Malawi – Heart-warming & Heart-breaking

As many of you are aware in July/Aug there was a joint mission trip from St Luke’s and St Lawrence, Abbots Langley, of 16 people who went to St Luke’s Hospital, Malosa, Malawi. As churches we had supported the hospital in 2012 by raising the money to build a new maternity unit at one of the clinics supported by St Luke’s Hospital. The aim of the trip was to further build relationships with the community there, and also gain a greater understanding of the needs and lives of the people. I can safely say that for many of the group it was one of the most enriching and challenging experiences of our lives.

Malawi is a beautiful country with mountains, lakes, wildlife and scenery to match & better many parts of the world. Malawi is called the “Warm Heart of Africa” because the people are so warm, generous, friendly, and welcoming. Everywhere we went people wanted to greet us, to get to know us, to learn better English from us, and to hear of where we were from and about our lives. We were welcomed in the community, at the church we attended on Sunday, at the hospital, in the nurseries in the community supported by the hospital, and where-ever we went by children and people shouting and waving and smiling, and by the local people working alongside us and talking to us.
However the reality of going to somewhere like Malawi is that not only is your heart warmed by such lovely people and glorious countryside, your heart also breaks for the needs of such a poor nation. Where-ever you go in a country like Malawi you are faced with death, disease, poverty, pain, corruption, and a lack of resources and apparent answers to the ocean of need.

Malawi was a former British colony and within the country there are a few remnants of that colonial past. But in much of the country, particularly the towns and cities, there is an air of collapsing infrastructure and economy. Malawi has no known natural resources (coal, gold, silver, diamonds, oil, etc), no real industry, and the majority of the people are subsistence farmers or fishermen. A land-locked country, about the size of the UK, it is really one of the ‘forgotten’ nations of Africa. Of the population of approximately 10 million over 2 million are HIV positive. Malnutrition, Malaria and TB, are common diseases bringing high levels of infant mortality, and a short life expectancy for most of the population.

Within the hospital there is a lack of funding and resources, so life and death choices have to be made each day between investment in the hospital (a new operating theatre, fixing the air conditioning unit in the pharmacy, etc) or buying drugs for a sick patient, who without them would die. At the local secondary school, one of the ‘elite’ schools in the country, there has been none of the agreed funding received from the government for this academic year, so there is a lack of books, sometimes the children do not eat, and the fabric of the school is collapsing.

For many of us the remarkable thing in the face of this relentless need and poverty is the faith of the people. The praise and trust in God is inspiring to see. The belief that God is sovereign and Lord, and that He hears the prayers of His people, is a real challenge to us in the UK, who have so much, but trust God is such a limited way. Some words from Habbakuk struck me as being so applicable to the people of Malawi:

“Though the fig tree does not bud, and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crops fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord”. Habbakuk 3:17-18

Our experience in Malawi as a team was both heart-warming and heart-breaking. A rich, beautiful country in scenery, joy, welcome, hospitality, and people, while at the same time an incredibly poor and harsh country in terms of poverty, lack of resources, disease, and death. The challenge we had as visitors is where do we take these mixed feelings, and where do we go when faced with this bottomless pit of need. All that we can do, perhaps taking the example of the Malawian people themselves, is to give it all over to God, otherwise the weight of pain and need would paralyse us. Our focus has to be on the promise in Christ from Revelation 21:3-5:
“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will love with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away’.”

For those of us who visited Malawi we have returned with a love of the people, a heart for the country, and a desire to do what we can to help in some small way to meet just a small part of the needs, focusing on the community of Malosa, where we now have friends and people we know. We all feel galvanised to do what we can to pray for and support that community.

Desmond Tutu, in his book “God has a dream”, wrote:

“God calls us to be his partners to work for a new kind of society where people count, where people matter more than things, more than possessions, where human life is not just respected but positively revered, where people will be secure and not suffer from fear of hunger, from ignorance, from disease, where there will be more gentleness, more caring, more sharing, more compassion, more laughter, where there is peace and not war”.

It is a vision which I’m sure many of us would agree with, and I trust and pray many of us will want to strive towards.

