for Luke and the Emmanuel Mission team. Bhengu had strong ideas on how to run his business. Pastors were bound under his constitution to forward all tithes and offerings to head office. In return their stipends were guaranteed and paid by head office, providing the pastor was viewed as ‘doing the right thing’! The difficulty with this arrangement for Luke Majaji was that the balance of funds above the pastor’s stipend that had previously been available to him to meet his own needs and fund future development programs was retained by Back to God. Luke, as the Emmanuel Assemblies Overseer, found himself with no personal support, and no funds to conduct further church planting.

It became plain to the ELIM Emmanuel Mission team, both missionaries and locals, that they were located in a bad arrangement. They were a small group with no representation on the AOG Board after Hubert Phillips died; their needs were mostly overlooked, and their Pastors were demeaned by the powerful Back to God church leadership. Things came to a head in 1977 when the Emmanuel Assemblies initiated a plan to leave Back to God. Various meetings were held without the matter being resolved. The white AOG leadership under John Bond was intent on preventing what they saw as an unfortunate split and loss of unity. We know, because we were in White River in mid-1977 when Bhengu and John Bond visited the area to talk with David Newington and ELIM’s Ron and Betty Gull.

The talks at White River were abortive and led to a conference being held by Emmanuel Mission and British ELIM in October of 1977 at

KaNyamadzane, a Swazi African town near Nelspruit. The result of that meeting was that Mack Mabisula, Chairman of the Emmanuel Mission, and David Ayling, UK ELIM Mission Board Chair, signed a formal agreement re-linking their two organisations and registered the Emmanuel Assemblies as a denomination in their own right. **(Push-back against the persuasive voice Part One)**. Their next move was to inform the AOG that Luke Majaji's Assemblies were withdrawing from Back to God. **(Push-back against the persuasive voice Part Two)**. This move was recognised and agreed to with some reluctance by the South African AOG Board at the 1979 AOG Annual Conference at Witbank. We know because John was there.

The decision came despite the finest sermon John ever heard being preached prior to the meeting. It was delivered by Gerald Rowlands and based on a text announcing the gathering of the Princes of Israel. So powerful was the sermon that six times three thousand black pastors rose spontaneously from their seats to worship God in tongues. Something to hear!

It was reported that, as soon as the decision was made for the Emmanuel Assemblies to leave the AOG, Luke Majaji said: 'Brother Bhengu, we would still like to send our pastors in training to your Bible College; would that be acceptable?' Bhengu replied: 'Of course, no problem.' The whites were flabbergasted!

This heralded a new beginning for the Emmanuel Assemblies. Luke and other church leaders had their congregations back. Land was purchased at Bushbuckridge for the building of administrative offices and a conference centre. Ron and Betty Gull came out of semi-retirement to design and get the buildings up and running.

ELIM and Emmanuel Mission did a fantastic job of pushing back

against the persuasive voice that had devastated their operation for over twenty years. We especially rejoiced with Ron and Betty Gull who played a major part in the process behind the scenes; they had been good friends and encouragers to us during our time with ETF. We attended an Emmanuel Assemblies Conference in early 1988. There were 3 000 people present. We ran into Luke there and can report that he was smiling!

POST SCRIPT

We would not like to leave this report with the impression that we thought Nicholas Bhengu was anything other than a great preacher and a dear brother in the Lord. Luke Majaji's problem was not caused by Nicholas Bhengu. It was the unfortunate result of a centralised approach to church government that has been a problem for Christian movements throughout history, commencing with Constantine's take-over of the church in the 4th Century CE. Bhengu's approach to church management may seem a little extreme but he knew his people, and it is not for people from another culture to say whether his style of management was good or bad. What we can say is that the Back to God movement was powerful and successful for a very long time.

There are many anecdotes that support the idea that Bhengu had a good heart and was free enough within himself to survive apartheid and many other challenges. On one occasion Bhengu was showing two visiting American missionaries around South Africa. Come lunch time they asked Nicholas where they could eat, and he took them to a hotel. He left them at the door without a word. The missionaries waited half an hour for Bhengu to re-appear, but he did not do so. They went looking for him and found him sitting on the back steps of the hotel building eating his lunch with the African hotel staff sitting

around him while he shared the Gospel with them. The Americans had completely forgotten that Bhengu, a Black man, could not enter the hotel dining room and they apologised profusely. Bhengu laughed and put them at their ease, assuring them that he had been well fed and had enjoyed his time of fellowship with the hotel staff.

Back in the East London days, Bhengu's wife died, and his church people decided he needed another wife. He left the choice up to them, and when a certain woman was presented to him, like Isaac of old, he took her into his tent and loved her until his death in 1984. Bhengu was not a tyrant; he was a man that God raised up to proclaim the Gospel to the peoples of Southern Africa at an important time. South Africa was saved from a blood bath in 1994 by the strong Christian presence in the country, particularly amongst the Back to God contingent and the Zion Christian Church.

Reinhard Bonnke opened his big tent in Soweto on February 18th, 1984. My son Stephen and his friend Greg King were there. Bonnke's mission, Christ For All Nations, provided a live Gospel Band for the occasions and there was much enthusiastic worship and praise. Just before Reinhard preached, he asked Nicholas Bhengu to pray. Everyone was surprised to find that Bhengu was there, for by this time he was a very old man. His prayer was: "Father in every season you have your man. Now Lord, let your servant depart in peace for this night I have seen your salvation and met the man who will speak to the next generation." The Black congregation that had been wildly enthusiastic in the worship time was absolutely silent when Bhengu prayed. In the video, it is significant that tears of joy were streaming down their upturned faces. No need for noise and hype; the Baba (the Father) was praying. Nicholas Bhengu died in the week following the tent meeting.

TWO FARMS – A CONTRAST IN MISSION

There was no TV in Malawi in 1979. We kept up with the news by tuning into the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation on the radio each day. One of the last broadcasts we heard before leaving Malawi included the announcement that eleven UK Elim missionaries had been slaughtered at their station near Mutare (now Umtali) near the border of Zimbabwe with Mozambique. Peter Griffiths, the Principal of the Mission School, and his wife Brenda, survived because they happened to be shopping in Salisbury (Harare) on that day. The other point of interest was that Bishop Abel Muzorewa had been appointed as the Prime Minister of Rhodesia under the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). For some reason we recorded this news broadcast and still have it somewhere on a tape cassette. The Bishop's tenure turned out to be just a few months – the Brits organised a Lancaster House Agreement which resulted in a national name change to Zimbabwe and Robert Mugabe coming to power.

We returned to South Africa a few days later and John was appointed as the Administrator of the Emmanuel Press in White River. One of his first jobs was to travel to Salisbury to meet with the ETF literature team there to discuss future developments. The Rhodesian ETF team was headed up by Ron and Dorothy Davies of the UK. Peter Griffiths was visiting the office when John arrived, and he was able to hear the details of the massacre first-hand. Peter had connections with Ron and Betty Gull, Elim workers at the Emmanuel Press in South Africa; we met Peter again in White River a few weeks later.

In 1985, as reported above, we travelled through six countries in Africa, calling into Zimbabwe on the way home to Australia. There we connected with people who in later years provided us with places

where we could stay any time we were in Zimbabwe. After Peter and Cheri Irish left the country, when in Harare, we stayed in the close-in suburb of Eastlea with Ann Cranswick and her great friend and colleague Gwen. What fantastic times of fellowship we enjoyed there, together with great food and sleeping arrangements! Thanks girls you were brilliant!

This chapter takes us on a journey from a farm at Chegutu, south-west of Harare, to a small town called Gondola just east of Chimoio located on the Beira Corridor in Mozambique.

THE VALENTINES

One hundred kilometres SW of Harare is a town called Chegutu. It was formerly called Hartley and is the home of a textile firm called David Whitehead. David Whitehead converts locally grown cotton to a wide range of colourful fabrics in Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Malawi. The cloth is widely adopted by the African peoples, who much prefer it to second hand clothing brought in from Europe and the USA.

In the early 1990s, Chegutu had a number of outstanding flower farms. In 1992 John visited one which employed a thousand African families and exported flowers in a 747 Jet plane to Europe seven days each week. It was something to take breakfast on the lawn waited on by cheerful servants with a Fez on their heads. In the mid-90s these farms were taken over by Mugabe's hatchet men and destroyed.

