

Project Number # MW 96454

Project Name Church Leadership Scholarships

Project Vision

By faith we see trained pastors and church leaders equipped to lead the Malawian church. We see the church growing both numerically and, most importantly, into deeper personal relationships with Jesus Christ.

Project Background

The Africa Evangelical Church (AEC) denomination has approximately 150 congregations with about 50 pastors and evangelists who have had Biblical training. The Malawian church has enormous potential, but in order for this to be realized, godly members must be raised up and trained to lead the local congregations. SIM has 3 missionaries placed as lecturers at the Evangelical Bible College of Malawi (EBCoM).

SIM has teamed up with the AEC to provide future leaders with the necessary firm biblical foundation. The church endorses members from its congregations as potential church leaders. Following an interview process, involving SIM, AEC, and the colleges themselves, SIM provides successful applicants with scholarships to Bible colleges. These scholarships generally cover tuition fees, boarding fees, and transportation to and from college each semester. Without assistance like this, nearly none of the students or churches would be capable of financing a substantial, Christian education. Students are expected to provide their own funds for registration fees, books, and other personal expenses. Upon completion of their studies, students are expected to undergo a 1 year internship program under an experienced pastor in order to gain some practical and firsthand experience of ministry.

Progress

EBCoM continues to equip students to serve their respective churches as pastors and Christian workers. During the period of October, 2019 to March, 2020 we saw a number of things happen, notably is the Covid 19 disease which has affected the running of the college leading to its temporary closure in March, 2020. Students are now trying to study from home though this is difficult for many due to poor access to internet and other resources in the rural areas of Malawi.

Students

In the previous report we indicated that 4 new students had been admitted into the college from the Africa Evangelical Church (partner church) and were offered scholarships by SIM. However one student was dropped on the way due to family issues. Besides this we have new students who include Sifa Pharaoh, Robert Damiano and Chikumbutso Michael and are adapting well to the teachings. We also have Beauty Chisi who is on pastor's wives program. There are 2 continuing students who are pursuing a Diploma and a certificate. If all goes well we would have Levison Chisi and his wife Beauty Chisi graduate at the end of this semester. Five other students are about to complete their internship year.

"Covid 19"

As the 2019/2020 school year progressed, the number of people being infected by Covid 19 disease across the globe was also slowly increasing. Malawi recorded the first 3 cases of Covid 19 infections in late March, 2020. But even prior to this, the government of Malawi announced the closure of all

schools in Malawi as a preventive measure to protect the students. EBCoM too had to close to avoid putting lives of students at risk. Since then the number Covid cases have been rising slowly and this has left the school with very little options to reach the students. The Covid 19 disease may in a way also affect the graduation of students this year. We are aware that the faculty and the management are working tirelessly to see how best to move forward.

“Interns”

The graduates from the 2018/2019 academic year are continuing with their internship within the Africa Evangelical church. Alex Maluwa is serving alongside Rev. Abednego Zibophe of Kawale AEC in Lilongwe, Phillip Matemba is serving alongside Rev. Chirwa in Nkhotakota, Thaulo Nyamithambo in Balaka with Rev. Priminta, Evance Nkhawo in Nchalo with Rev. Makhavi and Charles Sumbulero in Chilomoni, Blantyre with Rev. Bridge. We expect them finish up with their practical and firsthand experience in ministry in a few months to come and will be assigned their own local churches to fill in some gaps in local churches without trained pastors.



Phillip Matemba is serving along the lakeshore of Lake Malawi in Nkhotakota which is Muslim dominated. He said this, “By the grace of God I have been able to minister to some individuals who I am praying about that the Lord would convict their hearts to respond to God’s word. If it was not for the training I had at EBCoM, it would have been very hard for me to even attempt reaching out to these people as they are very tough to reach out to. Keep on praying for us.”

