

Robert Gideon of the CFCM Committee writes

Dear Brethren,

In the book of Deuteronomy chapter 11, we hear of the commandments, decrees and laws that God gave the new generation who were about to enter the Promised Land. Hear what the Lord said through Moses; **"But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end"** (Deuteronomy 11: 11-12).

These two verses contain promises of God's providence, care and presence. He would provide rain for the land, so that the people could have plenty of food. He also assured them of His presence throughout the year. May the Lord provide and care for you, from the beginning of this year to its end. He is the God who is always there for us. What an encouragement, that we can approach His throne of grace with confidence.

May the Lord make His face shine upon you.
Amen!

PRAYER POINTS

- The programme for 2018 includes at least 6 CFCM training seminars, but pray that many churches will take responsibility for organising seminars for the team to facilitate. Many more teachers can be trained when the churches cover the cost of running the seminars themselves.

- The programme also includes visits to new Bible clubs that have been established as a result of CFCM training. Pray that these visits will bring great encouragement, and that we will be able to supply some resources to each new club.
- It is an uphill struggle finding financial support from within Malawi, mainly because of the prevailing cultural attitude towards children's ministry. Pray for opportunities to challenge and change priorities within the church, and that more Malawians will take ownership of this ministry.
- Pray for Ruth MacBean as she promotes the work of CFCM within the UK: that new supporters will be found to uphold the work in prayer and in giving; that people will be inspired to help in creating visual aids and funding subsidised Bibles; that there will be openings in schools, Sunday schools and children's clubs for Ruth to use the work of CFCM to teach children in the UK about world mission and the Gospel message.



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and His church in Malawi and northern Mozambique



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zambesi mission, York Baptist Church, Priory Street, York, YO1 6EX
TEL 01904 674 748 office@zambesimission.org
www.zambesimission.org

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PASSIONATE ABOUT CHILDREN'S WORK

In May 2015 Ruth MacBean reported on her first few months of working with CFCM, and the contrasts she saw between children's ministry in Malawi and children's ministry in UK. Now back in the UK, Ruth continues to be in regular contact with the team, and to speak of the work of CFCM as she serves in the UK as a Zambesi Mission representative. In this bulletin she looks back over her three years working alongside CFCM in Malawi, and reflects on the things that have left a lasting impression on her.

Working alongside Elevate Mizinga, Joseph Jeke and Lackson Makawa, there is no doubting the passion they have for children's ministry, and their willingness to do whatever it takes to reach children with the Gospel, or equip others to do so. But the very great need is for more people to share this passion and be equipped.

In many churches in Malawi, as in other African countries, children are not regarded as important; as a result those who work with them can be undervalued. Very few people seem to be concerned about what the children are being taught, and certainly no resources or funds are set aside for children's work. These are the challenges Elevate, Joseph and Lackson have faced in their own experience, and the ones that face the Sunday school teachers they train. An important part of CFCM's ministry is in building up children's workers' spirits, impressing on them how valuable and important their work is and encouraging them to keep going even when they have little or no support. The team speak to pastors' fraternals with this same message: encouraging the pastors to take an interest in Sunday school, to oversee what the children are being taught and to ensure that Sunday school teachers are properly trained. They welcome every opportunity to promote children's ministry and to train future pastors in Bible college, in the hope of turning this tide of disinterest.

Meanwhile, CFCM keeps going with the task of running teacher training seminars across Malawi, going to places where no-one else will go to train the Sunday school teachers. Elevate, Joseph and Lackson often return from a trip feeling physically exhausted, from being bumped up and down for hours on bad roads in a bus with no suspension, or walking for miles to reach a place which can only be reached on foot, and bitten by bed-bugs at their stop-over. Sometimes they spend many consecutive weekends away from their homes and young families, rather than turn down an opportunity

to train others. Last minute cancellation, because something 'more important' has been organized, or poor attendance at a seminar, is discouraging, but does not stop them from carrying out the same training with the same passion to the few who have maybe walked miles to be equipped.

This commitment, this tireless giving of themselves despite discomfort and fatigue, this determination regardless of discouragements, has been an inspiration to Ruth as she has worked alongside CFCM. It has been an eye-opener to share in their experiences: to laugh together at the funny side of things; to rejoice together at the news of people who have been inspired to start up new Bible clubs on their own; a joy to go up the mountain with the team to pray for the ministry; it continues to be a privilege to serve CFCM by telling others about the work.



Ruth has also seen with her own eyes how great the need is for the training CFCM offers. She has travelled the length and breadth of the country with the team. It is often very clear that many of those entrusted with the responsibility of nurturing the future church, not only lack the

skills of age-appropriate teaching but also have little knowledge of the Bible. Worse still, some have no personal relationship with Christ themselves. Whilst it has been wonderful to be present where teachers suddenly see their own need of a Saviour and give their hearts and lives in commitment to Christ, it does make one wonder about the large numbers of Sunday school teachers who are not being reached by CFCM's training.

It soon became apparent to Ruth that the other essential missing element among Sunday school teachers was the Bible. In many rural churches only the pastor and a few members own a Bible – so it begged the question, what were the children being taught, if their teachers did not even own a Bible? There is also a huge need for teaching materials, since very few denominations have a syllabus, and next to nothing is commercially available in the national language, Chichewa. So CFCM have developed lesson plans and teaching guides in Chichewa, in addition to a few visual aids, but even when sold at cost price few teachers can afford these.

The emphasis in the seminars is on how to bring the Bible stories alive using oral story-telling techniques, with lots of repetition to make sure the children understand and are attentive, and above all how to incorporate the message of salvation clearly. It has certainly made Ruth wonder whether here in the UK that core message gets missed out, amidst all the visual aids and technology we need to use to keep our children interested. And how much do we value and support the children's workers in our own churches?