

## Project # MW 96558 - Pastor's Book Set (PBS) Conferences – Malawi

### Vision

To equip evangelical pastors in Malawi with the biblical and theological resources they need to effectively lead their congregations.

### Project background

In 2008, SIM Malawi held four conferences for pastors in Lilongwe (the capital city), Blantyre, Zomba and Mzuzu. Two thousand pastors benefitted from a week of teaching and a set of seventy books to assist them in their ministry.

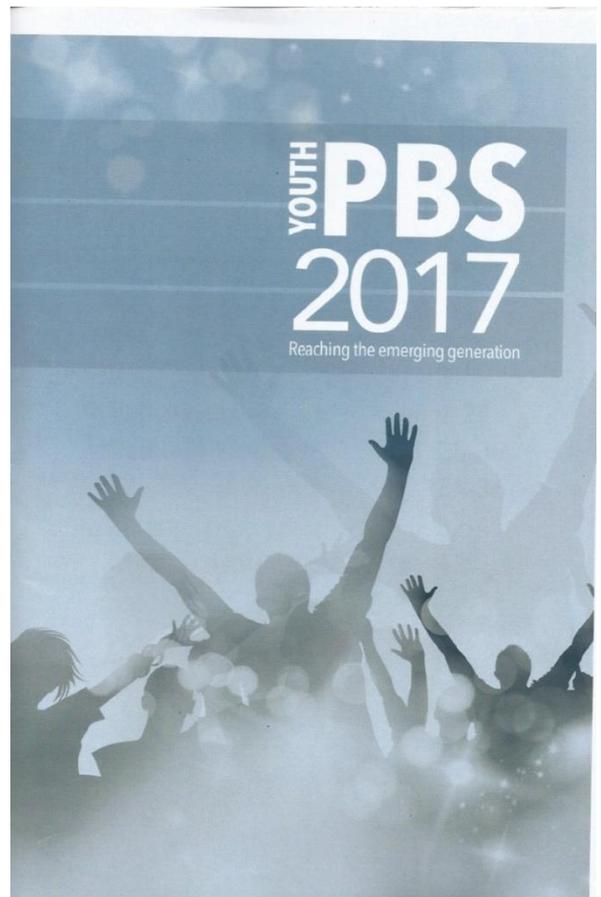
Many Pastors serving in the churches of Malawi are under resourced. Following on from these very successful Pastors' book set conferences held in 2008, it was decided that any resources remaining after these conferences would continue to be used for further seminars as the opportunity arises. SIM together with the Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM) seek to continue to use available funds to run appropriate seminars on topics of interest to church leaders in Malawi - such as missions, traditional religions, youth & children etc. A defining mark of the seminars is the inclusion of a selection of related resources - books, tracts etc in both English and the local Chichewa language. To maximise the benefit of these seminars, although participants contribute a course fee, the cost of running the seminars and providing the books is heavily subsidised through SIM donors, as most pastors and church leaders would not be able to afford the full costs.

In addition, twolay leadership seminars are to be held for pastors and leaders within the Africa Evangelical Church (AEC), SIM's partner church in Malawi, to provide training with locally produced material, for them to cascade throughout the leadership of the local churches.

This new project update has since been revised to plan for such PBS Conferences every 1-2 years, combined with lay leadership training seminars and workshops amongst the leaders of the Africa Evangelical Church.

### Progress

During the month of September all things came together for the Youth Pastors Book Set conference for five days from 11-15 September. Almost 100 participants and delegates from over 15 youth organisations converged on Blantyre Baptist Church for this week long series of devotions, talks, & seminars, all aimed at equipping youth leaders and pastors to nurture the emerging generation. (See story below)



Youth PBS 2017 Poster

Speakers from Australia/South Africa, Kenya, USA/Peru as well as Malawi helped us see that the Biblical models of leadership which are very relevant to youth leadership today.

