

Robert Gideon of the CFCM Committee writes:

Dear Brethren,

In Matthew 8: 23 - 27 we read of something that happened to Jesus and His disciples. Everything had been completely calm when they set out across the Sea of Galilee in a boat, but suddenly a terrible storm arose and the waves crashed over them. Jesus was sleeping in the midst of a great storm.

The disciples knew where to go in the midst of their challenges. They woke Jesus up and asked him to save them, because they were afraid of drowning. In v28 we read: **"Then Jesus got up and ordered the winds and waves to stop, and it became completely calm"**.

Sometimes in life, everything is calm and going well. Then from nowhere we suddenly encounter problems. Blessed are those who are with Jesus in the midst of any challenge, for they are in safe hands. Jesus deals with the root cause of our challenges. The waves on the lake were caused by the wind, and Jesus had to rebuke the wind first, before he could tell the waves to stop.

May the Lord encourage and strengthen us all in these difficult times that our world is going through, as a result of coronavirus. Believers have the good God, who is bigger than the challenges we face in life.

May the Lord bless you and make his face shine upon you all. Amen!!

PRAYER POINTS

- Pray for all those who, like Simeon, Yamika, Elness, Gazen and Dula, are running CFCM Bible clubs. Pray that they will know God's hand on their ministry and be encouraged to continue, so that many children will come to Christ.
- Pray for guidance as CFCM explores ways they can deepen the faith of those teaching children, especially matrons and patrons of Bible clubs.
- Pray that the CFCM safeguarding training will encourage the church in Malawi to play its part in protecting children from abuse and exploitation.
- Some measures have been introduced by the Malawi government to minimize the spread of coronavirus, such as closure of schools. This will impact the ministry of CFCM. Pray for God's protection in the coming days.



LATEST NEWS FROM CFCM BIBLE CLUBS

Recently we have been finding out from our trainers and sub-committee members what has been happening in CFCM Bible clubs around the country of Malawi. It is impossible to visit all the clubs that are taking place as a result of CFCM training, but we are thankful to those who send us reports on how things are going. Those who run these clubs face many challenges. They often work alone without any financial support. But it is so heartening to see their commitment to children's ministry and to know that they are doing what they can in their corner of Malawi.

We have also received some feedback following the introduction of safeguarding training in CFCM seminars. In our last issue we explained the background to this and how it is a topic that few discuss. It would appear that CFCM has certainly started the conversation. The signs are there that it will lead to action.



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CFCM BIBLE CLUBS AROUND THE COUNTRY

Our report from **Mchinji** has been written by two young men: **Simeon and Yamika**, who are pictured on the front cover with Joseph Jeke and Elevate Mizinga. They were trained to be trainers back in 2016. Their enthusiasm for reaching the children of Mchinji with the Gospel shows itself in their plan to work through all the primary schools in their area, systematically establishing Bible clubs in every one - all at their own expense. So far they have set up 32 Bible clubs. These clubs are attended by an amazing 95% of the pupils at each school.

Simeon writes: “Both students and teachers are testifying to the importance of the Bible club in their lives.” One student, 13 year-old Vanessa who is in Standard 7 at Waliranji Primary School said, “I was doing my education without knowing anything about my spiritual life. I took the step to join the Bible club, I learnt a lot how God can save me, and then I decided to receive Jesus as my personal saviour. As of now I know how to pray and I share the good news with my friends wherever I am”.

At each school they have been able to find teachers who are willing to act as matrons and patrons of the club, keeping it going after Simeon and Yamika have moved on to another school. However these teachers have not been trained in explaining the Gospel to children, indeed some are not even Christians. This is not too surprising given that even in churches in Malawi many of those appointed to be Sunday school teachers are not born again believers. So Simeon and Yamika want 2020 to be the year in which they meet together with all the matrons and patrons - to encourage them in the Word of God, to give them ongoing discipleship and teach them how to share the Gospel with children.

Elness was trained as a CFCM trainer in 2018, and she has been reflecting on the situation she finds in **Mzimba** in the Northern Region. She is running her own Bible club and each time they meet she sees new children attending. But overall her observation is that few parents are serious about the Word of God - so they are not sending their children to church or encouraging them to attend Bible clubs. She asks: “Pray that God should give them a heart of devoting themselves to Jesus and the church”.

Gazen, one of the new 2019 trainers, reports that the five CFCM Bible clubs in **Phalombe** are doing very well, receiving new members every week. Numbers attending vary from 70 to over 200. The leaders are particularly encouraged when they see parents bringing their children along. It was children from these clubs in Phalombe who suffered from the cyclone in March 2019. CFCM supporters helped provide blankets and school uniforms. At the time of writing, these families continue to struggle with hunger, but are hopeful of a good harvest to relieve their plight.

Dula, from **Chikweu** was trained as a trainer in 2015. He is seeing encouraging spiritual growth in the children attending his Bible club. The changes in their lives are impacting the community, to the extent that more parents are bringing their children along. This is all the more surprising given that Dula’s area is strongly Islamic, so generally there is resistance to Christian children’s ministry.



THE IMPACT OF SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

Following the inclusion of safeguarding training into the CFCM syllabus for Sunday school teachers, many are telling the team that their eyes have been opened to their responsibilities.

One teacher in **Mwanza** said, “I have been a Sunday school teacher for many years, but I never had in mind the fact that we as church should stand to protect children. We have been aware of child abuse, but people in Malawi often say the problem is with the child. Now we have learned that kids have been abused but there is no one to stand for them. It is time to stand and take action against this madness.” On the same occasion one pastor commented, “the Government of Malawi is now encouraging churches to teach their people about child protection, but the church always sees this as a secular issue. Now that CFCM is bringing this to our Sunday school teachers, we are very thankful because it has come at a time when the church is failing to respond to child abuse and exploitation.”

The new course has also helped teachers to recognize the signs of abuse. In **Tchoda** one teacher explained, “we have been experiencing some other strange behaviours from the children we teach, but we were failing to identify that those changes could be the outcome of the abuses that children are facing in their homes. Now we have been made aware, we will be able to take a step by helping the children in their situation.” At the end of this particular seminar, all the community Bible club leaders agreed to take action against child abuse and exploitation happening in their area.