

Building God's House in Malawi



Rev. Stanley Daile and his family will live in a new house being built on the campus of the Lutheran Bible Institute in Lilongwe, Malawi

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It's been fun to watch the progress. Standing on my front porch, I can look across the road to see the new house being built. The house is being built on the campus of the Lutheran Bible Institute (LBI) in Lilongwe, Malawi. Once it is completed, it will be a home for our newest LBI professor, Rev. Stanley Daile, and his family.



At the beginning of this project, the 'house' was nothing more than an architectural drawing on a piece of paper. It was only a nice idea that did not exist in reality, but then the workers came. They cut down several trees, dug up all the stumps and leveled off the ground. Large trucks carried in their cargoes of bricks and sand and

stone. In a matter of days, the workers had dug the foundations and poured a concrete slab. Then the walls appeared – each day a little taller, as if they grew up from the ground. Soon there were a dozen workers climbing in the rafters and hammering down the corrugated metal roofing sheets. Other workers installed the windows and the doors. Every day, the worksite was alive with activity. It was fun to watch the progress. Slowly but surely, a house was being built, one brick at a time.



As I watched the progress of that house from my front porch, I often thought about our ministry in Africa. The Bible often uses the building of a house as a metaphor for Christian ministry. In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul says that the Christian Church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Ephesians 2:20-22).

To me, that house across the street was more than just a building. It was a daily illustration and reminder of why we are working in Malawi in the first place. We are working together to build God's house, one brick at a time.



Sixty years ago, a strong and vibrant Lutheran Church in Malawi was nothing but a dream. It was only a nice idea that did not exist in reality, but then the workers came. WELS missionaries Raymond Cox and Richard Mueller were the first to arrive in 1963, and other missionaries followed them. By the preaching of God's almighty word, they gathered a few faithful Christians together to form the Lutheran Church of Central Africa (LCCA). Back in those early days, missionaries did almost all the preaching and baptizing. It wasn't until 1976 that Rev. Deverson Ntambo became the synod's first Malawian pastor. Even by 1980, there were still only about 3,000 confirmed members in approximately 50 congregations.



But things are different now. Today the Lutheran Church of Central Africa numbers almost 40,000 baptized souls who trust in Jesus as their Lord. They gather together on Sunday morning in approximately 130 congregations. More than three dozen Malawian pastors do virtually all of the preaching, all of the baptizing, and all of the confirmations. And all of these Malawian pastors are paid and supported by the congregations that they serve. What a joy to see the progress! Slowly but surely, God is building up his church.



In fact, even this new house at the Lutheran Bible Institute is evidence of the church's growth. The LBI exists to train young African men to serve as future pastors in our Lutheran churches. The new house is necessary because a new professor, Rev. Stanley Daile, has been called to serve as a professor of New Testament Greek. In the past, courses in Biblical Greek were always taught by missionaries. But now we have a well-trained Malawian professor who is able to teach these classes. This is progress. God is building up his church.



By the grace of God, I have had the privilege to serve as a missionary in Malawi since 2006. For almost 15 years I have been able to wake up every morning and to look out of my front door and to see tremendous progress. Slowly but surely, God is building up his house in Malawi, one brick at a time.

Missionary Mark Panning lives in Malawi and teaches at the Lutheran Bible Institute in Lilongwe

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