West of the Chegutu township is Ameva Farm, run by a Christian couple from Liverpool, UK, called John and Celia Valentine. John and Celia are members of a group of churches in the UK called the Fellowships of England and Northern Ireland. This group was founded by a Yorkshireman called Brother North.

In the 1980s John Valentine met the Bishop of the Christian Marching Church from Zimbabwe at a conference in Nigeria; they developed a friendship which resulted in the Bishop inviting John to come to Zimbabwe to help him set up a Bible Training Work. When he got home, John shared this with the Fellowship oversight, and this led to the purchase of Ameva Farm and John shifting with his whole family to Zimbabwe.



John Valentine with the Bishop

The Christian Marching Church was founded in 1956 by Peter Katsande. He was ordained as a Bishop by the African Independent Church. In the 1990s the Bishop's job was taken over by his son Tendayi Katsande. The church is one of the more influential independent churches in Zimbabwe. Its theology is orthodox embellished with African ecclesiastical clothing!

Ameva Farm is a fully operating commercial operation. It grows cereal crops and keeps livestock. By 1992, Ameva had developed an R-

12 School as well as a Bible College dedicated to the training of Marching Church workers. All of this was built from farm profits backed by offerings from the UK and Ireland home churches.



Ameva Farm - View from the School towards the Bible College

Staffing at the School and Bible College is augmented by short-time visits by workers from the UK and Ireland. Tuesday evenings are devoted to a Weekly Prayer Meeting. Our John attended one of these along with some visiting young women from Ireland. John was struck by the long shawls the women wore. When he inquired about this, John V. said: “They are just doing what the scripture says in I Corinthians.” John said: “Yes, but how did this practice begin.” John V. told him: “We were having a conference in Ireland one time. On the second morning Brother North told us that, while he was preaching the previous day, he could see the knickers of every woman in the front row. He preached on modesty and to this day the women of the Fellowship wear the long prayer shawl.”

Our John observed the women in the prayer meeting with new respect. They were not wearing the shawls under duress or because of a

Biblical principle; they were doing it with a glad heart, in the knowledge that by so doing they were making a statement about decency, holding up a standard in a reprobate world.

John's main job at Ameva was not to teach or preach but to build a dam! He had written a course on dam construction while in Malawi; this had come to John Valentine's attention and led him to make the connection. John spent ten days on the farm laying the foundation for the dam and enjoying the fellowship.

We take our hats off to the Valentines. We have lost touch with them over the years, but their webpage tells us that they are still there – or at least they were in 2016. Operating under Mugabe's regime was more than difficult; it is to John and Celia's enormous credit that they not only survived but made a significant contribution to Christian life and practice in Zimbabwe in a hostile spiritual environment.

David Hagger and John called at the farm on their way home from other meetings in Zimbabwe one night. They were woken at 4am by the Holy Spirit and told that they had 'stirred the dragon and should get in their vehicle and get out of there quickly'. They did! Mugabe's totem was the crocodile; he collaborated closely with senior witch doctors and destroyed everything that was good in a country which had the best literacy rate and the best agricultural systems in Africa when he took over in 1980. The Valentine's survived everything Mugabe threw at them, to their eternal credit. We salute them!

MAFORGA MISSION, GONDOLA, MOZAMBIQUE

The other main site John visited in this region was Maforga Mission located at Gondola on the road to Beira in Mozambique. This mission farm was run by Roy and Trish Perkins. We had heard of them

because, in 1987, they were abducted with six other ex-patriate missionaries by a rebel group called RENAMO and kept captive for three months in the bush before they were finally released in Malawi – quite a walk!

While at ASM, we had met two single-women students who felt a calling to Mozambique. In 1991, John decided to visit Maforga Mission to check out whether it would be a good place for them to locate and whether the Perkins would be interested in accommodating additional staff. John contacted Roy and it was agreed that he could visit them.

You reach Gondola by road via the border town of Umtali. Umtali can be approached from two directions: from Harare if you have flown to Zimbabwe, and from Beit Bridge if you were driving up from South Africa. There were a number of good ‘watering holes’ where you could stop for coffee along the road from Harare. These days these beautiful facilities have been trashed, to the great sadness of ‘the whenwes’, the Rhodesian whites who have left the country and are always saying: ‘When we were in Rhodesia’!

Coming from Beit Bridge you pass by the Great Zimbabwe ruins. Gerald Ramsey and John stayed a night at a hotel near the ruins in 1999 and inspected them the next morning. There are over 500 known stone sites across the southern continent of Africa, from Sofala on the Mozambique coast to Namibia in the west. Some of them appear to be stone stock pens – these are common in the land around Rusape, NW of Umtali. Great Zimbabwe is by far the largest stone site and the most impressive. Mugabe made a great deal of this sites being constructed by his Mashona tribe, but the sheer number of sites and their very wide distribution suggests that other people were engaged

in their construction. Trader Horne said they were built them by the Malay/Indonesian people that now inhabit Madagascar. Another view argues that the stone sites are connected with people from Egypt who travelled to the area to source gold. It has even been suggested that Sofala is the Biblical Ophir from which Solomon procured gold for the first temple! Interesting stuff!

Umtali is a sizeable town with 190 000 inhabitants and a surrounding rural population of 260 000. It is the principal town of the Zimbabwe Province of Manicaland. The people are Mashona, who make up 80% of the Zimbabwe population and spread all the way to Beira in Mozambique on the coast.

We were privileged to stay a number of times at the One Way Centre, owned and run by the Carslakes, when we passed through Umtali. This centre was specifically set up for travelling mission personnel. We enjoyed outstanding prayer times there.

The spiritual climate at Umtali was particularly bad. We put this down to the closeness to the witchdoctor training camp located just up the road at the small township of Nyanga. We pulled up at our room at One Way one evening; the oppression was so bad Judy did not want to get out of the car! The Carslakes lived in this environment all the time!

Roy had agreed to send a car to collect John in Umtali on an agreed day. As John sat waiting at One Way experiencing the incredible oppression, he wondered what the spiritual climate in Mozambique, the poorest and most shattered country in the world at that time, would be like! The car duly arrived, and they set off for the border post nearby. To John's amazement, when they crossed the border, he experienced a completely open heaven – no oppression at all!

The trip to Gondola took two hours. Soon after he arrived at Maforga Farm, John learned that the farm had been the home of a German Baroness prior to independence in Mozambique. The farm was 3000ha in extent, split in half by the main road to Beira. The headquarters were on the south side of the road. The only infrastructure on the north side was a school the Perkins had built close to the main road. After greeting his hosts, John was free to investigate the facilities. The first thing he noted was a photo in a frame hanging on the wall – it was of Princess Michael of Kent, German wife of the UK Prince. The Baroness was her grandmother and the Princess used to spend her school holidays at Maforga!



Morning prayers at Maforga

Mornings at Maforga began with a prayer meeting on the lawn in front of the house. The farm was an on-going commercial operation growing cereals and citrus. There were also chickens, sheep, and milking cattle. The farm work force lived in a valley some distance from the main house. Roy had a farming background, but there was a war on. Maforga was focused on evangelism and aid work in the early 1990s. Each day the team would send trucks out to the villages with

food. The trucks also helped people travel between the town and their villages; there was no public transport available.

On returning from their capture in 1987, the Perkins employed an armed eleven-strong militia to patrol the mission. Each night the mission group and visitors would move into Gondola Township to sleep, because, as soon as it was dark, local people took up weapons and started shooting one another. John took part in this nightly exodus while he was there. He could hear the guns going all night. Strangely, and thankfully, he felt completely secure in the temporary accommodation in the township and slept well. Whether this was solely from the protection of the Lord or the presence of the Zimbabwe army along the corridor (which was the main supply channel for goods into Zimbabwe) he was never quite certain! A little of both, we think!

