

PARTNERPLAN

Gary Brough - Malawi November 2024

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Greetings from Mzuzu!

We have just returned from a busy but fruitful deputation trip to Scotland. From a base in Edinburgh, we travelled across South West and Forth Valley and Clydesdale Presbyteries. Our previous attempts at deputation tours were heavily impacted by COVID and then by presbytery changes. From Largs to Dumfries and Strathaven to Grangemouth, it was great to have the opportunity to connect with so many congregations.



As we travelled, I thought often of Paul's letters to the church during his missionary journeys. The trip reminded me that he wrote both from his various places of Gospel service and to the local church with awareness of its challenges. It was encouraging, therefore, that that came out in conversation during our visits. There were questions about what the church in Scotland might learn from the church in Malawi in terms of engaging with youth, working in clusters of congregations and the role of lay ministry.



We were cheered to find many congregations and individuals excited about re-engaging with the work of the global church. I'm hopeful that these conversations will continue. For different reasons, we share some of the same challenges, and there is much we can prayerfully share as we work for the sake of the Gospel. Meeting so many people for the first time meant that conversation often turned to how we ended up in Malawi in the first place – how did we hear and respond to God's call? Such exchanges are reinvigorating, a reminder that "Thus far the LORD has helped us." – I Samuel 7:12

This was an important truth to hold onto as we returned to Malawi. The convenience of online shopping and well-stocked supermarket shops are a bit bewildering when we visit the UK, but we quickly fall into their comfortable thrall. Stepping off the plane in Lilongwe, we were embraced by the hot sun of November. Temperatures are high, politics are fragile, fuel is in short supply, and prices are rising. These are the familiar patterns of life in Malawi. At times, we find comfort in only choosing from seasonal produce, considering the privilege of having fuel in the tank, and going to bed early because the power has gone out. But there are days we count these as frustrations, so it is helpful to re-remember that these are all part of the life and work to which we feel God has called us.

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Malawi has once again been enduring a fuel crisis. Supplies are down to a fraction of regular capacity due to the struggling economy and a shortage of foreign exchange. This story is all too familiar, and signs point to further currency devaluations and price rises.

Much of the world news suggests there has only been one political struggle happening in the world. We all know that isn't true. It's hard to know how to pray in a situation like this. When do we get to the point where economic means, leadership integrity, and politics will align? In many ways, Malawi's hands are tied by global markets, national debt, and an

increasingly climate-fragile economy.

"Therefore, I say to you, do not worry about your life" (Matthew 6:25)

So, we pray that we don't worry about fuel because our lives are in Good Hands, especially for households whose livelihoods are pushed to the breaking point. We pray for leaders (in Malawi and internationally) who don't worry about their political and financial lives so that room can be made for the needed change. We pray for the safety of those who work at the pumps and are trying to keep tensions under control.

The fuel scarcity means local travel is off the cards for the short term. It gives me time to regroup and plan the next steps for various projects. It's good to be around Mzuzu as the children return to school and prepare for their International Day celebration and Christmas show. Morven celebrated her 7th birthday over the weekend, and Eilidh's 11th is just around the corner. Fuel or no fuel, things don't stay still for long!

Until we meet again, may the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. May He guide you in every step as you labour for His kingdom, bearing witness to His love and mercy. Please continue to pray for us here in Malawi, as we will for you, that together we may press forward in faith, trusting in God's provision and His purpose for us all. And may His Spirit move among us so that we might serve Him with gladness wherever He has called us.

Grace and peace be with you all.

Gary, Jacqueline, Eilidh, Morven and Caitlin