

**Robert Gideon of the CFCM Committee writes:**

Dear Brethren,

We thank God for CFCM's ministry of reaching out to the less privileged over the festive season. How appropriate, since it is the time when we remember and thank God for the precious gift of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, whose first coming to the world is celebrated during Christmas by Christians through out the world.

We read of the announcement of the birth of Jesus by the angel to Joseph: **"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel - which means God with us"** (Matthew 1: 23). God's love for humanity is seen in how He did not withhold His only beloved Son, but freely gave Him so that others could be brought into His kingdom.

As Christians we should demonstrate God's love to those who are in need by sharing with them whatever we have, and this should be accompanied by the preaching of the Gospel message. Let us encourage one another that God is always with us, no matter what our circumstances.

May the good Lord make His face shine upon you, as you demonstrate His love to others. Amen!

**PRAYER POINTS**

- Following on from our visitation to child-headed families, we feel we need training ourselves in how to counsel and support these children. Pray for us as we explore this more.

- Remember the young families visited by CFCM at Christmas, struggling to survive and living in real hardship.
- Given the urgent need for people to recognise and take action when they see child abuse, pray for CFCM as we seek ways to spread our training and to give more support to child victims.
- Pray for Malawi's school teachers as, with very limited resources, they try to make up for lost time with a shortened academic year ahead of them.
- Pray for the victims of rape and child abuse, and the many young girls who have become pregnant or forced into early marriage.
- We thank God for the support that comes through Zambesi Mission. Pray that support for ZM will recover after the difficulties of coronavirus, so that all of their partners in Malawi, including CFCM, can run a full programme in 2021.



**zambesi mission**  
and His church in Malawi and northern Mozambique



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**RESPONDING TO THOSE IN NEED**

CFCM finished 2020 with a Christmas outreach to child-headed families linked to our Bible clubs. There are many orphaned children in Malawi. Their parents have often died young from poor health and nutrition, or a hard life, or from the dangers on the Malawian roads. But a large part of the orphan problem is the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the consequences of which are still felt in every community. Some of the children left behind are cared for in orphanages and some by their extended family. But many orphans are just left to fend for themselves, with no aid from the government. Find out how CFCM brought some Christmas joy to these vulnerable child-headed families facing untold pressures.

Also in this bulletin we report on some of the consequences of coronavirus on the children of Malawi and how CFCM intends to respond to this.

## CHILD-HEADED FAMILIES

CFCM's team leader Elevate Mizinga understands fully the challenges that child-headed families face. She was only 20 years old when her parents were killed in an accident and she had to care for six younger siblings. She tells us, "to be a child-head of a family is not a simple life. It needs self-control, perseverance, a passion for the children and God's intervention. The main challenges are lack of food, school fees, accommodation and lack of protection. To provide for the family, the child-head needs to be hardworking - to start a small business or to find small jobs like washing clothes and digging gardens. Sometimes it feels like the world is not a good place to live, with no future and no way out of the situation. Every day brings more stress. The child-head feels very alone in the world, and has no one to counsel them or support them mentally."

## THE CHRISTMAS OUTREACH

CFCM visited ten families, leaving with them gifts of maize, eggs, cooking oil, school supplies and soap. We encouraged them from the Word of God, and prayed with them for strength.

Shiponia, pictured on the front, is nine years old. We found her caring for her five younger siblings, while her older sister was off searching for food. Their parents died three years ago.

Ndaziwona and Maria Phodogoma, aged 15 and 20, have been looking after their younger brothers for seven years. During that time, both girls became pregnant and there are now two more children to care for. Sadly, this is a common problem when there is no parental care and guidance. The boys were at school when we visited, but paying school fees and buying school uniforms for them is



difficult. Their tiny house is poorly thatched, and they sleep on empty bags since they have no reed mats or blankets. Praise God, as we shared the Gospel with Ndaziwona and Maria, both gave their lives to the Lord.

## CONSEQUENCES OF CORONAVIRUS

The great number of child-headed families is one of the long-term consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Malawi in the 1990s. When the coronavirus pandemic arrived in Malawi in 2020 there was understandably fear of more devastation and long-lasting suffering. However, we praise God that Malawi has been spared the worst effects of coronavirus. At the end of the year, the total number of cases recorded was 6,202 (based on very limited testing capacity) and 187 deaths.

Nevertheless, there has been an impact on the children of Malawi, mainly as a result of the schools being closed from March till October. Education effectively stopped, since access to computers, digital TV services and internet is so limited. Even when schools reopened in October, children attended in shifts to accommodate social distancing, so progress has been slow. Although children were able to sit their final exams in November, there was not enough time for teachers

to adequately complete the syllabus or give worthwhile feedback. Inevitably pass rates have dropped greatly, with most children having to repeat the whole academic year. Nationwide, the gulf between the rich and poor has widened.

There have also been social consequences. Teachers have noticed a lack of discipline and good character among students who have gone for so long without any spiritual input into their lives. Children living in orphanages were sent back to their home villages to be cared for by distant relatives, who were struggling to support themselves. Another tragic result of the school closures was the huge number of young girls who became pregnant during that time. This will have a long term effect on their lives, since they will not be able to go back to school and complete their education unless there is some intervention to help them. The numbers of cases of rape and child abuse have also risen during the year while children have been at home, with devastating life-long consequences for those who have suffered.

## CFCM'S RESPONSE

CFCM hopes to run a full programme of Sunday school teacher training seminars in 2021. We are aware of the urgent need to train people about safeguarding and child protection. We are looking for ways to widen this training beyond our seminars. Not all Bible clubs have resumed yet because of the tight schedules in schools. We are very keen to start reaching all children with the Gospel again, to restore their spiritual lives and teach them Christ's ways. Please pray for our ministry as our country recovers from the pandemic. Pray also that children will put their hope in God and their lives in His hands.