Thank you to those who gave so generously to the resource fund for Malawi. In the end over £5000 was raised. This money helped to make a life-saving difference in that community, including:

a) Refurbishment of the Female Ward at the hospital, closed for over 3 months
b) Repair of the air conditioning unit in the pharmacy, broken for 3 years, meaning valuable drugs were deteriorating in the heat
c) Training and resources (games, books, craft ...) for 16 nurseries associated with the hospital.
d) Contribution to life-saving drugs within the hospital.
e) Completion of a much needed second operating table
f) Provision of surgical linen to replace old, damaged, material being used
g) Tools and equipment for the hospital maintenance team to enable them to carry out general maintenance general on-site maintenance

There are many further needs in the hospital, in the local church, and within the local secondary school. We hope that as churches (St Luke’s and St Lawrence) we will be able to help meet some of these needs over the coming months and years.

Thank you again to all those who prayed for and supported the mission trip to Malawi, a heart-warming and heart-breaking experience for all who attended. Let us all see how we can further make a difference in that community. Rev’d Canon Dave Middlebrook - Vicar
For many of us September and the coming autumn represents a changing point in the year. Second perhaps to New Years, it offers us a time to reflect on the year so far and to plan for the year still ahead.

We will all hopefully had some rest over the summer period, holidaying abroad or at home or simply spending time with our families. The Scourfield’s had a slightly odd summer, having to come to terms with Juliet not going to Malawi. However as this is being written we look forward to a week on the Isle of Wight – one of our favourite places to get away from it and relax.

The idea of us each needing rest goes right back to the beginnings of the Bible. We are told of God: ‘on the seventh day he rested from all his work’ (Genesis 2:2). The idea is indeed enshrined in the fourth commandment ‘Remember the Sabbath by keeping it holy’ (Deuteronomy 5:4).

But here we are again! The long run into Christmas (sorry!). We are back to work. Our children back to school. The world is going full tilt.

It is at these points in the year that we may take the opportunity to review where we have been, what we have done and also what we want to achieve over the next few months, not only for ourselves but also for our Lord Jesus.

One of my favourite verses comes from Jeremiah. At a time when the people of God were in Exile in Babylon, as a result of their ‘disloyalty’ to God, Jeremiah speaks to them of Gods words of wisdom. (Jeremiah 6:16)

‘This is what the Lord says:

“Stand at the crossroad and look
Ask for the ancient paths
Ask where the good way is
And walk in it
And you will find rest for souls”
We use the summer holidays to recharge, to find rest. But the word of God to the people of God 2500 years ago is equally applicable to each of us today. It is applicable not just at the turning points in our year but in what we do every week and every day of our life.

Sometimes we are faced with big decisions in life, concerning family, work or our wider social life. But on a daily basis we make hundreds of decisions. In each case we stand ‘on the crossroads’. When we look forward our decisions will affect our walk with Jesus. Will we take the ‘wide path’ where the choices may seem easy but the consequence may not be what God wants for us and where there may be some regrets further down the line? Or will we take the ‘narrow path’ – the ancient path where the way is good and where there is rest for our souls?

Life is often not easy and nor sometimes are the decisions that go with it. However, as Christians we have scripture, our fellowship and our prayer life to guide and comfort us.

Also as Christians we are called to step back at times, when we encounter crossroads in our life and ask the question: is this the path God wants me to take?

As we become fully immersed in the fast flowing river of life in the coming months let us pray that the decisions we make at our individual crossroads will nudge us and others towards a more loving relationship with Jesus and in doing so expand the Kingdom of God.

And whether life is good, or tough, let us also remember those wonderful words of Jesus

‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11:28)

God bless

Dave Scourfield
Notice Board

Flowers in July were kindly donated by;

The wedding of Helen Davies & Jamie Simpson.
The wedding of Charlotte Nixson & Spencer Pearce.
Mave Knight - in memory of her husband Ted.
Sue & Bill Miller - celebrating their wedding anniversary.

In August they were kindly given by;- 

The wedding of Rosanna Hartropp & Joshua Muir.
Pat and Jack Watson - celebrating their wedding anniversary.
Max & Barbara Roberts - in memory of Eunice.
Joyce Shields - in memory of Sheila Hockey
Francis Goode - in memory of Oonagh.

Love knitting or would love to know how?

