

THE MODERATOR'S CHALLENGE 2024-25



**LET YOUR
LITTLE LIGHT
SHINE**

**BUILDING GOD'S PEOPLE THROUGH
EDUCATION IN MALAWI**

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During my visit to Malawi in the autumn, I was struck by the determination of the people, and particularly within the Church, to ensure education at all levels becomes available and accessible. We were able to see the steps from Early Childhood Development Programmes to the accredited University programmes of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) with whom the Church of Scotland have a long-standing partnership. I became very aware of the many obstacles in the way to achieving goals set by both the educational providers, the students and their parents. I evidenced a real desire and enthusiasm for education and was so taken by the steps learners (of all ages) took in their thirst for knowledge. This seemed to me to fit in well with my theme for my Moderatorial year of 'Building Together'. As much as I love a good DIY project, this theme is more about 'Building the People of God', allowing everyone at whatever level they are at to be encouraged and supported to take the next step on their journey through life.



THE RT REV DR SHAW PATERSON

LET YOUR LITTLE LIGHT SHINE

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**"I WANT TO GO TO SECONDARY SCHOOL
SO I AM WORKING HARD IN THE EVENING
TO COMPLETE MY HOMEWORK USING THE
LIGHT OF MY SOLAR LAMP FROM SCHOOL.
IT HELPS MY WHOLE FAMILY AS WE CAN
READ FROM THE BIBLE AS WE GATHER FOR
DEVOTIONS BEFORE BED."**

Joshua, aged 10



CREATING A LIGHT LIBRARY

Lighting up homes to allow children to do homework by funding a simple light library at their school can make a difference to their whole future – let's hear from one recipient.

VITUMBIKO'S STORY.

I am 10 years old and am a pupil at Thondwe Primary School in Zomba in Malawi. Malawi is in sub-Saharan Africa and so is near the equator. This means it gets dark between 6 and 7pm every day of the year. I walk to school and when I get home I help my Mum with the chores – I often go to the well to get water for her. Sometimes I look after my little brother and sister too and they like to play with me. After our evening meal, it is time for me to do my homework. In the past my parents would try to buy some kerosene or candles so I had light enough to read but these are expensive and they often can't afford them. Sometimes I would try to read by the light of the cooking fire outside the kitchen.

I want to be a nurse when I grow up but I need to get good grades so that I can go to high school and then to university. That is my dream. I want to work hard so that I can achieve this.

I was so excited when our school got a Light Library – our small solar lights are in the library of books at the school and we can borrow a light as well as a book. It has been one of my favourite times of the day when I can get both and take them home with me. Once I finish my chores, I sit at the table and do my homework. It is so good to have the brightness of the lamp in our small home – even the small children can keep playing in the shadow of it. Sometimes my Mum brings out her mending which she can see to do. After my homework, my Dad gathers us all together in the light and takes the family Bible down from the shelf and reads to us. Finally, when I curl up under my blanket, I take my story book from the library and fall asleep reading about adventures....and dream about my future as a nurse.

*name changed



"I LEARNED TO DO BASIC MATHS ALONGSIDE MY CHILD AND NOW I AM TREASURER OF THE WOMEN'S INCOME GENERATING GROUP IN THE VILLAGE."

Mercy, mother of Vitumbiko.



POWERING ZOMBA THEOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY'S POST-GRADUATE CENTRE.

Nestled in the foothills of the majestic Zomba Mountain, ZTU has high ambitions. Responding to Malawi's rapidly growing demand for postgraduate studies in theology, it enrolled its first Masters students in 2022 with new programmes in the pipeline (including PhD studies). Until now, these new scholars have been squeezed into corners of a facility that is already fully occupied by existing programmes. The University have identified the need to develop a Centre that can be tailored to support postgraduate studies.

BACKGROUND

As part of its strategic plan to advance and extend quality theological education, Zomba Theological University is embarking upon an ambitious renovation project to provide accommodation for new and expanding postgraduate programmes.

The vision is that the new Centre will become a hub of collegiality, creativity and collaboration that can generate transforming ideas and transformative leaders. The proposed development includes solar power provision and improved IT infrastructure throughout the renovated buildings to provide a variety of flexible working locations.

Energy supplies in Malawi are often erratic, are vulnerable to disruption during extreme weather and are subject to increasing prices. ZTU has existing solar power infrastructure to cover classes, administration buildings and the chapel, but not these expanded facilities.

ZTU proposes adding to the existing solar infrastructure to be able to generate, store and distribute sufficient electricity for the expanded facilities.



"I AM TRULY INSPIRED BY THE 'MODERATOR'S CHALLENGE' AND THE DECISION TO FOCUS ON EDUCATION ACCESS, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO SOLAR LIGHTING AT THE PHD CENTRE AT ZTU - ESPECIALLY AFTER HIS FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE WITH THE ELECTRICITY CHALLENGES WE FACE. THIS INITIATIVE WILL MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE TO THE LIVES OF MANY STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO STUDYING IN A CONSISTENT AND UNINTERRUPTED MANNER."

Rev Dr Taduke Chitsulu, Vice Chancellor ZTU

ABOUT THE APPEAL

The overall project has secured funding from the Church of Scotland's Salvesen Trust, and the Presbyterian Church in Canada. There are also local fundraising activities being developed by ZTU. These funds will help to redevelop the buildings. To ensure the students can make the most of their time of study, there needs to be a consistent electricity supply for lighting and internet access, something which this state of the art solar energy system will ensure once installed – and it will also be more economical than buying from the grid.

This appeal will help to keep lights shining and give students opportunity to shine too as they seek to enhance their learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT SOLARAID

SolarAid is an International UK based charity which works in many African countries. It works in Malawi through its social enterprise 'Sunnymoney'. Lights for the Light Library are sourced through them. They will provide help with any lights which have problems.

A school will get a number of small solar lights that a child may borrow - in the same way as a library book is. And in the same way as books not returned incur a fine, a light which is not returned is expected to be paid for by parents. This has meant that few lights are lost to the library.

The library allows children who want to learn in the dark evenings in Malawi to do so safely. Sometimes children use firelight, kerosene lamps and candles to do homework, all which are dangerous or expensive and many children just cannot do homework at all.

For students, access to light at night enables them to study for their exams and continue their education, creating a brighter future for all. Sunnymoney is able to provide solar panels for training institutions and schools also. This allows teachers to set and mark papers and prepare lessons. It also can support learning of boarding students too.



sunny
money 

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Solar lights for light libraries, cost around £10 per light and can be bought locally in Malawi.
- The new PhD Centre needs support to install solar power and a modern IT system which would allow students to study at anytime.
- No matter how little you can raise you will be helping to Build God's people in Malawi



HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS:

- Encourage others as they prepare to welcome Christ, the light of the world, through decorations and gifts to think of the gift of light to children.
- Sing 'This little light of mine' and share Vitumbiko's story...and
 - Have a special offering on one (or all) of the Sundays when you light the Advent candle
 - Have a special offering at watchnight
- Highlight International Day of Education on January 24 2025 with its Theme - Building a brighter future.
- Share the vision with your local school at a school assembly.
- Involve other organisations in your church and community such as youth organisations, Guild, Rotary etc.
- Be creative - let us know what you are doing to support a 'brighter future, for the people of Malawi.'



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CONTACT US:

121 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4YN

Email: cfinlay@churchofscotland.org.uk

Tel: +44(0)131 225 5722

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