



David Phillips

Africa Report — 2008

August, 2008

South Africa, Botswana, Malawi

Introduction

I would like to begin this report by expressing my deepest gratitude to all of the brethren who generously helped and supported this effort. I am thankful for the love you all have for the Lord's work and your willingness to trust me in this endeavor. As a steward, it is a great service to be able to spread the gospel throughout the world, especially in areas such as Botswana and Malawi.

In this report you will find photos of some of the places I have seen and people I have met. I will also describe in chronological order the events that occurred on my journey. On pages four and five I will provide some personal insights and conclusions concerning the work and, on page six, a financial breakdown and my thoughts for future trips.

It is my hope and prayer that this report will express to you an orderly

account of the journey as well as a concise, yet informative account of the spiritual benefits of this work. Due to the lack of space it is not possible for me to include everything that I want to say about the trip. However, I have made available online more pictures for anyone to view who is interested and who has an internet connection. As opportunity arises I am also happy to provide more information in personal conversations and public presentations. Please feel free to contact me.

As you will read, I have experienced and learned many things. I



Church building of the Mabalabala church of Christ, located on Warren's farm in the northern region of South Africa.

have attempted, the best that I know how, to let my love and zeal for this work to come across. May you be encouraged by the things that you read as I have been in sharing them with you. Once again, thank you all.



Monday evening Bible study at Mabalabala.

The Work in South Africa

In South Africa I worked with a preacher named Warren Schultz. Warren is supported to travel around and preach the gospel in the countries of the southern region of Africa. He has been preaching for about 15 years now and has helped to establish churches in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa. Arrangements were made for

me to meet up with Warren and to get to know the work in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

I left the States in the first week of August and arrived first in South Africa. When I arrived I found that my checked luggage had been lost. Fortunately I packed some

South Africa (continued)

backup clothes in my carryon. I was picked up by a member of the church there in Johannesburg named Fawny, who is Warren's uncle. He and his wife, Alma, hosted me that first night. The next morning Fawny took me to the bus station where I caught a charter bus. After about a five-hour ride, I arrived in Louis Trichardt, where Warren's home is.

I was able to rest for a day before, on Sunday, Warren, his family and I traveled farther north to where a church has been established on his father's farm—the Mpofu church of Christ. All of the workers on John's farm are Christians and they have been able to convert some of the workers on the surrounding farms. Every Sunday they all meet together for worship and function as an established local church. I preached for the church there during the morning services. We sang songs in three different languages in turn—Shawna (native to Zimbabwe), Vinda (of the Northern region of South Africa), and English. So that every one could understand, I had a translator help me, whose name is Curtis.

After lunch Warren and I traveled about one-and-a-half hours west to his farm, where he has helped to establish the Mabalabala church of Christ. The situation is the same there as on John's farm where workers on Warren's and the surrounding farms have joined together as a local congregation. They have used the funds from their weekly contribution to build a meeting house (see the pictures on pg. 1). Warren and I stayed on his farm where I was able to work and study with the brethren there for a few days. For our study on Monday night, several people from Australia, who were visiting a neighboring farm, decided to join us (pg. 1, bottom left). The lessons were centered on being faithful Christians and the Kingdom of God.

Wednesday morning Warren and I returned to Louis Trichardt. When we arrived I was pleasantly surprised to find that the airline had found my luggage and had delivered it to Warren's home.

That evening the Christians in Louis Trichardt assembled at Warren's house for a Bible study. We also had several people from the community in attendance who

were members of the Dutch Reform Church.

I taught on the subject of *authority in the church*. It was a fitting and timely subject. We had good discussion and the visitors expressed an interest in attending future studies because we had dealt with issues and questions that they had been thinking about.

In all, my time in South Africa, while not specifically spent baptizing people and establishing churches, provided a good introduction of the work there for me. I was able to get a feel for the work and get an idea as to the profitability of future trips. (For more on this see *Overview and Personal Observations*, on pg. 5)

Unable to travel into Zimbabwe due to political turmoil, on Thursday, Warren and I made preparations to travel north into Botswana to preach in some of the villages there.