It was on a Saturday that John arrived at Mafora. That evening Roy asked him if he would like to preach the next morning. John said he could. He talked to the Lord about it and felt to share on praise. At about 8am the next day, John Moyo, and his wife, local Mashona people who would function as John's interpreters, picked John up in their car and drove about ten kilometres into the bush to an Assemblios de Dios (Assemblies of God – Portuguese style) church building. The building was pock marked with bullet holes and much the worse for wear. The Moyos and John were greeted by the pastor and a few of the flock before they were taken into the building. There they found about forty people sitting looking down at the floor, many of them dressed in what can only be described as rags. John thought, these people certainly need to know about the power of praise. The pastor welcomed them and asked the people to stand for prayer. The congregation rose up as one body and launched into the most amazing

praise John had ever heard anywhere in his life. It was ordered by the Holy Spirit and deafening! John was stunned. No wonder there was an open heaven over Mozambique if this was an example of what was happening in church meetings across the land! The praise moved into high praise; demons were bound in chains and fetters of iron (Ps.149:8-9).

John preached his little sermon on ‘praise, high praise and the highest praise’ and the people enjoyed it. When he finished speaking, he suggested the congregation get into praise again. The whole congregation rose, and more business was done with demons. Mrs Moyo encouraged John by shaking hands with him after the meeting and saying: “I like your preaching.” John was glad that something he said had been received but the main focus for him was that he had heard a people who set a new standard in praise – one that put western churches to abject shame!

THE FARM PLAN

Roy shared with John that they had paid the German Baroness for the land, but the Mozambique Government would not give them the title.

Mozambique received independence from the Portuguese in 1975. The Portuguese had been there for a long time; Lourenço Marques, now Maputo, was established in 1544. They left suddenly in 1975, after ten years of protracted war. A Marxist rebel group called FRELIMO led by Samora Machel took over. At the time, the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa was pushing back against the Apartheid Government. ANC members who were forced to leave South Africa found refuge in Mozambique and continued their hostile actions in brief forays over the border. The FRELIMO were Atonga people from the south of the country. Their takeover did not sit well

with the Makua-Elomwe people in the north or the Mashona people in the middle of Mozambique; a new force emerged calling themselves the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana – RENAMO, and a new civil war commenced. The war was not pretty. The people who suffered the most were ordinary villagers. One group of soldiers would arrive at a village and demand food at gun point. A few days later the other group would arrive and accuse the villagers of supporting the opposition. The headman's hand would be cut-off with a panga as a warning to the rest of the villagers to stop supporting the enemy.

It was clear to John that Roy's problem in getting title to the land was not due to bureaucratic procrastination. His problem was that FRELIMO were threatened by neo-colonialism and did not want *masungus* owning *their* land. There was local evidence of this. Villagers were encroaching on Mafora Farmland to the south and north. One of the local rebel leaders built a house in the gateway of the Mafora School, to make the point!

When John looked around at the Mission operation, he found the main house was exclusively occupied by white people – the Perkins, expatriate mission staff and overseas visitors. The African farm staff were housed in inadequate housing in a valley some distance from the main house – they were fed but received incredibly low wages and had no land of their own to grow food crops. The land to the north of the road was mostly unoccupied and unused – John was not surprised that locals desperate for a place to settle considered it a site for invasion! John suggested to Roy that he should get hold of an aerial photo of the property and return to develop a farm plan that would:

- Assist Roy and Trish maximise production and ensure that the whole community was fed and economically secure, rather than

relying on overseas donations to support their work.

- Set up small farm plots on the land to the north, on which their converts, people they trusted, could build homes, and grow gardens for their families.
- Set up a cooperative arrangement for the whole community - the main farm and the tenant farmers – to sell excess produce into local markets.

John's thought was that the development of small farms would solve the encroachment problem and encourage the government agencies that Mafora would contribute to the local economy. This might lead to the issuing of a title. Roy agreed that John should go ahead with the plan.

As it happened, John had cause to visit Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, well to the south of Beira, a few weeks later. He called at the Mapping Department and found they were able to prepare an aerial photo enlargement of Mafora Farm. He paid for three copies of the plan and for postage to White River in South Africa. The photos arrived three weeks later, and John headed back to Mafora. The farm plan field work was conducted by John riding on a tractor with eleven militia men around him! John returned to White River to draw up the plan on the aerial photo and to write up his report. He posted the plan to the farm and did not visit Mafora Mission again.

THE CONTRAST

The operation at Ameva Farm is impressive. The Valentines are still



Mafora militia check the land for terrorists while John made his inspection

going strong after 35 years in Zimbabwe. They have a viable farming operation which provides their basic needs and funds for running the school and the Bible training work. Their presence in Zimbabwe was initiated by *an invitation* from the influential Christian Marching Church, an African church, not a *masungu* mission! (Mr Mugabe would have liked that!). This connection and the setting up of the theological training work has continued to provide the Valentine team with legitimacy in a hostile political environment. The development of a successful R-12 school has added to that legitimacy.

The Valentines have had sustained backing from a major group of Christians in the UK. This has provided not only a financial backing but a continuous supply of short-term workers to augment staff at the Bible Training Work and the School. It has also meant that the Bible Training Work has presented a coherent theological position with supporters from the UK all ‘speaking the same thing’, something the apostle Paul thought important (Phil.2:1-4). It is important to note that

the foundations of this work were laid in the 1980s when Zimbabwe was relatively stable and had a viable economy.

Roy and Trish Perkin's move into Mozambique contrasts strongly with the Valentine's experience. Mozambique was smashed to pieces by civil war when Roy was prompted by compassion and evangelical zeal to do something constructive in the country. The situation with most people was desperate when Roy arrived. Securing sufficient food for the day was the daily challenge; there was no way Roy could avoid trying to meet this need. Aid and evangelism were what was needed for a considerable time at Maforga Mission. There was no established large Independent Churches for him to connect with to legitimise his entry. He had limited backing; just a few contacts in Zimbabwe who had their own set of developing problems.

There was a basic lack of supplies that made farming difficult in Mozambique in the 1980-90s. This left the mission reliant on uncertain overseas funding from people with whom Roy and Trish had transient rather than concrete relations. The mission gained publicity when Roy and Trish were abducted, and this led to individuals from many places offering short term support for the work. Most of these people were not connected with established mission organisations and this led to an uncertain doctrine being promoted on campus. From snippets of information John pick up from time to time, he is quite sure that his farm planning ideas were not adopted. It is likely that the problems with the government and encroaching villagers have continued. No matter, we tried!

POSTSCRIPT

In 2017, we received a call from a church in Perth asking us if we could assist a missionary, called Robbie Housen, set up an agricultural

training program in Mozambique. Robbie was the founder/director of a training work called Hope Ministry operating in Beira. We said we could help, and Robbie flew to Brisbane to join us for three days to talk through the possibilities. The end result was that John prepared an outline for a Graduate Diploma in Agriculture which Hope Ministry students could take after graduating from a three-year Bachelor of Ministry course. The course provides basic education in subjects related to agriculture: plant science, landscapes and soil, and animal science, together with an introduction to client-centred community development principles.

On the 5th of May 2019, a cyclone hit the Mozambique coast and continued for nine hours. The Hope Ministry buildings were destroyed. We heard nothing from Robbie for eleven months because all communication systems, including the internet, were down. We finally heard from Robbie in April 2020; she was still there battling on. Fantastic people these Mozambique Missionaries!

THE TREASURES OF DARKNESS

In 1996, Judy was driving to the Post Office in Kensington, Johannesburg. She was thinking about the school we were helping Doreen Field develop at Moloto and was asking the Lord how we might fund it. The Lord said to her: “I will give you the treasures of darkness.”

When she arrived home, Judy set about preparing the evening meal. Liz and John arrived home an hour later and after supper, they went off to their studies. Judy went into the lounge room and started to read, but the book was uninteresting so she picked up her Bible and asked the Lord where she should read. The scripture that came to her mind was Isaiah 45:3. She opened to this passage and read: “...and I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places.” This was duly reported to the rest of us with some excitement. To say the least we were encouraged. Over the years that followed there have been many times when we have needed funding for worthwhile projects. Knowing that the promises of God are always ‘yea and amen’ we have pressed into them believing that if God had led us into them he will provide the funding.

As we mentioned above, on the 26th of December 1986 in Adelaide, South Australia, we received a prophetic word to ‘stand against the persuasive voices over South Africa’. This apostolic instruction resulted in us being in South Africa for almost eleven years (1988-1998), standing against the demonic forces that rule over the education system in South Africa. We returned to Australia in 1998 and it was only in 1999 that we were to return to thinking about how we could help lift the economies of nations like Malawi and Mozambique. John recommenced short visits to Africa for the next

fourteen years. In 1999 we started developing the training centre at Sadzi in Malawi. This continued to be the focus until 2006, culminating in the graduation ceremony that year.