Please join us for a relaxed and friendly morning.
Tea and coffee available
Any enquires please contact the church office 01923 246161
Tuesday 16th September 11am to 12.30pm

Sunday afternoon Music Recitals at 4.30pm

Sunday afternoon recitals at St Luke’s Church will be 30 to 45 minutes in duration without interval followed by light refreshments.

September 21 Yasmin Chen Violin
October 19 Melanie Young Flute Michiko Shimanuki Piano
November 16 Teresa Whiffen Clarinet Saxophone
Weddings

On September 20\textsuperscript{th} at 2pm, Sam Boxhall and Amy Howe are getting married at St. Luke’s. Please pray for them, their exciting wedding day and most importantly their marriage.

All welcome!

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Main Sunday Morning Services – Oct 2014

Background

As many of you are aware we have been working on the recommendations from my sabbatical report over the past 18 months as our growth strategy as a church. My report suggested, from scripture, that God brings growth to his church, it is the ‘natural state’ of the church. What we really are looking for is spiritual growth, which is very hard to ‘measure’. However where people grow in faith then they are more likely to attend church more regularly, more likely to bring family and friends to church, and hence growth in numbers is a ‘crude’ measure of spiritual growth in a congregation.

While God brings growth it is our role, as the church, to provide the environment to ensure growth can happen, and also to remove any hindrances to growth. Many aspects of St Luke’s life do encourage and nurture spiritual and numerical growth, however I also highlighted other areas we needed to consider, which included:

a) Small Group network to become “Life Groups”
b) Upgrade our welcome programme and resources
c) Introduce a ‘midweek service’ to bridge the gap between holiday club and church services.
d) Introduce additional identical main morning service
e) Ensure everything we do connects with our core value of ‘making whole-life disciples’
f) Role of vicar to move to be more about leading staff team, preaching, vision, planning, prayer
g) Role of PCC and structure of Church Management to change
h) Preaching and Teaching to engage with everyday issues and require a response
i) Recruit an “Associate Vicar”
j) Be ‘intentional’ about everything we do

None of these items in themselves will bring growth, but a combination of them all, combined with the numerous other good practices of church we already have will, I firmly believe, bring growth, both spiritual and numerical. This belief is backed by subsequent reading and discussion with clergy and laity in churches in a similar position to ours, and supported by the findings of the Church of England report “From Anecdote to Evidence” (Jan 2014).
**Rationale for 2 Main Sunday Morning Services**

The need to move to two main morning services is based upon the widely held understanding that when “80% of the desirable seats in church are occupied you will not grow any further”. In addition anecdotal evidence shows that churches that have multiplied their main morning service, as well as taking other measures, have grown numerically and spiritually.

Churches approach this multiplying of services in two ways, some have two identical services and some look to have two distinctive services. My reasoning for two identical services can be summarised as:

a) The 10am service is the service that is attracting new people
b) Repeating the service puts less strain on staff in terms of preparation, preaching and music
c) If we had a more traditional service and a more informal service the tendency would be to split the congregation on a generational basis
d) By having identical services people can alternate between the two services.

I believe that over time the services will grow and will take on an identity and style based upon the people who attend, and that the services will gradually diverge and become more distinct. Initially for unity and to ease stress on resources two identical services is the preference.

From average attendance figures at St Luke’s there has been little variation in church attendance over the period 2001 to 2013, although interestingly when more space became available with the opening of the new church in 2006 the average attendance increased. Our average Sunday attendance for the 10am service in 2013 – both children and adults – was 187. Based on a seating capacity of 225 that is 83% full. It has been suggested that we put out extra chairs at the back, which we have done, but the key is ‘desirable seating’. Sitting at the back, under the balcony, where you can’t see properly is not ‘desirable’.

**Details**

In July the PCC made the decision to go ahead with two main morning services from October 2014, with a formal review early in the New Year, after 3 months of operation. Obviously we will have continual assessment of how the services are working as we go along, and may need to make some adjustments.