We are hoping to repeat this conference in Lilongwe in 2018. We have sufficient book sets, but we will need to raise extra funds to bring in a similar group of gifted speakers to lead the youth pastors



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“Market Day” on one of the YPBS afternoons – 15 organisations encouraging the youth leaders with resources and ideas



An animated Rev Tim Hawkins engaging the participants



Worship through music was an essential part of YPBS 2017

### **Prayer requests**

Give thanks for all those who came – both leaders and participants

Pray that the delegates will use the material to train the next generation

Pray that we will be able to raise the funds for a repeat conference

Pray for SIM missionary Peter Ong as he follows up and networks with the youth leaders,, and continues to encourage them in their ministries

**“Reaching the Emerging Generation” (first published in SIM Malawi Amoto Vol 4.2 Oct 2017)**

From globalisation of Malawian youth to youth sexuality; from a study of 2 Timothy to building leadership character; from reaching students to preparing youth for global mission; from creative outreach to youth to morning devotions on ‘The Heart’. These are some of the topics that were covered in an intensive week of teaching at Youth PBS2017 in Blantyre between 11-15 September.

A panel of speakers from Malawi was backed up by three international speakers as they all worked with around 100 pastors and youth leaders to help them take a fresh look at how to encourage and disciple youth in the Malawian Church.

PBS2017 was designed to be an interactive experience for the delegates, as well as a time when speakers poured information into them. Seminars and workshops went hand-in-hand with sermons, Bibles study and devotions, and times of worship to inspire and build up the delegates and get them to think in a new way about how they approach youth and youth work.

Keynote speaker Tim Hawkins, Australian-born but now based in Cape Town, spoke about three key building blocks needed to develop leaders. With an obvious application for raising up leaders in industry, Tim is passionate that they also work for building up youth leaders.

“I have been raising up leaders for over 40 years, and it seems to me there are three essential building blocks for anyone to be a great leader,” he said.



**Global impact:** Diana Nkhoma leads delegates through a workshop on global influences on Malawian youth and what the church can do to counter these forces



**A wall of books:** Revd Tim Hawkins preaches over a ‘wall’ of book sets ready for distribution at Youth PBS2017

“The first building block is their leadership character, the second building block is their leadership skills, and the third building block is their leadership vision.

These building blocks are essential for anyone wanting to be a youth leader. And for young leaders, that building block called ‘character’ can be very fragile because we are dealing with younger Christians with less experience of life. So, if I am training youth leaders, a lot of time will be spent on developing their Christlike character, because that will determine how successful their leadership is.”

Tim was also passionate about youth leaders being

involved in the work for the long-haul rather than seeing it as a short-term step until something 'better' comes up in terms of church leadership. He made the comparison between youth leaders and doctors. He gets frustrated when youth leaders move on to other things after three years or so.

"Doctors don't do that," he said. "Can you imagine what would happen if doctors, three years after leaving training, said they were going off to do something else. There would be no doctors around and those that were around would know very little because the people training them, who only worked for three years, knew very little!"

"After three years, people think they know youth work, but they don't. It takes time and commitment and should be seen as a challenge to build up disciples, and so on.

"So much youth ministry in churches is really child-minding; that is, we do things with little kids and we are thinking "if we can just hang on to them until they become real adults then we can do some real ministry with them". Teenagers are passionate to have a cause to live and die for, and there is none better than the Kingdom of God expressed in Jesus. If you are not expecting much of your young people, there is a good chance they will find something more interesting."

The days started with a series of Morning Devotions led by different Malawian pastors on the overall subject of 'The Heart Matters'. In these devotions, four key subjects were considered; godliness, integrity, fully devoted and humility. These devotions were followed by a chapter-by-chapter study of 2 Timothy under the guidance of James Wainaina from iServe Africa in Kenya.

James spoke of the need to ensure that the chain of discipleship is not broken. 2 Timothy talks about his faith being handed down from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice to him as a young boy.

James also spoke of the generations of discipleship from Jesus to Paul; from Paul to Timothy and from Timothy to faithful men and women who took the work on.



**Bible Study:** James Wainaina who took us through 2 Timothy

"When you think about it, if you miss one generation then you have a problem in the next generation; the Gospel will get mixed up, the Gospel will get assumed and ignored and, before long, it gets complicated and people don't understand what it is all about," he said.