THE CHALLENGE

The challenge for the Bantu speaking nations of Africa is that, after the European countries raped the earth in the colonial era, the African nations did not really become independent; they were obliged to continue seeking aid to help them operate. This was made difficult by two arrangements set up by former colonialists. First, the European powers only left their former colonies on the condition that they signed trade preferences agreements. These arrangements meant that, in 1977, when John wanted to buy some heads for soil augers in Malawi from Australia, which he knew were available for \$4-00, he was forced to buy them through an agent with a bowler hat sitting in an office in London for \$11-00. The second problem was that the main aid source, the World Bank, made money by printing it against Saudi Arabian gold deposits in the USA Reserve Bank (a non-government entity owned run by the world's money men). They did not give away; it was expected that the recipient countries would pay it back. In other words, the World Bank created aid money from nothing but demanded that recipient African countries paid it back in hard earned cash!

Malawi is a land locked country with little or no manufacturing capacity. It must import all of its manufactured goods, all of its petrol and a host of other things. The people grow enough food to survive, although being reliant on variable natural rainfall, many families suffer at the end of each year as they wait for the next crop to be ready for harvest. The net result of this is that Malawi needs to borrow

around \$US250 million each year to continue operating. This debt accumulates over time with the result that Malawi remains in a permanent state of poverty. In 1999 we were asking how can this situation might be changed?

A GEMSTONE OPERATION

In February 2005, John attended a Full Gospel Businessman's meeting in Adelaide. After the meeting, one of the brothers asked if he could talk to him. John assured him that he could. He told John that a friend of his had had a successful gemstone business, going to East Africa to purchase rough stones, taking them to Bangkok to have them cut and polished, and selling them into the international market. Unfortunately, the man (who I shall call Jim) had had a severe stroke in 2002 and the business had stagnated. Now he had recovered and wanted to start up again, but the stroke had left him physically handicapped, and he needed people to join him in the business if it was going to work. The brother said: "John, I thought that your experience in Africa would be useful in getting things up and running again if you would be happy to help." In view of our concerns about the financial position of African countries, John thought this might be something to think about. So, he said: "OK, let's set up a meeting with your man, but first of all can you give me the name of someone who knows him and can give him a reference?" "Yes" he said, "Peter over there was a partner of Jim's in another business – he can give you the lowdown on him."

So, John approached Peter, told him the story as it was told to him, and asked: "What can you tell me about Jim, is he a person you would go into partnership again?" Peter said: "Jim is very capable. He knows the gemstone business inside and out." "Yes," John said, "But is this

something that God would back?” Peter replied: “What I can tell you is that when he had his stroke I went to the hospital to pray for him. When I did so the Lord told me Jim was going to recover and **He was going to give him the treasures of darkness!**” John began to feel some encouragement that this project could have potential! Gemstones are found underground and could be described as treasures of darkness.

John went back to the first brother and asked him to set up a meeting with Jim. The meeting was duly held, and the decision was made to see if we could raise the capital we would need to start the business. Over the next week we raised \$200 000 from Christian brethren. Each donor was given an equal share in the business and the balance for people who provided more than the share capital of \$7 000 was held under contract.

With the capital in hand, we registered a company called Alpha Gems and Jewellery and leased an office in 38 Gawler Place, Adelaide, the building where the bulk of South Australian gemstone businesses are located. The directors of the company were Jim, John as chair, the brother who had first spoken to John (who was a chartered accountant) and another Christian brother we shall call Sam who was an expert lapidarist, i.e. stone cutter, and polisher. On paper, at least, we had a good team.

START-UP

After setting up the office we prepared for Jim and Sam to take-off on a first trip to Africa. Appointments were made with Jim’s contacts in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Air tickets were booked via Bangkok, Thailand, so that Jim and Sam could arrange with stone cutters to cut the stone’s they would bring back with them from Africa. All of these

people, Jim told us, were located in one eleven story building in Bangkok. He had his preferred people there; one of them was holding stock for him he had left there three years before!

When Jim and Sam arrived at the airport, immigration told Jim that he could not leave the country because his passport was stopped. Sam took the flight thinking the problem would be sorted out. In fact, the problem was serious. While Jim was on his back barely conscious in 2002, a company in Melbourne with whom he had an account sued him when his balance was not paid. A friend of Jim's, thinking that Jim might never recover to pay the debt decided the best thing to do was for him to be declared bankrupt. The friend went ahead and arranged this without Jim's knowledge. Once you are declared bankrupt, you are obliged to submit annual financial statements to a person appointed to oversee your finances. Jim knew nothing of this when he recovered a year later. When he failed to submit his return, his supervisor stopped his passport! The result was that Sam spent three useless weeks in Bangkok before returning home. Alpha Gems had come to a full stop!

John called a shareholder meeting to explain what had happened and asked the shareholders to instruct the directors on a way forward. The shareholders, to a man, shared that they had prayed about it and felt sure that the Lord wanted the company to continue to operate. Three brethren had encouraging words from the Holy Spirit which they shared.

At that time, we were hopeful that Jim's passport could be unstopped, so we looked around for ways of keeping the project going. First of all, we contacted Jim's main contact in Nairobi and asked him if he could freight stones to Adelaide. He said he could and sent us a list of

stones he had available. We decided to test the system by importing 100kg of rough blue chalcedony, a stone not available in Australia and much sought after by gemstone collectors. This order arrived without incident.

The second thing we did was launch into opal trading. Jim had lived and worked in Coober Pedy for many years. He had good contacts there and it was easy for him to get a batch of rough opal. This had to be cut and polished, so we obtained a cutting machine and Jim and Sam set about preparing stones for the market. We purchased two kinds of opal: rough Coober Pedy Light Opal and Matrix from Andamooka which is ready for sale

Buying and processing opal is one thing. Selling it is another. Marketing cut stones in Australia presented us with quite a learning curve. We had two main markets: Gemstone Fairs and Jewellery Manufacturers.

GEMSTONES IN CENTRAL AFRICA

The opal selling went ahead but John was more interested in getting back to the original business plan – making the African connection. He knew that there were many so-called Small-Scale Miners in Malawi. As it happened, he was asked to visit Malawi to participate in the Sadzi Training Centre Graduation in August 2006, so he took Sam with him. They met up with our son Tim and Willie (Villie) Fourie in Johannesburg and the four of them flew on to Blantyre.

John had been in Malawi the previous February and while there had made discrete enquiries about gemstones with Malawi government officials. Unbeknown to him, after he left the country, a Mr Phiri from Northern Malawi, formerly the Chief Geologist with the Zambian

Government, heard about John's interest in gemstones, and travelled to Sadzi to try to connect with him. He met with Byson Mpinganjira who advised us of this, and before the 2006 August trip, John asked Byson to arrange a meeting with Mr Phiri at Mzimba.

After the graduation ceremony in Zomba the five of them, including Byson, travelled north. When they arrived in Mzimba, they found the meeting place they had been directed to and walked into a room expecting to meet Mr Phiri. Instead, they found twenty-three people sitting there, all Small-Scale Miners who belonged to a local Mining Association! Mr Phiri was there but it was the chairperson, in a black suit, who greeted them. After introductions and handshakes all round, the chair opened the meeting with prayer (!) and we got down to business. These people were looking for funding for mining operations and assistance in identifying markets. Our visiting team said they were ready to find out if there was some way they could assist them and asked if they could visit some of their mines. The miners had anticipated this and had arranged for us to visit three mines: two aquamarine mines and a rose quartz mine. What we saw amazed us – see photo.

The miners were mostly people who had retired from the public service with small pensions they used to hire local people to dig holes in the ground with picks and shovels to find gemstones. Aquamarine samples are found in small quantities; you dig a lot of soil for one specimen. Rose quartz occurs in layers; you can dig out a lot quickly when you get down to the layer, but rose quartz is much less valuable than aquamarine.