EBCoM students evangelizing at one of the local markets

Outlook

Well trained pastors are key to effective sound teaching to local churches. With the training which these pastors have had they will be able to help their congregation grow in their understanding of the word of God. Families, communities and the country at large would be impacted by the Gospel. This will in turn help to see more people becoming more like Jesus in this nation and their desire to reach out to peoples of other nations would increase.

Our partner Bible college, EBCoM, along with other similar colleges in Malawi, is facing some serious financial challenges mostly as a result of trying to offer too many programs with dwindling student numbers, and so needs to understand the times for theological education in Malawi.

“What’s It All About?”

SIM Director Mike Hammond spoke to Revd Wadi Chamambala (pictured below), who is the head of Christian Education dept in our partner church, Africa Evangelical Church, about the importance of this scholarship program for the church.

M: Why is theological education important for churches in Malawi?

W: Theological education provides skills for one to ably and efficiently interpret the Bible, making possible for churches to be fed with sound teaching. It equips pastors with skills like counselling, preaching, evangelism, discipleship and others necessary for the health of the church.

M: What are the challenges facing pastors in Malawi?

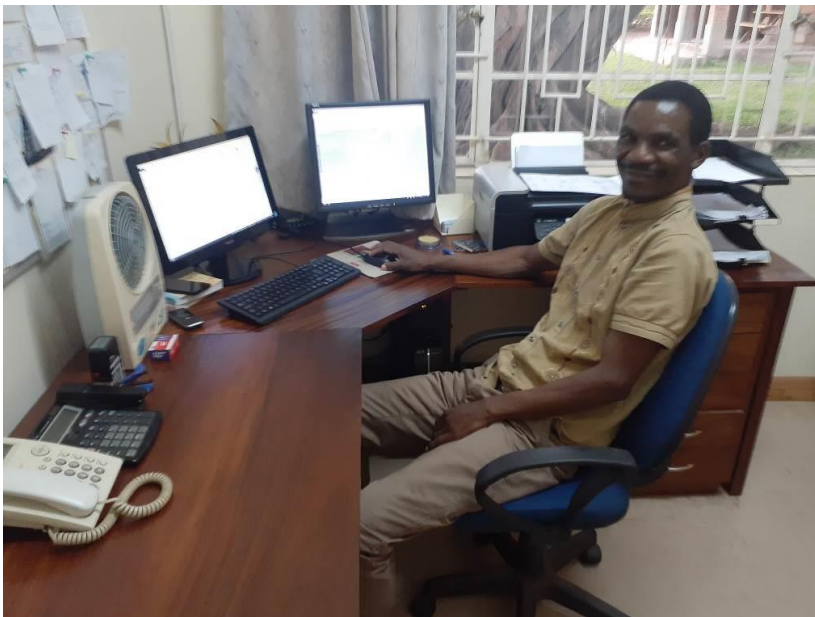
W: Pastors are faces with members' marital issues, drug abuse, school drop outs due to early and unplanned pregnancies just to mention a few to deal with. Sometimes churches cannot adequately support pastors (financially). Other pastors lack training due school needs like school fees.

M: What does your role as Head of Christian Education in AEC involve?

W: Christian Education looks at making sure trainings for pastors and other departments which don't have co-ordinators are happening. Facilitating recruitment of pastors, literature development, refresher course etc.

M: Why did you train as a pastor?

W: To make Christ known and to make disciples of Jesus Christ. I saw the gap of spiritual nourishment which some people had and God called me to contribute in a small way to bringing that gap. I lacked the skills to better serve people (so I felt the need to go for training).



Prayer requests

- Pray for increased passion for the interns to serve on their own.
- Pray that God would provide wisdom to faculty to identify alternative options of reaching the students while away from college during this COVID period
- Pray for God's intervention to the Covid situation, for his mercy on the nation of Malawi.
- Pray for provisions for EBCoM to continue providing meaningful Biblical training.
- Pray for Rev Chamambala in his triple role as pastor, head of Christian education for AEC, and also the SIM office treasurer