"I feel that is one of the dangers we can fall into, if we assume that people know the Gospel and we don't remind them. What encourages me about Paul is that, even when he is speaking to believers, he does not assume that they know the Gospel, so he goes ahead and actually reminds

them what the Gospel is all about.

"The Gospel is not for non-believers only, it is for believers too, and we need to be reminded of that. That is what Paul says to Timothy; he says: remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead, a descendant from David (2 Tim. 2:8), and remind others of this Gospel (2 Tim. 2:14). So, we need to keep reminding each other about the Gospel.

"When I was told this was a youth-workers' conference, I thought: which better book can you go to apart from 2 Timothy; a young person who is passionate about ministry? Paul is there giving him instruction and reminding him what the call is all about, how to do ministry in such a context.



**Hands on training:** Cynthia Sundman demonstrating how to 'train'

At the beginning of 2 Timothy you have a reminder of who has called us, and in the rest of the book we are being told how to do the ministry amongst the youth and among other believers. So, for a young person, that book will speak to our context, and it will also be useful for ministry training now and into the future. It is also a good basis for youth ministry.”

The third overseas speaker, Cynthia Sundman, serves with SIM Peru and is the SIM Point Person

for Youth. She has more than 30 years’ experience working in youth ministry. She ran two seminars looking at engaging and empowering youth in the church and mobilising youth for global mission. In her first session, she illustrated hands-on mentoring needed in engaging and empowering young people. She took a young man from the audience, trained him how to sweep the floor, then watched him as he did it, giving encouragement all the time, and then let him loose on his own.

“If we work in this way, if we work with them as they train, if we encourage them as they start to do it, and then let them go and do it, then we will build up young people whom we then can look to encourage to serve the Lord where they are before preparing them for global mission,” she said.

The impact of global influences on Malawian youth was talked about by Diana Nkhoma, Area Director for Blantyre West for Young Life. She said that Malawian young people are no different from their counterparts in the rest of the world, and the Church needs to wake up to the influences that are impacting them.



**YPBS2017:** Speakers and delegates come together for the 'official' Youth PBS2017 photograph

“Young people in Malawi are just like young people anywhere,” she said.

“A lot of them are influenced by celebrity culture, so we have a movement where the biggest influencers are not just Western artists but also African artists. We have rappers and singers and musicians on the TV and on the internet.

“The young people want to be like them and dress like them.

And there is also what the music contains as well as what they read on the internet and have access to now. Young people now have more information at their fingertips than ever, so that has a lot of influence on youth culture.

“One of the main things that church pastors and church youth pastors can do is to be aware of what the young people are going through. To be aware of what the young people are listening to and taking

in and then being able to use that content as an opportunity to share the Gospel. Using it as a tool and not running away from it. Being able to address the issues, being able to point out those people and being able to point out the flaws in their world, so that the young people can balance these things against the truth of Scripture.

“I think I would like people to take away from the conference that culture is changing but the Bible is not. The Bible will be sufficient in whatever time period. No matter how much things are changing, the Bible never changes and will continue to be relevant as we reach out to young people.”

But perhaps the most poignant part of YPBS2017 came in an afternoon workshop on youth sexuality – challenges facing youth today, and the Church’s response, given by Patrick Kaudzu. Patrick has worked with the Student Christian Organisation of Malawi (SCOM) for 25 years, teaching young people, amongst other things, the value of abstinence, and unlocking the Bible in the context of this subject.

He spoke of how things do not always go right and how a family crisis hit him and his wife with one of their daughters. He spoke about the need to support people when things go wrong, even if your first reaction is to throw them out and have nothing to do with them. He spoke about this in terms of families and also in terms of how the Church reacts to people who mess up.

At the end of the conference, each delegate was presented with a ‘Youth Leader’s Toolkit’, a box containing 40 books on youth ministry and related subjects which, it is hoped, will allow YPBS2017 to have a much longer life-span than just the week at Blantyre Baptist Church.

***It is hoped that the conference will be repeated in Lilongwe as YPBS2018, but financial resources will be needed to make this a reality.***