The current details are:
a) The two services will be 9:15am and 11:00am
b) Children and Youth provision will be provided at both services
c) The services will be identical, except where ‘special’ services occur (e.g. Parade, Baptism, Remembrance ...etc)
d) We assume that the attendance split will be ¼ to 1/3 early service and then 2/3 to ¾ for the late service – ie. Roughly 63 and 126
e) We assume that more children and youth will attend the later service
f) The same people will lead and preach at both 9:15am and 11am services
g) The 8am service will be moved into the chapel
h) The sermon at the 8am service will normally be the same as the 6:30pm service
i) There will be 1 communion service per month at the main services, and on that Sunday it will be a shorter preach
j) Coffee after the 9:15am service will be served in the hall

Conclusion

The move to two main morning services will not be easy, and will require sacrifice and hard work from all of us. It will also generate some feeling of uneasiness among some people, because change always does. It would be easier to remain as we are. However I firmly believe that God wants us to take risks and to seek to grow as a church, and as individuals. As indicated above two main services on their own will not bring about growth, however without this brave step then we are leaving in place a hindrance that will prevent growth.

Please do pray for this move and also for how you can help to support this new service pattern, as we still need volunteers to help with children’s work, youth work, warden and sidesperson duties, welcome team, and more. Please also pray that this bold step will help to support our growth strategy for St Luke’s.

“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God makes it grow .... The man who plants and man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labour. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building”

1 Corinthians 3:6, 8-9

Rev’d Canon Dave Middlebrook – Vicar
St. Luke’s Services

Tuesday 2\textsuperscript{nd} September
9.30am   Holy Communion (BCP)

Sunday 7\textsuperscript{th} September –12\textsuperscript{th} Sunday after Trinity
8.00am   Holy Communion (BCP)
10.00am   Morning Service
6.30pm   Evening Service with Prayer for Healing

Tuesday 9\textsuperscript{th} September
9.30am   Holy Communion (CW)

Sunday 14\textsuperscript{th} September - 13\textsuperscript{th} Sunday after Trinity
8.00am   Holy Communion (CW)
10.00am   Holy Communion
6.30pm   Evening Service
8.00pm   Christian Across Watford ONE HOUR @ St Mary’s

Tuesday 16\textsuperscript{th} September
9.30am   Holy Communion (BCP)
8.00pm   FOCUS

Thursday 18\textsuperscript{th} September
10.30am   Toddler Service

Sunday 21\textsuperscript{st} September – 14\textsuperscript{th} Sunday after Trinity
8.00am   Holy Communion (BCP)
10.00am   All Age Service
6.30pm   Holy Communion

Tuesday 23\textsuperscript{rd} September
9.30am   Holy Communion (CW)

Saturday 27\textsuperscript{th} September
6.00pm   Sat@StLukes

Sunday 28\textsuperscript{th} September – 15\textsuperscript{th} Sunday after Trinity
8.00am   Morning Prayer (CW)
10.00am   Morning Service & Back to Church Sunday
6.30pm   Informal Evening Service

Tuesday 30\textsuperscript{th} September
9.30am   Holy Communion (BCP)
From October 5th 2014 St. Luke’s service times will be:-

† 8am – Holy Communion or Morning Prayer in the Chapel

† 9.15am – Main Service 1 with crèche, children & youth groups

† 11.00am – Main Service 2 with crèche, children & youth groups

† 6.30pm – Evening Service

All are welcome to any service.
At St Luke’s we are approaching a “Season of Invitation”. This autumn gives us many opportunities to invite people to attend church events and activities: Sat@StLukes (27th Sept & 22nd Nov), Back to Church Sunday (28th Sept), ALPHA (Oct-Dec), Two Main Sunday Services (From 5th Oct), Mark Ritchie Event (18th Oct), Harvest (19th Oct), Light Party (31st Oct), Bereavement Service (3rd Nov), Remembrance Sunday (9th Nov), Christmas Services and Events (Throughout Dec), to name just a few.

The key to expansion and growth in the church, both numerically and spiritually, is ‘personal inviation’. Right Rev’d Paul Bayes, formerly Bishop of Hertford and recently appointed Bishop of Liverpool, writes:

“We believe that a simple invitation is a powerful way for you to introduce a friend to Christ. An invitation is natural because it begins with “Would you …”, “What about…”, “Why not…..”. It’s personal because you have a relationship with the person you’re inviting”.

