

# Let the Little Children Come to Me



Pastor & Mrs. Jeffrey

Pastor Wisick Jeffrey is passionate about Sunday School for good reason. Not only is Pastor Jeffrey the School Coordinator for the Blantyre District of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa; humanly speaking, Sunday School is why he is a Christian today.

Pastor Jeffrey is a member of the Yao tribe, one of the Bantu peoples who live in the countries of Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania. This people group of 2 million people is predominantly Muslim, due to historic contact with Arab slave traders, with whom they cooperated to enslave their fellow Africans. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Yao chiefs as a whole resisted the efforts of Christian missionaries, who were seen as agents of the European colonial powers, and embraced Islam because it accommodated their traditional practice of polygamy. Today the majority of Yao people live in isolated communities and maintain their cultural and religious differences from their fellow Malawians, who are predominantly Christian.



Muslims make up about 12% of Malawi's population. Former President Atupele Muluzi was a Muslim

While Wisick Jeffrey's extended family follow the teachings and lifestyle of Islam, his father was a non-practicing Muslim and did not force religion on his sons. While he was growing up, Jeffrey became friends with children who attended Sunday School at a local LCCA congregation. He accepted their invitation to go to Sunday School with them, but he did not attend Sunday worship services. Over time, the Holy Spirit worked through the Gospel message Jeffrey heard in class and he eventually began Confirmation instructions. At about the same time his mother began to pressure him into memorizing passages from the Koran. On the day of his confirmation Jeffrey told his family his intentions to convert to Christianity, and as you can imagine they were not pleased. His uncles refused to help pay for his schooling, or for the schooling of his brothers who also became Christian.



Sunday School is often held outside under the shadiest tree in the church's yard. It was very difficult for Jeffrey at this time in his life, but God's promises continued to sustain him. Eventually he continued his education in the town of Zomba, where Deverson Ntambo, the first Malawian pastor of the LCCA Malawi, was serving. Pastor Ntambo is also from the Yao tribe, and he gave young Jeffrey the encouragement and Christian guidance that was missing in his life. Pastor Ntambo encouraged Jeffrey to consider studying for the ministry, and began taking him through the LCCA's pre-worker training courses known as T.E.E. (Theological Education by Extension). Pastor Jeffrey was ordained in 2008 and currently is serving at Kanyepa Lutheran Church, the oldest LCCA congregation in Malawi.



Kanyepa Lutheran Church was the first LCCA congregation founded in Malawi. Pastor Jeffrey's wife is from his home village. She was a Muslim when they married, but with great patience and diligence Jeffrey displayed Christ's love to her in his words and actions. The change that the Holy Spirit worked in Jeffrey's life must have also made an impression on his father, who became a Christian and was baptized days before his death. To God be the glory!



Children from Jeffrey's home village

We can learn a lot from Jeffrey's story. Christian Education of young people is not only important for passing the truth of God's Word to

the next generation, it is also a means for children to reach out to their peers and change lives for eternity. We can also once again wonder at how God works faith in the hearts of people according to his timetable, no matter how improbably or unlikely it may seem to us at the time. Great patience and love are needed to reach out across cultural and religious barriers, as our Savior demonstrated during his earthly ministry. *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17).* As Christ patiently called us out our sin-darkened ways of thinking and acting, may we show the same patience with those who are still in the dark and lead them to the light.

*Missionary John Roebke  
lives in Malawi.*

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