Shepherd (left), and Daniel (right) are Christians who work on Warren's farm. Shepherd is learning how to preach and has been instrumental in helping Warren establish churches near his home village in Zimbabwe.



From left to right: Sophie, Shepherd, and Progress are Christians who work for Warren in his home in Louis Trichardt.

Into Botswana

On Friday, August 15th, Warren and I, along with his family, traveled about six hours NW into Botswana, which was a very interesting drive. It took us three hours to get to the border. Once across we traveled about one-and-a-half hours on paved roads, then as we went farther into the bush the pavement ended leaving us to dodge large ruts in the dirt roads. About thirty minutes from our destination the road ended altogether. The rest of the drive was to be spent on “cut lines,” which are 20-30 meter wide lines carved out of the land using graders. They cross the country like a giant grid to prevent fires from spreading from one quadrant to another. Thankfully we had 4-wheel drive to get through the loose Kalahari sand. So we arrived safely.

On Saturday we drove about twenty-five minutes, arriving at the first village, Mabua (above), at about 10:00 a.m. Warren’s wife, Ivy, taught a Bible class for the children in the village. After that the adults came together for a Bible study, in which I taught on the Sermon on the Mount. In the congregation that has been established at

this village (on right) there are about fifteen women and two men.

Two years ago Warren had opportunity to teach his first Bible class in Botswana when a friend of his got stuck in the mud. When Warren went to help free the truck, some of the villagers helped out as well. Afterwards one of the women from the village approached Warren and, lo and behold, she spoke English. Prior to that Warren had not been able to find anyone who was able to translate between English and Tswana. He introduced himself and she said she would like to learn about the Bible. The next day, Warren had a study with nine people and baptized six. Since then he has been able to establish only one other congregation.

The one woman has been able to help him translate in the two villages, but her job prevents her from traveling elsewhere. Due to other circumstances Warren has found it difficult to set up studies in other villages, but continues to work to create opportunities.

After teaching in



The church in Mabua.

Mabua, we traveled about ten minutes to Majiabana (below), the only other village with a church. Again, Ivy taught the children and I taught another study with the ladies. There are no men in this congregation yet.

The next day we returned to both of these villages and joined in their worship services where I preached a lesson for them. As far as experiences go, that was the first time I’d ever preached standing outside in the middle of a sand storm. It is times like that where a preacher finds out how well he really knows his lesson—I had to quote all of the passages from memory as the wind and sand prevented me from reading my Bible.

We had several visitors to both services, but they seemed to be more interested in the “white men” rather than in the gospel.

After the second service we headed back to Louis Trichardt. The Christians in the villages seemed to be encouraged, but beyond that there is not much to report (more on this on pg. 5).



The church in Majiabana

The Work In Malawi

On Tuesday, August 19th I flew into Lilongwe, Malawi where I was met at the airport by a man named Simon. He drove me to a hospital called *Blessings*, which is owned by a Christian in Malawi named Napoleon. Napoleon has been instrumental in helping Christians in this country and is the one who first invited my father-in-law, Alan Hitchen, to preach there in 1999. From Lilongwe, Napoleon drove me north to Mponella where I met up with Alan who was finishing up a gospel meeting.

I worked with Alan in Mponella on Wednesday. Then on Thursday the two of us along with Mumba, our translator, caught a mini bus (a ten-passenger van that was carrying 15 people), north to a town called Kasungu. We arrived about 10:00 a.m. where we rest for a short while before catching another mini bus east to the village of Maron. While resting in Mumba's home we received word that the church in Maron was assembled and waiting for us—though we were not scheduled to be there until about 3:00 p.m. Upon hearing the news we hiked from Mumba's house to the bus depot where we waited about forty-five minutes for the next avail-

able bus headed to Maron. After a one-hour drive (on a very bumpy roads with my knees to my chin) we arrived and were greeted by the elders and deacons of the church.

