

What do you do in Malawi?



Mindy Holtz and Lamson Chimaliro

When I tell others that I live in Malawi one of the first questions they ask me is, “What do you do there? What is your job? How do you spend your time?”

For many years my answer was, “I’m a housewife.” Taking care of the kids, husband and home

took up most of my time (and still does, minus the kids). In spite of our “exotic” location living in

Africa, the laundry, grocery shopping, cooking and cleaning has to be done here as anywhere else in the world. I get the

impression that some people imagine that my life is very interesting. Perhaps it felt like that a little bit when

we first moved to Africa 22 years ago.

But the novelty has long since worn off...

In 2014, I had a chance to add another role to my repertoire. The mission offered me a job as Assistant to the Financial Secretary! I happily accepted. This gave me the opportunity to help a missionary spend less time on paperwork and more time on gospel work. In general, I like working behind the scenes (In fact, I'm cringing right now even writing about what I do...).

The current Financial Secretary, Mark Panning, is a WELS missionary who teaches at the Lutheran Bible Institute. He also has been given the duty of overseeing the mission expenses of the Malawi field. He is responsible to pay the bills, account for the money, and budget for the future. As his assistant, I help him do all this.



Mark Panning teaching

Bill paying and record keeping for an average household in the United States probably doesn't take up too much time. In general, things take longer to do in Malawi. I spend about 5-10 hours per week taking care of mission finances. Internet banking and electronic bill paying are just starting to be available here, although paying a bill online has not yet worked for me. All bills are paid with a check or cash and hand-delivered to an office. There are phone bills, electric bills, water bills, school bills, rent, security services, taxes and salaries to be paid. There is fuel to buy for the trucks and generators and maintenance costs for vehicles and properties. Sometimes I send money to a pastor in a remote village. Almost every week I go to the bank to get cash to pay for something.

Accounting for all the Malawian Kwachas spent is also important. I spend a lot of time entering transactions in a computer program, choosing the correct account category (out of 100+ options), making reports and filing away all the receipts. I'm always happy when the accounts balance out!

Even though I'm an assistant to Mark Panning, I also have an assistant! He is a Malawian named Mr. Lamson Chimaliro. I rely on him a lot to do some banking and running errands in town. Without him, my 5-10 hours per week might turn into 20! Besides helping me, Mr. Chimaliro does a myriad of tasks related to the running of the Lutheran Bible Institute (LBI). He is a faithful and talented worker whose tasks range from driving an LBI student wife to the hospital to deliver a baby at 2 a.m. to fixing electrical problems on our mission compound to arranging meals when hosting pastors at the LBI guest house.

I'm glad God gives us different gifts and different ways to serve as part of the body of Christ. And

I'm thankful to God for being able to serve the mission in this small way.

How will you use your gifts to serve God today?

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others..." 1 Peter 4:10

Mindy Holtz 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>