

Relay Race



Eight LCCA Pastors and I attended the funeral of Ev. Chataika last week

I've been running for a whole year. One trip around the sun and my life is not the same as it was before. I left behind my children, my congregation, and my country. I have spent hundreds of hours repeating tongue twisters and I still get lost in translation. I cope with a shortage of power and an oversupply of insects, and I am taking lessons on patience. Yet the Lord's steady promises have kept me moving forward in the race I am running as a missionary to Malawi.



Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it (Prov. 22:6)

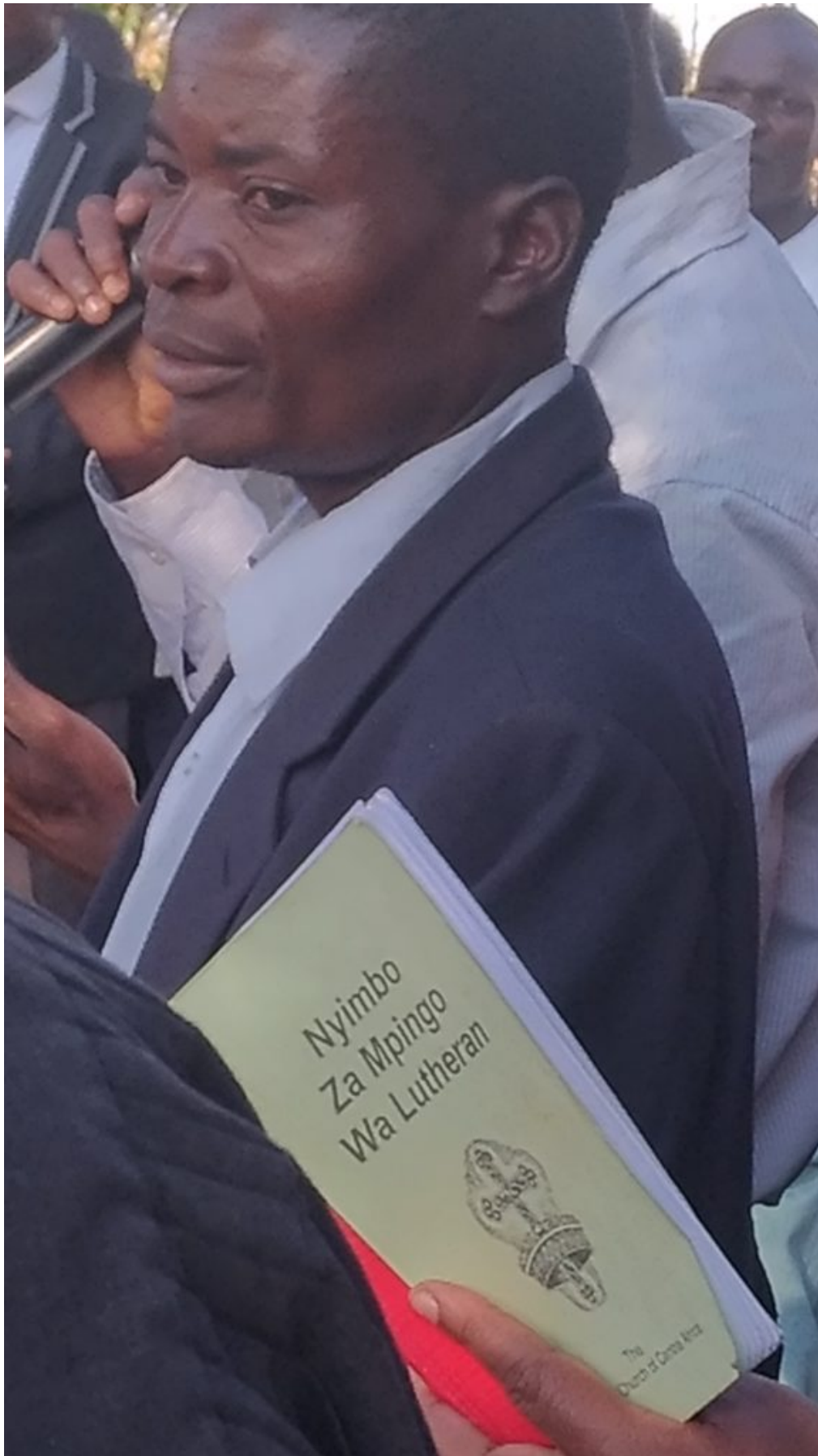
It is a relay race that started fifty-five years ago. The first WELS missionaries in Malawi, Ray Cox and Richard Mueller, arrived in 1963. Their initial contacts led them to the village of Khanyepa, where last week I attended the funeral of Evangelist Austin Chataika. Ev. Chataika eventually enrolled at the Lutheran Bible Institute in Lusaka, Zambia and graduated in 1971. Under the direction of missionaries, he served at three different parishes, feeding the souls of people with God's Word and Sacraments.



Mr. Makuluni is the one of the first members of Khanyepa

Lutheran Church

But the missionaries' arrival in Kanyepa touched not only Ev. Chataika and the members of his parishes. Three of his relatives who attended his funeral are also pastors in the LCCA, and they have touched countless others through the course of their ministries. It is hard to overstate the significance of this. Until the early 1990's there were only two Malawian pastors, Deverson Ntambo and Daison Mabedi serving alongside a dozen or so WELS missionaries. By the end of the decade however there were 20 national pastors serving about half of the congregations of the LCCA - Malawi Synod.



The Nyimbo (Hymnal) is one of the most important LCCA

publications

As of 2018, all of the 130+ congregations of the LCCA in Malawi are served by national pastors. I am one of four WELS missionaries who provide administrative support and training to the LCCA. Although I do not stand in a pulpit on any given Sunday, I am working with the Publications Committee to produce sermon books and other tools for use in local congregations. Most LCCA pastors serve parish unions made up of 3-6 congregations, and travel by motorcycle or bicycle to serve people living in remote locations. Thus, the church body relies heavily on sanctified lay leaders to conduct services and to prepare people for baptism and confirmation. Two missionaries serve as professors at the Lutheran Bible Institute in Lilongwe, preparing the future pastors of the LCCA. The fourth missionary serves as the liaison between WELS and the LCCA as field coordinator, and provides ongoing training and support to pastors who are in the field.



‘I know my Redeemer lives’ was the theme of Rev. Stanley Daile’s funeral sermon

As far as I have travelled during the last year, I realize that I am only the latest in a long line of WELS mission workers who have served in Central Africa. I am blessed and humbled to see the fruits of their labor, as evidenced at the funeral of Ev. Chataika. Several hundred people, including local village chiefs were present to hear a powerful sermon based on Job’s testimony, “I know that my Redeemer lives...and

after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God” (Job 19:25-26). As we have received the gift of faith from our forefathers, so the baton has been passed to the LCCA and is being carried forward. May their example of faithfulness in the face of adversity, and the great blessings that God has poured out on the LCCA over the last half-century encourage all of us to keep running strong until we cross the finish line.



The Lutheran Women's Organization (LUWO) supports many functions of the LCCA

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>