The story these miners told us was that with limited funds they could pay diggers for only a few days each month. When the diggers found



The chairperson points out a stone – 2 views!

something, there was the problem that they often put the sample in their own pockets. The stones handed to the miner were held waiting for travelling stone buyers travelling. These people were from India and China; they paid only a small portion of what the stones were worth, because they had the advantage in the deal and knew it.

As Willie Fourie was walking through a rose quartz mine, he was suddenly aware of the Lord's presence. The chairperson who was walking a few paces ahead, felt it too. He turned around with a look of surprise on his face and launched himself into Willie's arms. The Lord spoke to Willie: **'I will give you the treasures of darkness'**! When Willie reported this later, we were all encouraged, to say the least!

The Thandizo Small-Scale Miners Association

When our team returned to the Southern Region, John contacted the

Malawi Mines Department and discussed with them the possibility of setting up two operations:

- A Small-Scale Miner Loan Fund
- A National Gemstone Lapidary Workshop

As a starting point, he was directed to the Thandizo Small Scale Miners Association in Blantyre. Discussions were held which led to the Association Executive and the Directors of Alpha Gems signing a Memorandum of Understanding leading to a Memorandum of Agreement signed in June 2007. The objectives of the MOA were ambitious but both signatories entered into the arrangement with serious intent. The goals were:

- 1 Purchase a property for establishing a Gemstone and Jewellery College in Malawi.
- 2 Develop courses that provided training in safe mining methods, lapidary, jewellery manufacture, and marketing.
- 3 Develop a national system for identification, grading and valuation of gems and specimen stones mined in Malawi.
- 4 Develop a national inventory of sources of gemstones and specimen stones.
- 5 Promote a machine-based mining technology for miners and source capital for loans and grants to procure the equipment.
- 6 Develop a national commercial cutting and stone polishing operation and develop sale outlets for same.
- 7 Develop a commercial jewellery production operation and

develop sale outlets for same.

- 8 Develop a national and international marketing strategy for Malawi small scale mining output.

The parties saw that the above objectives could be helped by developing working relationships with Malawi Polytechnic Staff. Alpha's job was to provide lapidary personnel for short term training courses, raise venture capital, and find international markets for both gemstones and jewellery.

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is much closer to Malawi than Australia. Our team recognised that it would be easier to get trainers from South Africa to visit Malawi than for trainers to travel from Australia. On their way home, John and Sam spent time investigating gemstone operations in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa. One of their contacts was with the VR Mining Company near Barberton. VR had the best collection of semi-precious stones in South Africa. The company directors were sympathetic to the Malawi situation and available for training exercises. John and Sam agreed to help them do this by purchasing stones from them in bulk and introducing them to the Australian market. They were particularly struck by the VR tiger-eye, which is only found in South Africa, and their verdite, a green muscovite only found near Barberton and one other place in Zimbabwe.

THE CHINESE INVASION

By the end of 2007, our plan to assist Malawi small-scale-miners access 'the treasure of darkness' was in place. All concerned were

hopeful that Malawi small-scale gemstone mining could become a viable enterprise for our hard-working Malawi brothers and sisters. Sadly, concomitant with our success, Chinese interests suddenly mounted a massive assault on the international gemstone business.

First, they set up a lapidary operation in Guangzhou, paid their labourers a pittance and charged well below Bangkok prices for work done. They wiped out the Thailand operation in eighteen months. When Sam re-visited Bangkok in late 2008 the eleven-story lapidary building was empty! Labour costs were far too high to cut and polish in Australia, and the Malawi operation was going to take several years to get up to scratch. Our cutting operation was wiped out over night!

Secondly, they sent buyers to the Australian opal fields. These people sat in motels like tarantula spiders waiting for desperate miners to offer them rough opals at well below the market rate. John and Sam visited Los Angeles in 2009 at the invitation of the American Opal Society. They found that nobody in the USA could buy rough opal for cutting anymore; the Chinese had cornered the market.

To summarise: all of Alpha Gems good intentions were brought to nothing by the Chinese operation. We did not give up straight away. Two of our directors, Jim and the accountant brother resigned in early 2008, but Sam and John kept the company going for another eighteen months. They appointed two new directors to assist them in the marketing operation but in the face of the Chinese operation everything they tried was unsuccessful. Alpha Gems was closed in 2009. Those who participated in the day-to-day operation received no salary at any time over the four years of operation, and our shareholders lost their investment. Half of them had heard about Alpha from John and invested a total of \$84 000 in the project. Co-

Director Gerald Ramsey and John have not ceased to work to recover their funds since that time.

This result left us with a lot of questions. The Lord had encouraged us all, directors and shareholders, that He was behind the Alpha operation. Were we all deceived, or had we missed something important? It seemed that there would be no ‘treasures of darkness’ for small-scale mining in Malawi. Or would there be? The epiphany that Willie Fourie and the Chairman experienced near the rose quartz mine suggested otherwise. That was not an imaginary experience; Jesus was there! Was there hidden manna somewhere underground in Malawi which no-one had yet detected.

CORPORATE MINING OPERATIONS IN MALAWI

There is no doubt that the ‘treasures of darkness’, especially gold and diamonds, have been the greatest source of wealth in Africa. Gold is what brought the Portuguese to Sofala and Kilwa in 1515. They set up an operation on the Zambezi River at Sena in 1544 and set up a full colony in 1629. Huge amounts of gold were taken from the Kingdom of Monomotapo, now part of Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Further back still, it has been hypothesized that Solomon sourced gold for the first temple from this area. There are caves and stone buildings right across Southern Africa, many of which have wall paintings of Egyptian design. Mysteries! People have been chasing the treasures of darkness since time began.

Malawi, Kenya, and Tanzania have meagre supplies of gold and diamonds. In 2010 John decided to investigate what other mining opportunities might present themselves in Malawi. There were good topographical maps available and detailed reports on the location of rock formations containing substances that had commercial value.

These confirmed that there is not much of value in Malawi. There are tiny amounts of uranium scattered around the far north. Only one of these sites, near the Masuku Hills, was considered viable. It was being worked by an Australian company in 2010. Whether this venture proved profitable or not we cannot say.

There is one small coal deposit in Malawi, some useful cement limestone quarries, and one hill of apatite near Lake Chilwa from which you could make superphosphate fertiliser. That was about it, except for the previously mentioned small-scale gemstone operations. Malawi missed out on the treasures of darkness. Undoubtedly that was the reason it was made a Protectorate under the Raj, and not a full colony. John would have to look elsewhere if he were to lay healing hands on the economy of this Central African country.

THE MALAWI ECONOMY

In early 2010, John undertook a situation analysis of the Malawi economy to see if he could isolate some key needs and think about how they could be met. In particular, he hoped to find a way by which Malawi could extricate itself from an aid economy to self-sufficiency. What follows is a brief summary of his conclusions:

Basic Food Supplies

Maize is the staple for the bulk of Malawians. There are isolated groups that cannot grow maize because of soil conditions; along the Lake they grow rice, in parts of the north they grow cassava.

A persistent problem for maize growers, as mentioned above, is that they grow it under natural rainfall which is variable from year to year. Malawi has a huge Lake, the third biggest in Africa and the sixth

biggest in the world. It is 500km long (N-S) and up to 80km (E-W) at its widest point. It has a surface area of 21 600km², and at its deepest point it is 706m deep. The volume of water in the Lake is 8 400km³, i.e. 8.4 million gigalitres of fresh water you can drink. In 2011 this enormous water supply was practically unused. If we could find some way to use it, Malawi's food problems would be solved.

The Lake water is not fossil water. Nor does it come from run-off. It comes from underground springs, what Genesis calls the fountains of the deep (Gen.7:11). The Lake lies in the great Rift Valley. In 1979, while we were living there, Lake Malawi rose 3m overnight, devastating facilities located at the Lake's edge. The input to the Lake that night was **65 million mega litres!** The same thing happened to Lake Tanzania on the same night. A German cameraman took infra-red photos of Lake Tanzania from the air and published them in the July 1979 issue of Readers Digest; the pictures show great spirals of water coming up from the bottom of the Lake. This may have been the Lord's way of showing us in 1979 that this Lake was a key to Malawi's future.

In 2006, the President of Malawi, Bingu wa Mutharika, an economist, proposed a Green Belt Project that included using Lake Malawi water to grow irrigated crops. Sadly, he could never get funding for it, and he died of a heart attack in 2012. If the President of Malawi could not raise the funds to use the Lake water, it was certain we could not. We would have to find another way.

