

Looking Forward and Back

Today's post is written by Missionary Howard Mohlke, the leader of One Africa Team. He has been waiting for over a year in the USA for his work papers, which he recently received.

On Saturday, April 17, 2021, Leslie and I landed in Lilongwe, Malawi. As we landed and looked forward to our new life living and working in Africa, we also looked back to 1991 when we first landed in Zambia to serve as part of the mission team. Back then we arrived with two daughters ages 4 and 2, and one son who was 6 months old. Now, it's just the two of us and those three and two more are all grown up. Back then we left behind our parents and "took their grandchildren away" as they would remind us at times. Now, we are leaving behind our grandchildren.



The Mohlkes circa 1991

Back then we were a young family and I had just been assigned from the Seminary to serve in Zambia. Now, Leslie and I have been together for over three decades and have been blessed in many ways as we lived in Zambia, Nebraska, Idaho, and Arizona. Now we look forward to being blessed as we live again in Africa and wonder a bit what the Lord has in store for us. That said, we know for certain that just as the Lord saw us through in the past, he will be with us and bless us this time too.

Many Changes

It is said that you can never go home, meaning that our memories of home remain the same but time changes everything and things are never as we remember. As Leslie and I returned to Africa, we kept reminding ourselves that this would be true and indeed it was.

Back in 1991 we arrived in a country that had suffered from years of socialism and one-party rule. The consequences were a ruined economy and infrastructure. It was a challenge to procure the most basic of needs. Now, even though there are differences in name brands and price, almost anything can be purchased at a local store. Back then it was big news when certain items were available at the store; now one can compare prices and the quality of items that you want to buy.

Back in 1991, the only forms of communication with family in the states were airmail and long-distance calls that cost \$1.00 per minute – that is if the phone was working at all. Now with cellular data, there are multiple means of voice and video communication – if the electricity is on. I guess some things do stay the same.

Nothing New

Rev. Medson Mitengo is the President of the LCCA – Malawi Synod

As with water and electricity outages, other things remain the same. The biggest constant is the need to share the good news of Jesus. People continue to struggle with sin and guilt and need the comfort of Jesus. The work of sharing this comfort is still carried out through Christian congregations who gather to be blessed through

Word and Sacrament and are willing to share the truth with their neighbors. Nowadays, the congregations are served by locally trained Pastors and Elders, but the work remains the same.

Something New

Back in 1991, my work was to serve a dozen churches, visiting them every four to six weeks. In between my visits, the work of shepherding the congregations was in the hands of faithful men and women who read sermons on Sunday, taught basic instruction, and Sunday school. They visited the sick and managed the affairs of their congregations. When I would visit, I conducted worship and offered encouragement and training to those who were serving so faithfully.



Serving congregations in rural Malawian villages

Today, WELS Missionaries in Africa are not serving as Pastors of congregations or overseeing congregations but are working with the Pastors and leaders of church bodies throughout Africa. Back in 1991, there were missionaries doing what I was doing in Malawi and Zambia. Now, the mission team works with partner church bodies in Nigeria, Cameroon, Liberia, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, as well as Malawi and Zambia. We also are working with Multi-Language Productions offering basic Biblical and shepherding training to individuals anywhere in the continent. Our prayer is that all these relationships and partnerships would be blessed by the LORD so more people may hear the Good News of Jesus in Africa and beyond.

Always



As Leslie and I begin this new stage of mission life, we know that it is the LORD who has called us here and will bless us. For this we are thankful.

The Lord be with you all,

Howie

aka Rev. Howard Mohlke. One Africa Team Leader

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>