



## Constructing buildings, building people



*Two of the new staff houses under construction at the J-Life site, funded by The Kerusso Trust*

**Over the past three years, The Kerusso Trust has partnered with J-Life Ministries to construct a Training Centre for church leaders in Malawi. Jonathan Groves, Director of The Kerusso Trust, reflects upon some parallels with the Bible books of Ezra and Nehemiah.**

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe God's calling of several key leaders in successive generations to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. The leaders mobilized teams of people from near and far to contribute their skills and material resources to enable each stage of His plan to be completed. God moved the hearts of local workers, far off donors, even pagan kings.

At one level this Bible story is about the physical restoration of the temple and reconstruction of the city walls. But at a deeper level it speaks of a profound

moral and spiritual rebuilding project – the repentance, redemption and renewal of God's broken people.

First, God called Zerubbabel and Jeshua to build the temple in Jerusalem with its altar as a centre for worship (Ezra 3:1-11). In 2015-16, our first construction project was Chimwemwe House, the J-Life headquarters building. This now houses the training room, library and staff offices. While J-Life is a parachurch organisation, not a church, this building is the hub for ministry. It was completed by a team of over 50 local builders and labourers led by engineer Harold. Like the temple (Ezra 6:17), it was dedicated to God's glory in a joyful celebration!

Second, God called Ezra who was a man that had 'devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees' (Ezra 7:10). Ezra taught the people and their leaders to love and apply God's Word in their daily lives. Since 2013, The Kerusso Trust

and J-Life partnership has developed the 'Learn2Serve' programme. This has given biblical training and Bibles to hundreds of rural church leaders across Malawi. Last year we also launched the 'Entrust' programme, to equip a smaller number of church leaders to become trainers of others (2 Timothy 2:2).

Third, God called Nehemiah and his team to rebuild the city walls and houses. Although temple worship and a return to God's Law were the initial priorities, they needed a robust infrastructure for the prosperity of the city and people (Nehemiah 1:3). Likewise, we are building houses for staff and security guards at the J-Life site. Completing these is key to the long-term security and sustainable operation of the site and ministry.

Ezra and Nehemiah were leaders of vision, action and persistent prayer; all three qualities were required to bring about spiritual transformation. They were also leaders of high integrity (Ezra 9:3; Nehemiah 5:14-18), not abusing their positions for personal gain. We are thankful for everyone who is partnering with us. May we all walk in the steps of Ezra and Nehemiah as we follow God's call to build His people in Malawi.



*A local bricklayer laying foundations*

# Ruth and Tara in Malawi



Ruth speaking at a Community Children's Bible Club

## In October 2017, Ruth Groves and Tara Engelmann travelled to Malawi with The Kerusso Trust.

Ruth, a trustee and one of the founders of The Kerusso Trust, spent time in Malawi with our partners, J-Life Ministries and Wingate Girls Christian School, sharing learning and discussing future developments. Tara, an Epilepsy Fieldworker from Scotland visiting Malawi for a 3<sup>rd</sup> time with The Kerusso Trust, continued her work in the villages around Blantyre, training community leaders, Community Children's Bible Club leaders, and people with epilepsy and

their carers. Ruth reflects on her first trip to Malawi for 4 years, since the early days of The Kerusso Trust.

"It was a tremendous privilege and joy to spend two weeks in Malawi with The Kerusso Trust, seeing first-hand the work of our partners. Together with Tara, I was able to speak at the Community Children's Bible Clubs, share at women's meetings, deliver training on safeguarding children with J-Life staff and visit child-headed families. From the moment I stepped off the plane in Blantyre, into the hot Malawian sun, to leaving two weeks later, my time was full, but always a blessing.

What struck me? ... the warm welcome from our Malawian hosts; a deep sense of community; the resilience, hope, even joy of people, in the face of desperate poverty and suffering; the passion and vision of the J-Life team; the sacrifice, commitment and tireless efforts of Bright Gama, Director of Wingate School, in providing education and pastoral care to girls from poor backgrounds; church leaders, passionate to make Jesus known and to bring hope and healing into broken lives; Children's Bible Club leaders willing to walk for two hours to attend training; women's fellowships seeking to reach out to the needy...

I was often taken out of my comfort zone and stretched, whether it was responding to situations of need, speaking to a group of women from Luke's gospel, or bringing a word of encouragement during a service. I prepared as well as I could but then had to depend on God; and there were often situations for which I could not prepare, but God always stepped in."