Imported Goods

Malawi imports many essential goods. The main costs are fuel and vehicles. Was there some way we could reduce this bill?

Malawi is blessed with the perfect system to produce hydro-electric power. The Shire River (pronounced Sheery) is the outflow from Lake Malawi; it is a permanently flowing stream. A hydro-electricity plant was built by the British at the Kapichira Falls on the Shire in colonial times; the place where David Livingstone had to dismantle his boat and carry it up stream. This plant could easily be upgraded to produce an immense amount of power that could be used for electrifying, amongst other things, the Malawi rail service. This would give people the choice of not driving cars and trucks but transporting themselves and their goods by rail. The first stage could be Blantyre to Lilongwe, via the Lake Port of Chipoka. The initial cost would be high, about \$1 billion, but the benefit would be enormous.

John reasoned further that electric vehicles could become normative in Malawi if the hydro-electric plant was upgraded. These need not be the expensive vehicles being introduced in the West. We discovered that the University of South Australia had designed and built basic four wheeled electric vehicles to transport patients living in the bush in Zimbabwe to hospital. These are no more than four wheels on a frame with a seat, a battery, and a solar panel on the roof. People commuting to Lilongwe from Blantyre and vice versa could hire such vehicles or take electric taxis to conduct their business. These simple electric vehicles could be manufactured in Malawi, providing jobs.

A Funding Source

John looked around to see what funding source might be available in Malawi. He discovered that there was a 50 000ha forest of mature pine trees on the Viphya Plateau that was not being used profitably. The planting had begun in Protectorate days. The British had planned to build a pulp mill for paper and rayon production from these trees.

The planting continued after independence, but the purpose was forgotten by the newly independent Malawi government. The trees continued to grow despite being untended for the next forty years.

In 2010, the trees were fully mature and ready to harvest. The pine species was *Pinus patula*, Mexican weeping pine. John was unfamiliar with this species, but the literature told him the timber quality was equivalent to *Pinus radiata*, the species commonly grown in South Australia. Pine forests are planted at 1000 trees/ha. The 50 000ha stand on the Viphya contained 50 million trees! At a stumpage price of \$50, these trees were worth \$2.5 billion.

John discovered that 10 000ha of the forest had been allotted to a commercial company to produce plywood boards. The Malawi Government had been given aid funds to build this commercial venture, but it was sold off in the 1990s to a company from Kerala in India. The rest of the forest John heard on the grapevine was being wasted; small operators backed by corrupt politicians were chopping down trees, milling them with transportable sawmills in the forest, and selling the timber to dealers from Kenya who were coming to Malawi regularly to collect it. The State was getting nothing out of it, which was sad considering that these trees could be milled, and the timber sold into international markets at a profit of around \$US200/tree. If we could persuade the Malawi Government to set aside 20 000ha for export timber sales, the potential gross return was in the order of \$4 billion – more than enough to get the Greenbelt Program going at the Lake and to start electrifying the Blantyre/Lilongwe rail service.

It turned out that Malawi's treasure is neither gemstones nor in secret places - they are water and pine trees. These are clearly in view, yet strangely invisible to the people running Malawi's economy - except

of course Bingu wa Mutharika, but he was dead. John decided to pursue the following strategy for developing Malawi's resources:

1. Develop a Business Plan to build an export industry for Malawi's timber plantations.
2. Design irrigation layouts for irrigating maize and other crops using Lake Malawi water

These tasks were duly accomplished, and in July 2010 John headed for Malawi to make the initial contacts with the appropriate Malawi Government officials.

TREES OF THE FIELD

When the Lord first spoke to John about Africa, on the 25th of August 1975 in Brisbane, Australia, he received a vision and a scripture. The scripture was Isaiah 55. The vision was of African women and children; and their joy and excitement as they reached out to John seemed to fit with Isaiah 55:12: ‘...and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.’ In 2010 John was in Adelaide preparing to enter a real field with real trees.

We realised that this project was a fair way away from conventional mission work. We had long left behind the *kyrie eleison* and the eucharist, daily Bible searching and Pentecostal hyper-spirituality. We had not done this lightly. We kept reviewing our operation, sometimes wondering whether we were getting too far away from what other people think was important - winning souls and teaching the Bible. But John had received a sovereign word from the Lord: For this cause, you were born John – Psalm 24:1! We needed to give this some attention.

So, the earth is the Lord’s, all of it without exception. There is no doubt about that, but what was the special significance of this verse for us? God’s sovereign words are really something; they are so comprehensive and deep in meaning that you spend the next fifty years trying to understand their full significance – ‘the Logos calling you on’ (as St Augustine said). Over the years since John received the Psalm 24:1 word, sitting in an aircraft on the tarmac at Lagos airport, we have deduced the following:

1. The Lord’s land is currently occupied by strategically placed major demons. Satan himself is always somewhere – he is not

ubiquitous like the Holy Spirit. He was at Pergamum in the 1st Century AD (Rev 2:13) and at Varanasi in India in 1985. Where he is now, we do not know – his practice is to hide because he is a defeated foe and desperately keen not to be noticed! Our first job is to get rid of the territorial demons and hand the land back to God who owns it. We do this by following the instructions of the Holy Spirit because: (1) we do not know where the demons are; and (2) we do not have any power to do the job without the Holy Spirit's assistance. We are just a voice, although, as Reinhard Bonnke discovered, God's word in our mouth is just as strong as His word in His mouth. The Lord gave us the job of dealing with the principal demon over the Bantu nations, from South Africa to Kenya in 1986. The demon was located at White River, South Africa and the battle raged in our lives from 1988 to 1998. Since then, Chuck Stephens has continued the battle.

2. Phase two of the job is to collaborate with the Holy Spirit to establish God's Kingdom operation on His land. 'Thy Kingdom come' is what Jesus said we should pray for. Together with our good friend Gerald Ramsey, we have spent the last twenty years addressing the question: what does the land look like when the Kingdom comes upon it? One thing we know is that God is looking for regional temples constructed of people, for the Holy Spirit to start directing operations – Ephesians 2:19-22. (Ephesians 2 is an important chapter – it speaks of things for our time, like unity: 'one new man').

These understandings are grounded on the reality that God created the cosmos for His pleasure (Rev.4:11) and created humans to manage it (Gen.1:28). We can find nothing to suggest that God's objective has changed since the New Covenant relationship came into operation; on

the contrary - see Eph.2:10. Our job is to manage God's land; and the Hebrew word *kabash* translated 'subdue' in Genesis 1:28, indicates that we are expected to acquire a knowledge of, and mastery over, the material environment, so that we can meet God's objective to His satisfaction and, in the process, meet our own survival needs. Adam was a farmer, and so was Abraham. John is happy to be an agricultural scientist. We are not denying that we need all of the other professions, disciplines, and services that contribute to our continued community well-being; but managing God's land is primary, because it is there that the Lord has 'given every green herb for food'.

In 1999 Tony Brain and John registered the Paraclete Institute as a charitable educational and training organisation in Australia. They gave it that name to reflect that it was a mentoring organisation (*paracletos* = coming alongside), working under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They did some work in Australia, but the bulk of their work was overseas. It was John's job to manage projects in Africa and we placed our Malawi work under the Institute in 2000. In 2010, it was agreed that John should investigate whether the Viphya plateau pine plantations in Malawi could be a means of providing capital to meet the food and transport needs of the Malawi populace. We were encouraged by the fact that world demand for construction timber was high, especially in Europe, Australia, South Africa, and the USA which had a serious disease in its forests.

THE VIPHYA PLATEAU

The Viphya Plateau lies just south of Mzuzu, the capital of the Northern Region of Malawi. In its natural state it grows grassland with occasional small thickets of natural bush.

The Plateau is elevated, ranging from 1500 to 2000m above sea level.

The temperature on the plateau ranges from a mean minimum of 12°C to a mean maximum of 24°C. Rainfall averages between 1200mm and 1400mm per annum (48 to 56 inches). It is ideal for forest plantings of *Pinus patula* (Mexican Weeping Pine).

