

NEWS UPDATE

Summer 2020

Like everyone else, the work of the Trust has been adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, but we are grateful to the Lord that none of the directors or local volunteers have so-far contracted the illness.

Pandemic and Politics

Mercifully, the number of reported cases in Malawi is still low, although there is justifiable concern that this is simply due to lack of testing and disorganised reporting. A few days ago it emerged that 400 immigrants from South Africa had “escaped” from government quarantine in a football stadium in Blantyre, even though they had been under the supervision of the army. The whole episode raises myriad questions, and has fuelled all kinds of allegations, not least that they were allowed to escape because the authorities could not provide for them. There is widespread ignorance of public-health related issues. A poll published by the BBC today (1/6/20) states that 81% of Malawians are more afraid of hunger than Coronavirus, and that over-55s are least concerned, in spite of being at greatest risk.

As you may recall, there was widespread unrest for months after the May 2020 elections, and earlier this year the Constitutional Court delivered the historic decision to annul the result. When the government introduced a very early lockdown, opposition parties claimed it was simply to thwart the election, and obtained an injunction against the lockdown. In the meantime, although the government is encouraging social distancing, both sides are simultaneously organising massive political rallies as they campaign for the elections which are now due to take place in July. It goes without saying that this is extremely reckless. “People will vote in this fresh election, whether [we have] Covid-19 or Covid-21,” one of the candidates said during a campaign rally in southern Malawi. Infrastructure in Malawi is hopelessly inadequate, and the consequences of a widespread Covid-19 outbreak are simply unthinkable.



Malawians are encouraged to wear masks



Election campaigning carries on

Cancellations

Sadly, we had to cancel our annual Bible teaching conferences in Malawi for a second, consecutive year. Last year they were affected by the Presidential elections, and this year by the pandemic. It is such a shame, as we know that these have been a huge blessing to many, and have definitely been used by the Lord to advance assembly testimony in Malawi.

We also face the inevitable reality that Malawi Gospel Outreach (MGO) 2020 is not going to happen due to the ongoing crisis. Again, we are deeply saddened by this, but must leave everything in the Lord's hand. Please pray that the Lord of the harvest will be pleased to use seed that has been sown in previous years. Looking further forward, it is impossible to say when we will be able to resume visits to Malawi. Please pray about this, as we desperately miss the saints and the work there.

Gospel Videos

Frustrated by the inability to visit and the upsurge in crazy conspiracy theories circulating in Malawi on Social Media, we began to stream Gospel messages in Chichewa. We have run a couple of Facebook advertising campaigns, and our Uthenga Wabwino (Good News) page now has over 2800 followers. A short Gospel message is published daily, and we are grateful for the help of a number of brothers who have assisted with this, and for Bro Harold translating the volunteers' messages.

We were particularly encouraged by the results of a recent campaign to boost a message addressing some of the matters raised by the virus concerning coming Judgement. The video reached almost 35,000 people, was viewed by 9,500, of whom over 3,600 watched through to the end, and produced a large number of comments and other responses. Presently over 350 individuals are receiving a daily Gospel message to their phone by Whatsapp.



The message on Tribulation was watched by over 9,500
[\(Click to view video\)](#)



"Forgiveness"
[\(Click to view video\)](#)

There is considerable effort involved in producing all of this material, but we believe it is an investment in the souls of many and would ask you to pray for the necessary help.

Container

Our latest container with Prison Hygiene Packs and Gospel Literature has been much delayed at the port in Beira, Mozambique, but is now en route by road to Malawi. We are especially excited about the 1,000,000 Gospel Tracts and 150,000 John's Gospels which will enable us to continue the all-important task of spreading the Gospel. Please pray for speedy delivery and customs clearance upon arrival. Please also pray that the local brothers will manage with the extra responsibility and difficulties of distribution in the present circumstances.

Literature & Translation

We are thrilled that the first phase of translating the Postal Bible School "Bibletime" lessons is progressing well. We also have other important translating and publishing projects in the pipeline, including the long-awaited publication of "Tell me more about the Gospel", which we hope to release in the coming months.

The calendar work has been a massive blessing over the past number of years. Demand for this year's calendar exceeded the 500,000 supply, and we are thrilled to think about the Word of God in so many homes during this time of world crisis. However, we are still unsure about whether a 2021 calendar will be possible due to the problems associated with the pandemic, and would ask you to pray about this matter.

Relief work

We are glad to continue to help with the feeding of around 100 orphaned refugee children in the Dzaleka camp, in Dowa, Malawi. This work is run by a Congolese Christian couple who are themselves refugees with a very moving story.

Southern Africa Literature Trust (salt@salt-mail.com) (See www.SouthernAfricaLiteratureTrust.com for further information on how to pray for and support the work)