

Amayi Amvano



A big turnout for this year's convention

The Lutheran Women's Organization (LUWO) of Malawi held their annual convention this week in the Zomba district. Over eight hundred women traveled by bus to the village of Namangale to renew old friendships and to recommit themselves to faithfully serving the congregations of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa (LCCA).

I almost didn't make it. Although I had been to Namangale once before with a group of short term volunteers, I wasn't quite sure where it was and I didn't trust the pin I dropped on Google maps. In rural areas of Malawi, internet coverage is spotty and the satellite maps don't always match what's on the ground. With me was Pastor Bornface Mjinga, who serves Epiphany Lutheran in Blantyre. Although we had a general idea of where we needed to go, the asphalt road only takes you so far. How do you know which dirt road to take, when they all look the same?



“Namagale? I think I’ve heard of it...”

Sure, there are many pedestrians you can ask for directions – but that doesn’t mean you’ll get what you need. Oftentimes instead of admitting they don’t know where you’re trying to go, people give you bogus directions and send you on your way with a smile. It’s a way of “saving face.” The first people we asked directions got us started down the right road, but at every subsequent place we stopped, we got directed further and further away from our goal. Finally, we were able to place a call with the pastor who serves in the area and he got us back on the right track. When we saw the chitenje of the LCCA fluttering by the side of the road, we knew were close.



This marked the turnoff to our destination

There was the feel of a festival/rock concert when we arrived. The congregation had prepared for the event ahead of time by enclosing a large portion of their property with eight foot high walls made out of corn stalks. So many women arrived that some had to sleep outside the walls, and the men of the host congregation expanded the enclosure the next day. Inside, I saw the largest gathering of women I have ever seen at one time in Malawi. They came from all over the country. Most had arrived the previous day after travelling all day (and all night in some cases). Some came with their infants and toddlers. An army of cooks was stationed in the back and preparing lunch.



The army doesn't march on an empty stomach...thanks to those behind the scenes

The first order of business was to make introductions. One by one, the Amayi Abusas (Mrs. Pastors) from every congregation in attendance approached the microphone and extended their heartfelt greetings. The pastors in attendance also gave their greetings. The ladies had a good chuckle when they heard my poor Chichewa.



The “paparazzi” were on hand at the 2018 LUWO National Convention

Several choirs sang during the opening service. Out of necessity, the pastors asked that one choir from each of the five regions would sing one song each. New members of the Amayi Amvano (Ladies’ Guild) were inducted during the service. The Amayi Amvano provide invaluable support for the churches of the LCCA, by setting a Christian example for their sisters in the faith, leading choirs during worship and teaching women’s Bible studies, and gathering special offerings for the pastors’ families and others in the congregation who have needs. The Amayi Amvano wear white head scarves and blouses to remind them they are covered in Christ’s pure righteousness, and their purple skirt reminds them of their royal King’s suffering at the hands of His enemies.



New inductees cover themselves before reciting their pledges,
and then are publicly revealed

After that, there was a sermon based on Jeremiah 7:2-5 which reminded all present to speak God's word clearly and to give a Christian example in the world. Then all the women received the assurance of their forgiveness as they were given the true body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion.



A member of the Amayi Amvano gives a gift to an elderly person

In Malawi, women generally have a tougher life than their counterparts in the West.

Up at the crack of dawn to feed the family and the chickens. Fetching water from a well a mile away. Making a little extra money selling vegetables they raise in their garden plots. Most women in rural areas have very little formal education, and some have never attended school. Their rights are generally not as respected as they are in developed countries. But God's love in Christ has given the Amayi Amvano of the LCCA the strength to serve their Savior, their families and their churches with a joyful heart. They have put on the full armor of God so that they may stand firm (Ephesians 6:13).

Missionary John Roebke lives in Malawi

Please pray for those working in fields that are ripe for harvest. Share their story, engage with future news and receive updates. Go to this link to learn more about our mission fields in Africa and how the Holy Spirit is working faith in people's hearts
<https://wels.net/serving-others/missions/africa>