***'Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.'***  
**Psalm 115:1**

## People's lives transformed at J-Life construction site

In the three years since building projects began at J-Life Malawi with funds from The Kerusso Trust, many workers' lives have been transformed financially and spiritually. Chigonjetso Mzati, an intern with The Kerusso Trust, interviewed two women working at the construction site:

Annie Mlenga (left of photo) from Nzigala village in Blantyre, has been working at the site from the outset. She says,

"I was one of the poorest people in my area. Being a jobless widow and a mother of four, I was struggling to provide the basic needs for my family

like food and clothes. My children's health was in danger since it caused them to suffer from malnutrition. Their performance at school was affected too since they were going to school with empty stomachs and missing classes due to sickness.

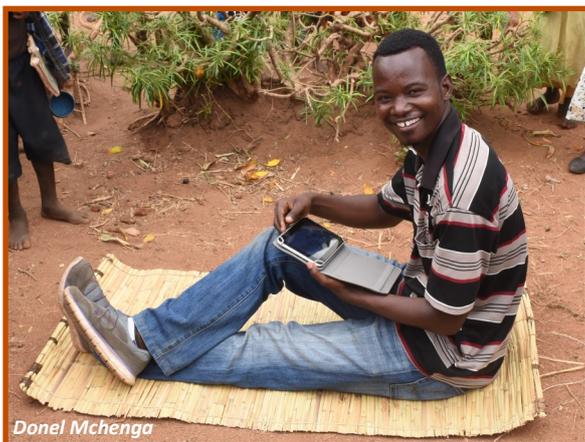
Since I started working here, my life has changed completely. I feed my family well and my children are living a happy and healthy life. Above all I thank God for changing my life spiritually. I became a born again Christian after listening to the message during the morning devotions at the site."



Another beneficiary is Annie Ngwamile (right) from the same village who was divorced by her husband and left to care for her five children alone. She is now able to pay for her daughter's school fees and has also given her life to Jesus.

# Donel Mchenga – a vision to reach children

**Donel is the Co-ordinator of the Community Children's Bible Clubs in Malawi. He is visiting the UK in March 2018, sharing with Jonathan Groves about The Kerusso Trust's work with J-Life in Malawi. Here he tells us about his journey to faith and passion for children's work.**



## **Tell us about the family you grew up in?**

I was the second born of four children. We grew up with our mum and with my stepfather. My mum and stepfather both died when I was young so I was raised by my grandparents. Then I went to live with my uncle in Blantyre when I was in secondary school.

## **How did you come to faith?**

I became a Christian because of my grandmother and mother who were both believers; these two women inspired me. When I was at secondary school I joined a baptismal class in an evangelical church where my teacher asked for my help in teaching my friends. That is when I felt that God touched me, my eyes were opened and my heart was at peace.

## **How did you first get involved in youth ministry?**

One day I heard teaching from Matthew 4, when Jesus says to his disciples, "I will make you fishers of men." God spoke to me saying I should persuade people to follow Jesus. He had given me an ability to speak to young people in a way they

could understand. I became passionate to reach the young because they are the church of tomorrow.

Then I met Connex Ijalasi, J-Life Director, and got involved in their Youth Discipleship Programme. I thank God for him and all the other people who shaped and encouraged me at that time.

After that my path led to teaching, a diploma in journalism, sports education, youth ministry in South Africa and then to Bible College.

## **So what led you to go to Bible College?**

A friend encouraged me to see that I needed to know the Bible deeply. As I was praying about it an Australian man preached at our church one day when I was interpreting and offered to fund me to go to Bible College.

## **Soon after Bible College you came to J-Life. What was your role?**

First I was assistant to Anthony, the Youth Discipleship Co-ordinator. Then, nearly two years ago, the Community Children's Bible Clubs were launched. I was involved from the beginning and am now co-ordinating children's ministry.



*Donel giving a Bible talk at one of the Clubs*

## **Why is it important to have the Children's Bible Clubs?**

In Matthew 19, Jesus says to his disciples, "Let the little children come to me, and do not deny them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Children are often not regarded as important in Malawi, but Jesus accepts and ministers to them so we should follow his example.

We should plant the word of God in them as early as possible when they are easy to teach. Also, because they are dependent, children can teach us adults so much about relying on God as well.

