

This bulletin will focus on my recent visit to Malawi with **zm's** new Chair of Trustees Trevor Matthews and Pastor Jon Mackenzie from Lighthouse Church in Forres. We had a wonderful and very moving time. We visited three flood-affected ZEC churches in Malawi: Chirombo, Migowi and Dzinthenga. In addition, we visited ZEC churches at Chikumba and Limbuni in Mozambique that had also been affected by the severe weather.

We travelled to Chirombo and Migowi churches in the same day. We were accompanied by the inimitable pastor Isaac Mpanga, the Regional Superintendent for the South of Malawi. When we arrived at Chirombo, it seemed as if all of the church members had turned out to greet us. They were very thankful for the gifts of food and soap that they had received previously. Although the church had clearly endured great hardship, it was also so encouraging to see the incredible resilience of the church of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Although the church building at Chirombo ZEC had been destroyed by flood waters, we met the assembled church in an adjacent temporary shack - and in the shade we praised God together! The church at Chirombo is located very close to the river, and we hope to help them to purchase some land in a better location. We also proposed that, when the church members are able to rebuild the church building in the new location, **zm** would support the cost of the iron sheets. We were very thankful for the ministry of Ps Maluwati - he will be supported by **zm** for the next two years.



The ruins of Chirombo ZEC, destroyed by flood waters

We arrived in the early evening at Migowi ZEC to find the church members waiting patiently for us. Their roof and some of the supporting walls had been destroyed by the extreme weather. We held a brief service of worship as the darkness closed in around us. As we finished we looked up through the open roof and saw the most stunning array of stars. When the church at Migowi has completed the rebuilding of its walls, **zm** is committed to helping the church with the cost of new iron sheets.



The temporary Chirombo ZEC church, adjacent to the ruins of the old church building

We visited Dzinthenga ZEC just before Jon flew back to the UK. This church was built in 1912! It was different from the others that we had visited - the building had not been damaged by the extreme weather or by flooding. Nonetheless, the people at Dzinthenga had clearly suffered a great deal of loss as a result of the weather conditions. About 175 church members joined us as we held a church service (on a Tuesday!). Afterwards, there was an opportunity for the pastor and the elders to share their challenges. They were very grateful for the assistance that they had received, but were concerned that a small number of their members had missed out on the distribution of emergency supplies. Simon Chikwana agreed to arrange to return to ensure that no one was overlooked. We also agreed to provide some church members with pairs of goats to enable them to earn an income for themselves. The church

agreed to construct small shelters to protect the goats at night – this is a pre-requisite for our support and demonstrates that the recipients are serious and truly committed to owning and caring for the goats.

After Jon returned to the UK, Simon Chikwana, Trevor Matthews and I visited North West Mozambique, basing ourselves with the leaders of Zambezi Evangelical Church (ZEC) Mozambique in Vila Ulongwe. We visited two churches which had been damaged by the torrential rain and gale force winds. In this region most damage had been caused by the force of driven rain on brick walls. Cement is incredibly expensive in most parts of Africa, so builders often compromise and use clay-like mud (or “dambo”) as mortar. Sadly, this material is not water-resistant and this had led to collapse of a number of church structures.

Our first visit in Mozambique was to Chikumba ZEC: this is a prayer house of the nearby “station” or parent church at Mtenga Wabalame. The Chair of ZEC Mozambique is responsible for this church. The church had been subjected to four days of continuous heavy rainfall and heavy winds in January, which had destroyed most of its side walls and its thatched roof. Once the fellowship at Chikumba has mobilised itself to mould and bake the bricks, and provide the roof timbers needed to rebuild the church, **zm** will provide them with iron roofing sheets.



The church members at Chikumba ZEC

Our final visit to a weather-affected church was to Limbuni ZEC. Their pastor Christavo Chambwinja is one of the **zm**-supported churchplanters in Mozambique. He receives a monthly allowance to help him and his family to survive and concentrate on evangelism and churchplanting. The church at Limbuni was only partly built when the storms hit, causing one wall to collapse. The church members here appeared to be less severely affected than their Malawian neighbours. They are likely to be rebuilding the wall soon and **zm** should then be able to support the cost of new iron sheets for the church roof.



A meeting with the church at Limbuni ZEC

Our visit has been very helpful and enabled us to focus on medium and long-term support: providing churches with iron sheets to help rebuilding; purchasing land where the original site is unsustainable; and implementing income-generating schemes (usually pairs of goats). But we will also need to “be watchful”. After the torrential rains in Malawi and Mozambique there was an extended dry period. As a result, the maize yield is likely to be unusually low. There is a very real concern that this may lead to a severe food shortage in the coming months.

Brief Prayer points:

- Please give thanks for a successful and safe visit to Malawi and Mozambique.
- Give thanks for the resilience of the Lord’s church despite all the difficulties and setbacks.
- Please pray for continued wisdom to discern how flood relief funds should be used.
- Please pray that widespread famine later this year would be averted.

Yours in Christ

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