



BLESSINGS HOSPITAL

LUMBADZI, MALAWI

MAY 2011

N E W S L E T T E R

A New Birth

By Wes Gunn

It was January 2009 when Napoleon Dzombe faced the difficult decision to close Blessings Hospital. A lack of resources and the right staff had led to a decline in the hospital. It hurt to watch the closure and people responded in prayer for God to make a way forward. This facility had meant so much to hundreds of people, so it was incredibly sad to see it become empty and lifeless.

But God was preparing the hospital for a “new birth.” Napoleon began to have immense pressure on him from the community to reopen the facility. Even President Mutharika called Napoleon to urge him to take action. But Napoleon wasn’t sitting idle, he was waiting for the right people and the right time.

In July 2010 new life was breathed into the facility as Blessings reopened its doors for outpatient care. Its new

leader, Harold Banda, began working tirelessly for months to secure the right staff, the pharmacy stocked and the lab back up and running. Lots of cleaning, painting, and sorting was done with Malawian and American labor.

Alongside the reopening of the facility was the rebirth of a

vision that would make this facility one of the best in the country, including surgical care. In late 2010 the Landmark Church of Christ in Montgomery, AL received a \$63,000 grant to provide the means for getting the surgical center at Blessings operational. Dr. Jeff Bennie in Nashville, TN, Dr. Ken Mitchell in Pensacola, FL worked with Landmark missionary Dr. Bruce Smith, Jeni Huggins, RN, and Wes Gunn to develop a plan with engineer Allen Gunn and the local Malawi administrator that would provide everything needed for first-class surgical care.

A team traveled from Montgomery, AL in March to work on the infrastructure, particularly the lack of consistent water and the lack of pressure. This team did an amazing job and installed new water lines so that every room in the facility has great water pressure and the surgical center has adequate supply.



A Malawi “kasu” lays on the ground where workers were installing new water pipes around the facility.

Also on that March team Dr. Ken Mitchell met with and was approved by the Medical Council of Malawi to practice surgery in Malawi on future trips. This was a tremendous

blessing to be so warmly received by the government.

In the near future we anticipate teams of American surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses, and non-medical help to operate on patients identified by the hospital.

Getting beyond our campus and into the village, Blessings Hospital will soon begin regular mobile clinics in rural

villages where medical care is not easily available. These clinics will carry a mobile pharmacy and be able to refer patients to the main campus when necessary.

Most exciting about these mobile clinics is the location they will be held- local churches. We have already begun new dialogues with local churches in a radius around the hospital to assist them in reaching out to their communities. We hope this will be another avenue that we can display the compassion and message of Jesus in the central region of Malawi.



Muli Bwanji, Harold! Meet the Administrator

One of the key hires Napoleon made in the reorganization of Blessings Hospital was its new administrator, Harold Banda. Napoleon needed a passionate and trusted worker who would be willing to make great sacrifices to get the hospital back up and running.

Originally from N'dyapansi Village in Dowa district, just 8 miles east of Madisi, Harold had always dreamed of being a church minister and planned to attend a Bible school in South Africa. When passport problems delayed his plans, he settled for a degree in business administration. Harold says, "When I saw the great work that Mr. Dzombe was doing helping multitudes of people at Blessings Hospital, I wanted to offer my services at the

hospital." Harold was hired and served in the billing center from 2004-2006.

Through Harold's interaction with patients and his awareness of the shortage of medical personnel in Malawi, he wanted to do more than accounting. "I realized it was a calling from God to serve people in their illnesses and preach the message of God's love to them," Harold says. In 2006 he joined the Malawi College of Health Sciences and completed a nurse midwife degree in 2009. It was then that Mr. Dzombe called on Harold to oversee the revamping of the hospital.

Harold's vision isn't just for a facility that heals people physically, but to provide a place that points people to Jesus. "They should see smiling faces, caring hands,



*Blessings Hospital Administrator
Harold Banda.*

loving and gentle talking, and letting [churches] take part in their care," he says. Harold has held meetings with local church leaders to get their feedback and listen to the needs of the communities. He has taken great care to hire a

staff that is Christ-centered, including the new medical officer, Chimwemwe Kateka.

Harold's medical connections, his background in business administration, and his relationship with area churches are a beautiful blend of the areas of knowledge that are needed to make the hospital successful. You're likely to find Harold running to town for pharmaceuticals, keeping the books, seeing patients, or managing the supply room on any given day. He is truly multi-talented.

Harold's big news is that in September he will marry a wonderful Christian woman he met in nursing school. He is a great joy to be around and a very dedicated servant of Christ. We anticipate great things will come from his leadership.



Dr. Bruce Smith and Harold Banda look at a district map and potential sites for mobile clinics.

Under 5 Clinic Begins!

Thanks to Harold Banda working with the Malawi government, a new under 5 clinic began at Blessings in March. With the 11th highest infant mortality rate in the world, Malawi children are at risk for many serious illnesses.

The Malawi government is going to staff and operate a free clinic for children under 5 years of age which will include monitoring their growth,



weight, and administering vaccinations. Blessings Hospital personnel will be on hand for teaching the mothers about good hygiene, breast feeding and nutrition, HIV dangers, and malaria prevention. Children who are not well during this clinic will have access to the clinical officer and pharmacy at Blessings.

During the first clinic more than 20 mothers attended with their children. At the most recent clinic in mid-April, more than 90 children under 5 attended.

Contact

For more information about Blessings Hospital or to put your name on a list of medical professionals interested in traveling on a surgical team in the future, please contact:

Landmark Church of Christ

Wes Gunn wes@landmarkchurch.net
1800 Halcyon Blvd. 334-277-5800
Montgomery, AL 36117

To make a financial gift for the hospital, please mark your check for "Surgery Center" in the memo line.