## **What is your prayer and vision for the clubs?**

It is my prayer for the kids to give their lives to Christ, giving them hope for the future. I want this next generation to become godly leaders and responsible members in their families, churches and society.

## **Children's Bible Clubs update**

The Community Children's Bible Clubs were launched in May 2016 and the first three clubs soon grew into eight.

Since these beginnings, there have been both challenges and blessings. Challenges in carrying and storing games equipment, finding suitable teaching resources, too few leaders for the large numbers of children, and for a short while the disapproval of some parents who expected their children to be given food at the clubs.

Yet many blessings too: 2017 saw a second group of young leaders being identified and trained. One leader was so inspired that he has started at Bible College, and his wife has replaced him as a leader! Children are hearing Bible stories, singing, learning memory verses, and enjoying games. And mums and dads listen from a distance too.

Donel has tackled these challenges with enthusiasm - sharing the vision for the clubs with community leaders, training and supporting the leaders, and planning launch events for April when the clubs reopen after the rainy season.

By the end of the year, 1500 children were attending the eight clubs in total. "The numbers are growing simply because the children are enjoying the clubs," explains Donel.

# “I want to be part of this ...”

People in Malawi are so open to hearing the Gospel message and receiving Christ. Hundreds of new churches are starting every year with thousands of new believers. But as 90% of church leaders are untrained, especially in rural areas, helping young Christians to grow in their faith is a huge challenge.

Rev Wallace Kabango has served as a senior pastor in Malawi for the last 16 years and was previously in national church leadership. In 2017, he attended the ‘Entrust’ training of trainers programme as a participant, and also as the teacher of one of its modules. Pastor Kabango is keen to join the ‘Learn2Serve’ team this year as a volunteer trainer. He says, **“I want to be part of this.** ‘Learn2Serve’ is a wonderful gift to the Malawian church.”

***“I am delighted to be part of the training team of ‘Learn2Serve’ because first, it brings people into the Kingdom of God and second, there is such a great need in the land for trained church leaders.”***

*(Pastor Wallace Kabango)*

It is not difficult to plant a church in Malawi. A church may send a team of 50 members to a remote village, hold evangelistic meetings and door-to-door visits on Friday and Saturday, and then plant a new church, called a Prayer House, on the Sunday morning.

Sometimes funerals may also lead to



Wallace Kabango teaching at ‘Entrust’

new church plants. Pastor Kabango explains, “Recently, I went to a village for a funeral. Afterwards, two men gave their lives to Christ and asked us to start a Prayer House. I returned a week later to find over 30 men and women wanting to receive Christ and join the church – I was amazed! Now we are sending someone there to preach every Sunday, there are 40 people attending baptismal classes, and they have built a grass church building for themselves.”

Faced with the challenges of poverty and suffering, people need to be rooted in good soil or they wither (Mark 4:14-20). Yet many churches that hold evangelistic campaigns are not equipped to offer follow-up and nurture.

Wallace continues: “God is blessing us. People are turning to Christ. But what limits the growth of these young Christians is the lack of trained people who can make them into disciples, not just converts.”

So many rural church leaders in Malawi have never attended any Bible training. Pastor Kabango explains that when the church leaders have not themselves been trained, it is so easy, unwittingly, for false and harmful teaching to creep into churches. “When I ask these church leaders about training they often say that they would love to go to Bible school but cannot afford the fees or to be away for long from their families.”

‘Learn2Serve’ gives a basic ‘tool-kit’ of Bible and ministry training, delivered in short blocks out in rural locations. “The Malawian church faces so many challenges,” says Wallace, “but if ‘Learn2Serve’ can be expanded then some of these problems can be solved. **That is why I want to be part of this.**”

The Kerusso Trust and J-Life share the vision to develop a second training team, based in Lilongwe, the capital city, to extend the reach of ‘Learn2Serve’ into the Central Region of Malawi.

## How you can help:

**Pray:** We produce a monthly prayer diary by email, post and on Facebook. Let us know if you’d like to receive this.

**Do:** Offer your time and skills to help with an aspect of the work in the UK, or maybe hold a fundraising event. Contact us to know more.

**Go:** Consider joining a team going to Malawi to give training to the community or church leaders.

**Give:** You can give to the work of The Kerusso Trust by cheque, bank transfer or online

## How you can give:



## The Kerusso Trust is a member of:



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