Timber from *Pinus patula* is equivalent in strength and appearance to *Pinus radiata*, the pine commonly grown in Australia. *P. radiata* is not grown in Malawi because it gets a fungus disease above an elevation of 600m (2000ft).

A stereoscopic examination of aerial photos suggests that there is at least 270 000ha of land available for pine forest development on the Vipha. If this could be developed, Malawi could become a major supplier of milled construction timber for the world. Across Lake Malawi, at the same latitude, there is 500 000ha of virtually uninhabited land in Mozambique that could be brought into timber production.

The Paraclete Executive Committee decided that John should visit Malawi to determine:

- The state of the current forest – its suitability for milling (the trees were old).
- Under what conditions the Malawi Government might give us access to the forest.
- What infrastructure was available on the plateau.
- What transport facilities were available for transporting timber to rail heads and ports.
- What timber milling and drying equipment would suit the Vipha.

- What training would be needed to develop a competent work force.
- Information for budgetting: stumpage charges, milling and drying costs, freight costs to port, freight costs to markets and overheads.

MALAWI VISIT 2010

In July 2010, John Coverdale, a brother in the Lord and good friend from Portland Victoria, joined John for a week long visit to Malawi. They landed in Lilongwe and were met by Byson Mpinganjira from the Sadzi Training Centre in Zomb. The Johns first visit was with the Director of Forestry, Dr Dennis Kyambazinthu, in Lilongwe.

John outlined their intentions in the Vipyha to Dennis. It was decided that the best way for us to get into the action was for the Paraclete Institute to offer to train Malawi nationals in milling timber to export



With Dr Dennis Kyambazinthu, Director of Forestry, in Lilongwe 2010

standards. The proviso would be that we could export the milled timber to cover our costs. Dennis suggested that the best place to run the training program would be in the Zomba Forest in the south and that we should see the folk at the Forestry Institute of Malawi in Zomba with regard to setting it up.

After seeing Dr Kyambazinthu, the two Johns and Byson travelled north through the Vipya. They visited the Raiply plywood factory and met the management team; they were from Kerala State in India. Their advice was that the transport facilities from Chikagawa to the south were inadequate; Raiply only produced plywood for home consumption.

They stayed at Mzuzu overnight and then headed for Zomba down the road adjacent to the Lake. On the way they inspected the port facilities at Chipoka to determine whether milled timber could be transported south from the Vipya on barges. There is a rail link from Chipoka to Nacala on the Mozambique coast. This looked like a good option.

Dennis had phoned ahead to arrange for the team to meet with Dr Clement Chilima (Director) and Dr Tembo Chanyenga (Deputy Director) at the Forestry Research Institute of Malawi (FRIM) in Zomba. The Johns had detailed discussions with them about setting up a saw milling training program in Zomba. The FRIM staff suggested that it should be located on Zomba Mountain. This appealed; the Zomba Plateau is 2000m above sea level and there are no mosquitoes up there! It is also cool. During the hot period prior to the rainy season, hundreds of professional people flock there to get out of the heat.

The Zomba Forest is the oldest commercial forest in Malawi. When we lived in Zomba in the 1970s it was well covered with healthy



With Dr Clement Chilima and Dr Tembo Chanyenga, at FRIM, 2010

Pinus patula. To John's great disgust, when he visited it in 2010 the whole forest had been almost completely felled and not replanted. Apparently, in 1995, the Malawi Government handed over all of its properties and field stations to private companies to manage. The company that took over Zomba Forest 'raped the earth' and left without re-planting it as they were obliged to do under their contract. To our knowledge, the forest has not been fully re-planted to the present time.

The Forest Camp infra-structure on the mountain was still in place when the two Johns visited in 2010. They met the foreman and some of the staff. It seemed an excellent place to conduct a training program. Student accommodation was available. There were also enough trees left to conduct the program for 2-3 years.

There was an old sawmill complex at the base of the mountain. This was inspected and found to be still operable. Four drying kilns were of particular interest; you can dry timber in the air in Malawi but it is

good to have a kiln to back you up in an emergency.

More importantly, John learned that Malawi now had a considerable number of forestry personnel with Diplomas and Degrees from Bunda College in the Central Region. There were also trained artisans available; electricians, plumbers, mechanics and IT people. It would not be difficult to train local people to take over the project once it was up and running.

The Johns left FRIM with a verbal understanding that Paraclete would work jointly with FRIM staff to develop a Memorandum of Understanding for presentation to the Malawi Government. The Johns returned home and our John set about developing a detailed business plan and budget for the proposed training operation. Clement Chilima supplied John with details on wages and transport costs. The business plan was simple enough. FRIM and the Paraclete Institute would jointly set up a training program on Zomba Mountain. Paraclete would find the start-up capital and FRIM would find the trainers and trainees. The timber produced would be exported to Australia where Paraclete would find markets. South Africa was an alternative market but the wholesale price of milled timber there was around R2 000 (\$AUD180) per cubic metre compared with Australia \$350/m³. The freight costs were only slightly higher to Australia; and Paraclete could manage the import of timber to Australia without appointing special agents in South Africa.

SAWMILLS

We settled on the Lucas 8-30 portable sawmill as the preferred option. These were manufactured in Australia but the company had an agent located 1km down the road from the Mont de Dieu Desmod Tutu Training Centre in South Africa who could supply the mills and would

travel to Malawi to install them and see that everything was operating well. FRIM would appoint a qualified forester to oversee the training and the timber export program. The Zomba Forestry Camp would provide the labour for tree felling and transport. They already had a tractor and log trailer for the job.

PRODUCTION PLAN

The plan was to mill timber to a standard size: 3m x 200mm x 50mm. This was the size of popular garden sleepers in Australia. If the timber was required for construction, each sleeper could be milled to the standard 95mm x 45mm size; each sleeper providing 2 studs and two noggins. One hundred standard sleepers would pack as 3m³. A Lucas Mill operating in two shifts of 5 hours per day would produce 80 sleepers in a day, so two mills would produce 5m³ per day and fill a 6m container in 8 days (40m³). We budgetted on filling a container every two weeks, to allow for unforeseen developments.

MARKETS

In Australia, Paraclete was able to secure contracts with three timber merchants – one each in Sydney, Adelaide and Perth. The agreed price was \$350/m³.

Budget (per container):	
Income from sale of timber	\$14 000
<u>Expenses, including overheads, milling and freight</u>	<u>\$6 000</u>
Profit (tax exempt)	\$8 000
Annual income (assuming 40 weeks of operation)	\$160 000

FINANCE

We canvassed Christian support groups, financial institutions, and

timber wholesalers in Australia. Nobody was prepared to invest one penny in an African project! We took this blockage to the Lord and looked to him for the miracle.

YORK TIMBER

During the 2010 trip to Malawi the two Johns had paused for a few days in South Africa. They wanted to visit Mont de Dieu in White River and on the way they called at the offices of a timber company called York Timber that had recently taken over a 600ha *Pinus patula* forest located at Sabie, 40km from White River.

Our John had told York Timber people that we were interested in helping the Malawians set up an export timber project. Two days after we left the matter of finance with the Lord in Adelaide, John had an email from York Timber. This told him that York Timber were interested in operating in Malawi and asking him if he could take a team from their Sabie base to Malawi to introduce them to the right people at their expense! John returned to Malawi in October 2010 but first of all he revisited York Timber in South Africa to discuss with their management team the possibilities for them in Malawi. They met at the York offices in Sabie and John explained that:

- York would never be permitted to take over existing forest plantings in Malawi. Malawians were nervous about neo-colonialism.
- There was a good chance of them being allocated land for new plantings if they registered a company in Malawi with some Malawian directors – John could introduce them to excellent people.

- There was a chance of getting a licence to cut existing timber on the Viphya if they worked with Paraclete to get the proposed training program on Zomba Mountain underway.

Next day, the team, consisting of three York Timber people and John, set forth for a week in Malawi.

The trip to Malawi went well, with one exception. It soon became evident that a man called Dave either did not like John, our training project, or both. He was hostile throughout the trip. John ignored this as best he could and carried on with his introductions to the Malawi Forests and the people who run them. They met the FRIM staff and Dennis Kyambazinthu and travelled to the Viphya, Dedza Forest and Zomba Mountain Forest. John handed Dr Chilima the draft MOU for him to submit to government and everything seemed to be going well.