Before we began preaching we were invited into the preacher's house where we ate a meal of rice, a type of tomato soup and fried eggs (a high-end meal by their standards). We found out while we were eating that one of the older gen-



The church in Karungu town.



Preaching for the church in the village of Caron.

tlemen with us there was the chief of the village.

As soon as we finished we returned to the church building. After a few songs and some introductions I was invited to preach first (center picture). I preached a basic lesson on the scheme of redemption and man's need to live in faithful obedience to God's will. Following the lesson, a lady of the congregation went forward to confess a sin. The preacher at

the congregation did not know what to say about her situation, so he asked Alan if he would give a few words. After doing so, Alan was introduced properly and he then preached his lesson.

Following Alan's sermon, the preacher of the congregation stood up to "give a few words." Actually, it was a pitch for money to help build buildings and feed people. Likewise the chief of the village stood up and made the same basic request. Needless to say, Alan and I left with a bad taste in our mouths. After everything we were taken to the main road of the village where the chief was able to flag down a ride for us on a lori (a flatbed truck used to haul goods). We sat in the back with packaged soy meat as our cushion. We arrived back in Kasungu sometime after dark.

The next day we were planning on traveling to another village, but were told that a funeral for the chief of that village had been scheduled for that day, so none of the Christians would be available (everyone in the village is expected to help with such funerals or face severe consequences).

Therefore, we changed our schedule and ended up teaching a lady's class for the ladies in the church at Kasungu.

On Saturday Alan and I preached



A baptism after services in Kasungu.

Malawi (continued)

several hours for the whole congregation at Kasungu and then on Sunday we preached for their worship services. The church in Kasungu has too many members for their building so they meet in two assemblies. Alan preached for the first and I preached for the second. Between the two services there were seven baptisms that day.

Early on Monday Alan, Mumba and I caught a mini bus back to Mponella. We arrived about 9:00 a.m. and by about 9:05 a.m. I began teaching a class on the book of Exodus for a group of men who were training to be preachers. The class would last until about 3:30 that afternoon with breaks every hour-and-a-half. We followed that same schedule for the next three days.

During my time with these preachers-in-training I was able to develop a very good relationship. In response to the Bible teaching, as Alan had also observed, the students were constantly amazed at all of the wonderful information that is in the

Bible, which they had never known before. They had basic knowledge of the major Bible stories (Adam and Eve, the flood, David and Goliath), but they had never learned or been taught how to study the Bible to learn what is God's will.

Seeing such a great need, as I taught the book of Exodus, I integrated many lessons on authority and the kind of life God expects of His people. We spent much time learning how to look at all the information available in a text in order to understand the context. During our break times I would visit with some of the students

and talk to them about their goals and ambitions as preachers.

After teaching for four days, I said my farewells. Thursday evening Alan and I headed back to Lilongwe where we stayed in a house provided by Napoleon. Friday afternoon I boarded my flight to begin what would be a thirty-five hour flight home.



Preachers-in-training at Mponella

Overview and Personal Observations

In all, I would say that the work I was able to do in Africa, all by the grace of God, was a tremendous experience. I saw many wonderful and interesting things and learned a great deal of life-lessons that will influence my perception of life on earth for the rest of my time here.

However, there is a more important question that I, as a steward of God, must find an answer to. "Was it worth it?" Of course, this question does not refer to the preaching of the gospel, for that is always worth it, whether "in season or out of season." But rather, is it worth the time, effort and resources required to sending a preacher from the States to Africa, or is the work better left up to someone else?

As I weigh everything in the balances I find that I have a mixed answer to that question.

I believe that the trip as a whole was certainly worth the effort and resources. As for South Africa, there are several well equipped preachers to work there and who have been working there for many years. While the experience was great, I do not believe that my services would add anything to the work there. As for Botswana, the field is wide open. There are only about three congregations in the whole country, which means there is a great deal of work to be done. However, because of culture there and the time involved in finding and taking advantage of opportunities there, one would need to

devote extended periods of time to preaching there and pursuing those opportunities. Time which is not readily available to me.

