

Spring 2007 Newsletter

The Rt. Rev. Christopher Boyle
Bishop of Northern Malawi

The World Mission Committee
Of the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth



The Anglican Diocese
of Northern Malawi

Youth Conference in Mzuzu

“Alleluia!” Henry Mankhowe’s voice is scratchy and tired, but his smile undimmed as he greets the gathering of young people on the last day of the Youth Conference. There is no doubt that it has been a success. Three hundred and fifty voices shout their approving “Amen” in response.

Plans began in February of 2006 for this week-long gathering held at the end of November. It has been three years since the last Youth Conference. It is a big undertaking to stay within an attainable financial budget while feeding and providing accommodations for representatives from every parish youth group in the Diocese. In the early stages, only 10 representatives from each of the 18 parishes were planned for, with the decision to house the approximated 180 youth in Mary Mount Girls’ Secondary School in Mzuzu. In the end, 350 came!

The Youth Groups themselves raised funds for transportation and contributed food, often in the form of maize. When numbers overflowed the space at the school, members of St. Mark’s Church, Mzuzu, opened their homes. During the week, electricity failed and water dried up, but no one complained. The school matron was even astonished at how well everything was cared for.

Over 40 delegates from Usisya walked for six hours on rough and difficult roads to be able to participate in the conference, as transportation from their lakeshore home is infrequent and expensive. Fr. Brighton Chitowe and his wife had celebrated their marriage only the Saturday before, but were determined to be active participants in such an important event. They were offered a room to themselves, but declined, and slept separately in the men’s and women’s dormitories on mats on the floor. Sadly, representatives from one isolated parish didn’t make it. A poor harvest and great distance did not make it possible to raise the funds necessary for travel. There is a spirit of determination, a desire for togetherness, and a dedication in the organisers to overcome all difficulties that are tangible.

Perhaps a particularly moving occasion was on December 1st, when the Conference commemorated

World AIDS Day. Not one of the delegates will be unaffected by the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic at some point in their lives, and some will even find themselves living with the disease. While the Day was used to learn, discover and share information on HIV/AIDS it was also used to commemorate those whose lives had been so drastically changed by the virus.

There is no doubt that this was a major event, a source of encouragement to the many delegates who have returned to their parishes with a deepened sense of belonging to the wider Church and a strengthened determination to face the many challenges of their daily lives as active members of the Body of Christ. Delegates are dedicated to serve the Church and the community and are determined to build bridges between the generations.



Youth Commemorate World AIDS Day

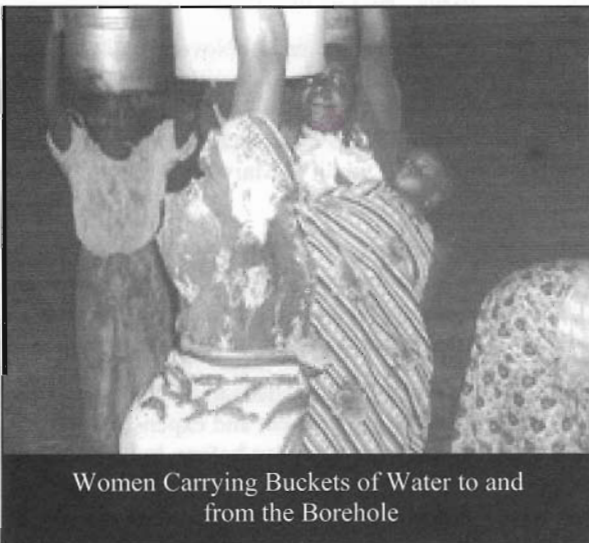
Facts about Youth in Malawi:

- Youth refers to individuals ages 13-40. It is thought that youth cannot contribute to a decision-making process with the church elders until they are over 40. Until recently, it was not possible to be a priest until age 40.
- Older people shout at youth, and youth are thought to be rude if they speak.
- Proportionally to the population, there are many more youth in Malawi than in the UK or the US.
- To attend a church youth event, youth must often travel long distances and provide their own food.
- In rural areas in particular it is especially difficult for young women to participate in youth events. They are expected to stay home and help with the running of the household.

Mfula Borehole Saves Lives!

Henry Mankhowe returned from a week long visit to Mgoza, Mfula, and Kanjuchi. He went to encourage young people in their very embryonic Youth Groups.

These three places are far from the tarmac road and make up a parish newly carved out the sprawling parish



Women Carrying Buckets of Water to and from the Borehole

of Mzimba. The villagers do not see their priest often. Mgoza is fortunate to have a catechist who has stayed for a long time and a Primary School with the full complement of eight Standards (grades). Nevertheless, in spite of four purpose-built houses, Mgoza cannot attract new teachers to boost the three staff members who share the teaching. When asked how his trip had been, his reply was "Horrible!" He was not complaining about the miles he had to walk in the hot sun between stations, but the state of the water at Mfula.

Mfula had a borehole drilled some time ago in a sandy river bed which had quickly failed. At the time of Henry's visit, men had dug holes 12 and 15 feet deep with rough boughs pushed across so that the women, some very pregnant, some with small babies on their backs, could climb down to gather water. The water was a rich mahogany color and Henry had to strain it through his shirt before he could even begin to think it

suitable to boil for drinking. The water seeped slowly in to the bottom of the hole. It could take an hour of scooping with a flat plate to fill a bucket. Women waited far into the night for one bucket of barely palatable water. Any other water source was too far away. When asked if people were getting ill, one man said, "Everyone."

What a blessing came next! The Anglican Diocese of Northern Malawi was holding funds they had received for boreholes. There was a contractor already in the area at another site willing to undertake the work. Now the people of Mfula have a good clean supply of water, not far from the existing site, which gives signs of being a plentiful source!

Christopher Northern Malawi

All gifts to the Diocese of Northern Malawi go directly to Bishop Boyle without deduction for administrative costs. Please make checks payable to the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth, with "Northern Malawi" in the memo line.

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www.fwworldmission.org

2900 Alameda Street
Fort Worth, TX 76108