York Timber team with FRIM staff, Zomba 2010

On the last night they had a meal at the Ku Chawe Inn on Zomba Mountain and Dave announced that there was no way that York was going to get involved in a miniscule project like the Paraclete training program. Instead, he was going to advise York to ask the Malawi Government for a lease to manage Zomba Mountain and the Dedza Forests. John said: “There is no way that they are going to give you such a lease. If you play it my way, in two years you will get a lease in the Viphya”. But Dave was adamant and his colleagues looked sick.

We found out later that Dave did apply for a lease on Zomba and Dedza but, as John predicted, he received no reply from the Malawi Government. The York Research Officer with whom John had developed a good relationship left the company soon after, this, and went to work in Malaysia. We also heard that York Timber suffered intense robbery problems following the abortive trip to Malawi – whole truck loads of timber were highjacked and the police did nothing about it. There is a scripture in Isaiah 16 which has meaning for us, for it came prophetically six times when we were leaving African School of Missions in 1988; if an organisation will not be poured off its lees, in three years it will be weak and feeble. York had its opportunity. Unfortunately it also had Dave!

PARACLETE IN MALAWI

The Memorandum of Understanding, signed by the Malawian Government was emailed to us in May 2011. Everything was in place to get the forestry project on the road except that the meagre amount of start-up capital had not been sourced. John discussed this with the Paraclete Executive Committee and they decided that it might be easier to raise funds if the request came from the Malawians rather than from *masungus*. It was decided to register the Paraclete Institute

in Malawi to be run by a mainly Malawian Board. John contacted Byson Mpinjanjira and asked him if he could underake the registration process and suggest a few Malawians who could sit on the Board.

There are hundreds of Non-Government Organisations in Malawi. To register a new one, you need to demonstrate that you are a legitimate organisation. John provided Byson with funds to lease an office in Zomba township and he got on with the job of achieving the registration. In late 2012, the Paraclete Institute in Malawi became a reality. The Board of Trustees consisted of Andrew Kacheyo, Dr Tembo Chanyenga, Byson Mpinganjira, our son Tim Potter (from South Africa) and John.

Andrew Kacheyo is the Engineer in Charge of the Zomba Water Board. He is a qualified civil engineer with loads of experience, some of it overseas. We thought Andrew would be the ideal person to oversee an irrigated food project on Lake Malawi in the event that we were able to get such a thing going. Dr Tembo Chanyenga was an outstanding hands-on forester, as well as a highly competent research officer; we could not have had a better person to represent our forestry interests. Byson Mpinganjira had expertise in education and training; and had been our long time confident and man-on-the-spot in Malawi. Tim Potter was a founding Director and Chief Engineer for the Motheo Group, a construction company in South Africa; he had managed extensive project and business expertise. We had a good team. The Board met for the first time in May 2013 in Zomba.

An interesting thing happened to John on his way home from that trip. He had shared with the Board his hope that we might be able to get the Malawi rail system electrified down the track. John caught his plane at the Lilongwe airport and found himself seated in one of two

seats on the right hand side of the plane. A man came and sat in the seat alongside him. After the plane took off the man introduced himself: he was the Chief Engineer of the Malawi electricity grid! During the two hour trip to Johannesburg, John was able to describe to him in some detail his ideas on electrification of the transport systems in Malawi. The man sat with his mouth open!! They exchanged contact details but John never followed up the connection. First we needed to get the forestry project off the ground and that did not happen.

EPILOG

The Malawi Paraclete team had no better luck in raising funds for the forestry training project than we had in Australia. John's last trip to Malawi was in September 2015. As he moved around the country he kept running into professional people who asked him what he was doing in Malawi. John said he was working to help Malawi in education and training, forestry and food production. They all said, without exception: "John, we Malawians must do these things". When long time friend, Emeretis Professor Moir Chimombo (a white woman) said exactly the same words to him, John realised that there had been a change of the guard in Malawi. This fitted with a dream he had had in 2014.

In his dream, John saw himself walking across some land, through thickets of vegetation; suddenly he stopped, just quick enough to avoid falling over the edge of a precipice. It was the end of the earth! In front of John was the universal space. He had no fear. He could have stepped out into space and trusted the Lord for the consequences. He thought at the time: is this the Lord saying the journey is over? He certainly found this to be the case in Malawi in October 2015.

When we first came to the country in the 1970s there was only one Malawi national with a post graduate degree; now about 5% of the population have higher degrees and loads of international experience. For a long time these people had been just having a good time based on their positions of influence and high salaries. It was highly significant that Andrew Kacheyo said to John in 2015: “John we always knew there were people living in poverty. It is only now that we understand that when they suffer, we also suffer”. There is one thing that African understand better than *masungus*, and that is: ‘we all go forward together’. We consider it a wonderful thing that educated Malawians have now put their shoulder to the wheel with regard the country’s economic development. Masungus may go home! We worked in Africa amongst the Bantu speaking peoples for forty two years, counting a few years of preparation – six sabbaticals in all. What has been the result?

South Africa gained a democratically elected government in 1994 – we voted in that election. But the ruling ANC Party is in a permanent state of tension between stable and disruptive influences and the country’s economy is in crisis. Zimbabwe, once Rhodesia, the best run country north of the Limpopo River, was taken over by Mugabe. He operated under the crocodile totem, and has been replaced by a man from the same clan. Zimbabwe seemingly has no hope of economic recovery. Mozambique sunk to the very bottom of the heap, the poorest country in the world in the 1990s; it is making some progress towards sanity but it is hardly determinable, despite the best efforts of people like Australian missionary Robbie Housen in Beira. A third of Zambia has been taken over by the Chinese to grow food for China, and Angola is much the same. Malawi has been a bright light in all of this, but even there, dark forces have operated against us and pulled down our best efforts to raise the bar. John was blessed to hear

Malawians say ‘they must do it’, because, as a life-long practising change agent, his objective has always been to grow the people and then quietly slip out the back door without being noticed when the time is right. In the case of Malawi, John forgot this temporarily. He was still working hard to make things happen when he was told not to worry. All we can say is: ‘Thank you Jesus, it has been quite a ride’.

* * *

It has been important for us to write up these African Memories. It has been the means by which we have gained some insight into what has actually been going on in our lives. Prior to our calling to work as the Lord’s agents in Africa in 1975, our life could have been considered ‘successful’. Strangely, the things that the Lord has asked us to do in later years that followed have failed to produce the results that we might have expected. In Africa, a Christian literature program had a period of spectacular success and then imploded. A training exercise Byson Mpinganjira and John developed in Zomba had seven wonderful years and then faded from view. A program of economic development in Malawi, that had great hope of success, failed through lack of capital.

Some people will argue that these programs could not have been from the Lord if they failed. We understand that we can fool ourselves into believing that we are on the right track only to find we have either deceived ourselves or been deceived by devious demons. But worldly failure is not a sign of God failing, Did Jesus fail because he was executed at age 33. The Holy Spirit, has been on the planet for 2 000 years; has the world become a better place to live in because of that? Demons still occupy most of God’s land and anti-God human agents are everywhere, in large part controlling human affairs. Has God failed because the world is in a mess?

These days, God is moving sovereignly and the people of God are being called to live in the secret place of the Most High (Psalm 91:1). In that position we find ourselves seated in heavenly places and able to observe God at work in these end times. When we see massive bushfires across Australia, we know that God is making a statement about 90 000 babies being murdered by abortion each year. When the bushfires are followed by massive rainfall across the country, after years of drought, we see that God is still sending rain on the just and unjust. Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are rising by 1.75ppm each year at God's command; the world is greening and food supplies are increasing. As much as we would like to see the Kingdom of God win through in the political and social arenas of life in this old fallen planet, it looks like God is more interested in preparing His sons to live with him in a new heaven and a new earth where His objectives will be the order for the day. We can't wait!

PUBLICATIONS BY JOHN POTTER

THE WAY THINGS ARE

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

THE CARBON STORY

TRAVELS IN AFRICA

PLANET EARTH

BUSINESS AND THE COMMON MAN

THE WORLD OF PLANTS

CARBON WORKSHEETS FOR SCHOOLS

SELF MANAGEMENT

THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

AFRICAN MEMORIES (with Judy)