If the opportunity arose where Warren would need an extra man to teach in one village so he could take advantage of opportunities in other villages, then I would say yes, it would be worth a return visit. But until that time, after discussing the matter with Warren, I believe my time would be better spent elsewhere.

Malawi, on the other hand, presents a whole different set of challenges and opportunities. At first glance it would seem that the gospel is already very prevalent in that country and that there is no need for

DAVID PHILLIPS

9116 Crawley Ct. Apt. 2
Louisville, KY 40241

Phone: 502-212-9904
Email: faithful_word@yahoo.com

More photos and stories about my trip are available on line. If you are interested in viewing them, please send me an email telling me so and I will provide you with a link.

Financial Breakdown

Total Support	\$6,000
Airfare	\$2,570
Fuel and misc. travel expenses	\$1,350
Supplies	\$1,300
Food	\$400
Literature: books, tracts, materials.	\$250
Excess: forward to next year.	\$130

any great evangelistic work to be done there. I would urge the reader to consider that there is more to the story that meets the eye. The first concentrated preaching in Malawi took place about fifty years ago. At that time three American preachers moved to Malawi and began preaching, one in the Northern, one in the Southern, and one in the Central regions of the country. The first converts made by these men were very devoted, and a handful of these devoted men, native to Malawi, began to preach. Since that time there has been little in the way of sound Bible teaching and "rightly diving the word of truth." While it is true that "religion" is prevalent in Malawi, it is the case that the truth and sound Bible teaching are not. The resulting scenario is a generation of Christians who know about Christ, baptism, and the basic function of the church of Christ, not as a result of their biblical studies, but as a result of tradition that has been handed down. There is little understanding of how to search the scriptures in order to understand the will of the Lord.

Now, there are only two of that first group of preachers left in the country. The generation of preachers that are now working seek the work for the social status more that a commitment to spreading the truth. This conclusion is not from speculation, but is the result of discussions with these preachers and seeing the fruits of their labors.

This conclusion is not meant to paint a negative picture but to describe a shining picture of a great opportunity and a field that is abundantly white for harvest. After hearing what the Bible has to offer to those who are truly committed to studying from it, these people are hungry and thirsty for more. They are begging that Alan and I return to preach the truth among them.

Looking To Next Year

The opportunities that abound in Malawi are such that I cannot ignore them or leave them in the hopes that other men will be able to take advantage of them. The fact is, Alan is one of few (if any) sound preachers who have been invited by preachers and elders in Malawi to return to teach other faithful men and to instruct congregations concerning the true New Testament pattern for the church.

When we first arrived in Malawi, as mentioned on page 4, Alan and I were being asked to bring money from American churches. After working with these people and helping them to understand the true worth of God's word and the kingdom of heaven, they were embarrassed about their previous attitude.

By the time Alan and I left some of the preachers and elders were

begging us to return again next years. But this time, they were saying, "We don't want your money. We want you to come and teach our people the truth. We see now that we need that more than anything else."

That is the opportunity that, if the Lord wills, I am hoping and praying to be able to take advantage of next year. In this trip Alan and I spent most of our time working in the central region of Malawi. But by the end of our time there we had receive invitations from churches in all three regions to come preach the gospel and teach the Christians the truth of the Bible.

While I have not yet established a definite schedule, over the next few months I will be working toward that end. Once again, if the Lord wills, I will plan to spend three weeks in Africa. This time, however, if things

work out, the entire trip will be spent in Malawi.

In concluding this report, I send an appeal out to the reader and anyone who is interested in having fellowship with Alan and myself in this effort. The support that was provided by congregations and individuals for this trip was tremendous. It is my earnest prayer that the same be true for next year.

If you would like to help in this work in the future, please feel free to contact me with the information at the top of this page. If you have any questions, I would be glad to discuss anything pertaining to this work with you in detail.

May God bless you in your continued efforts in His Kingdom.

In Christian Love,

David Phillips