The Church of England, and other denominations in the UK, have been running Back-to-Church-Sunday on the last Sunday in September for a number of years. For the last few years we have also run “Back-to-Church-Sunday” here at St Luke’s. The Church of England has now expanded the idea to “A Season of Invitation”, which includes: Back-to-Church-Sunday, Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas Starts, Christmas. Invites and literture have been introduced, and churches are being encouraged to ask church members to invite people for this ‘season of invitation’.

Who are you going to invite? Who will you give an invitation to? May I encourage you to prayerfully consider who you will invite to these different services and events over this period. The church will only grow if we all play our part, and a personal invitation from you to someone you know is part of your role as a member of the church family. As Bishop Paul goes on to say:
“This [personal invitation] is the key to the spontaneous expansion of the church – as ordinary Christians inviting an ordinary non-Christian to take a closer look at Christ”

Please look out for the invites and information about the services at the back of church, and in the church notices and during services. Perhaps a quote from John 4:42, when the Samaritan Woman brought her friends to hear from Jesus, will inspire and challenge you further:

“*We no longer believe just because of what you said: now we have heard for ourselves, and we known that this man really is the Saviour of the world*”.

I pray that the Holy Spirit will inspire and direct each one of us to boldly ask those we know to come and discover Christ for themselves during this “Season of Invitation”.

God Bless

Dave Middlebrook - Vicar

*Can we please not sing ‘Our God Reigns?’*
A meeting of the Parochial Church Council was held on July 15th. and our new curate, Chris Jones, was welcomed to his first PCC meeting.

Reports were presented on the activities and plans of the ‘People and Pastoral Care’ and the ‘Children and Youth’ working groups by their respective chairs, Christine Massey and Fran Davies, each setting out short term and five year plans for their groups and the future development of their work.

The People and Pastoral Care group has drafted a combined version of the St Luke’s Directory and the Electoral Roll to have a comprehensive list of contact details for people associated with St Luke’s, arranged a Welcomers Conference, a Welcome Lunch for newcomers and a Bereavement Service. Our church had also hosted a Bereavement Service held by the Peace Hospice. A speaker from Christians against Poverty had attended one meeting and the group would like CAP to run their course on money management at some future time and also a marriage course, the latter possibly together with All Saints Church Leavesden.

The Children and Youth group believe that having two interns (Caz and Charley) has brought great benefit and would wish to continue to have two in the future. Children’s Holiday Clubs continue to be a success, but more helpers are needed to resource these adequately and avoid restrictions on numbers attending. Prayer support was emphasised and the group plan to issue a monthly prayer sheet to all Life Groups and would like to have a dedicated Focus prayer group meeting each term. There is a continuing need to encourage ‘twenty-somethings’ to meet together for friendship and mutual support. On an associated topic, Communion for children not yet confirmed, Dave M and Jenny Stromberg have prepared a booklet setting out a short instruction course for children and parents, which after minor modification will be sent to the bishop for his approval and comment and then be available for use as and when needed.

In accordance with legislative and Diocesan requirements St Luke’s has guidelines and policies for the Care and Protection of Children and Youth as well as Equal Opportunities which must be reviewed at specified intervals. Some minor updates were approved by the PCC.

Our vicar, Dave, reviewed progress on the Mission Action Plan and proposals in his sabbatical Report, which included a proposal to hold two ‘main’ services on Sunday mornings in order to increase attendance. A paper has been produced setting out the wide range of things to be addressed to do this and after discussion it was agreed that we should hold identical services at 9.15 am and 11.00 am beginning on the first Sunday in October (5th) and continuing until Christmas and then review the situation and decide how to continue in the new year.

Peter Tindale (PCC Lay Co-chair)
The edition for October 2014 will be published on September 28th, any entries please to the church office by September 17th. You are welcome to submit an article, of not more than 450 words, to be considered for the next magazine.

If you wish to receive the St. Luke’s News regularly – either delivered to your door or emailed – please contact the Church Office (246161). Large print is also available. Alternatively, please let us know if you no longer wish to receive it.

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PLEASE NOTE (PAID) STAFF WORKING
DAVE MIDDLEBROOK off on Fridays.
NEIL BROOKES contact by text on 07778 587 414
JEREMY COOKE in Tuesdays & Wednesday mornings
JENNY STROMBERG off on Saturdays
CARYL BOXHALL in Monday, Thursday, Fridays am

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