

Mission to Malawi, Africa 2009

This year a team of five traveled to Malawi, Africa, with Heart of the Shepherd Inc.; a public non-profit Christian organization that operates at Shepherd's Cross, just north of the city of Claremore. The trip was just over 2 weeks long, from July 26 - August 6th.

The team consisted of Peter and Dr. Diane Dickinson, Jacqueline Dickinson, Carolyn Dickinson & Kate Gregory. Peter & Dr. Diane Dickinson are founders of Shepherd's Cross Inc. & Heart of the Shepherd Inc. The primary emphasis of these two corporations, in a "nut shell" is to teach about basic agricultural principles and how they relate to the bible. This message is taught not only locally, but internationally.

Malawi, is a land locked country in Africa, and one of the poorest nations in the world. The team stayed at an orphanage in Amilyka Forest, about an hour and a half from Blantyre. The trip was multi-faceted, however the under girding premise, was to serve the needs of the people in whatever manner they needed assistance, with special emphasis on agricultural need. Heart of the Shepherd's slogan when traveling to third world counties is "volunteers in agriculture and animal medicine."

The orphanage, Victory Christian Children's Home, began approximately fifteen years ago, by a couple from Tulsa, Charles & Gladys Trombley. The orphanage is located on an 89 acre farm. There are approximately 150 orphans, all of which are not considered adoptable. In Malawi, if there are any living relatives, a child may not be adopted. The orphanage provides a special service, in that they accept older children, whose families can not care for them (from 4 years to 12 years). The children are housed, clothed and schooled at the orphanage. They are housed in smaller communities or homes, and each have house mothers/fathers.

Team Members, Jacqueline, Carolyn and Kate are all college students, with a desire to help the underprivileged. While at the orphanage, they led a six night revival. The theme of the revival was Christ's love, grace, freedom, and how to walk in relationship with Him. This was a tremendous encouragement to the children, as well as to the leadership. Additionally, they spent one on one time with many of the children, played soccer, and educated about hygiene.

The team worked with the orphanage to improve some of the agricultural techniques, as well as implementation of some new agricultural strategies. Peter's skills as a farmer were especially helpful in working with some simple farm equipment, repairing and teaching basic operation skills. Mentoring young men in farming skills is a special gift to a community that depends upon the land, for their next meal.

While there, we helped the orphanage implement a plan to develop a goat herd of 40, and a chicken flock of 200, in order to increase their daily protein intake. At this time, the children at the orphanage are fortunate to eat meat once per week. This will make a tremendous difference in their quality of life. We were able to provide the funding for these ventures, through the generous donations of many individuals in our community.

Peter and Dr. Diane Dickinson led Sunday morning worship both Sundays they were there. The message centered around Jesus the Great Shepherd, and how we are the sheep of the pasture. The people live so close to the land, consequently, they relate very readily to this imagery, found so pervasively throughout the bible.

Dr. Diane Dickinson is a licensed veterinarian, and led a team of veterinary technicians in a three day training seminar, that was set up through the Malawian government. In Malawi, there are essentially no veterinarians. The veterinary technicians have essentially no supplies, and no form of continued education. They were very grateful for the opportunity to learn. The training was held at the premier agriculture institute in Malawi. We expected to find books and learning aids there; however there was nothing there to teach with, except what we brought with us. Basic veterinary medical skills were taught at the seminar. We were so grateful for the open opportunity to teach and help these individuals. Additionally, we distributed 20 veterinary kits, with basic veterinary supplies to 20 districts, across the nation of Malawi. These kits

became the property of the government, and will be available for the veterinary technicians to use, throughout Malawi. Each kit truly encompasses more equipment than any one district possessed prior to our visit. We are very grateful for the donations supplied by individuals and medical professionals from our community. At the end of the seminar, the spokesperson made this statement “We came hoping to get some supplies. What we have left with is of far greater value, knowledge, and spiritual insight. When we have no tools in our hands, we know the Great Shepherd is with us and will equip us.” This truly warmed our hearts.

We treated a few animals locally, in villages, however, this year, the government authorities wanted us to work with them, in teaching, and helping implement a program that was far reaching throughout the nation of Malawi. This then can have greater ramifications than one team, laboring for two weeks, in one area. We were grateful for the opportunity to work with them.

If you would like to hear more about the trip to Malawi, we will host a slide show presentation in the tour barn at Shepherd’s Cross this Sunday afternoon from 2:30 - 4:30. All are welcome. Directions can be found on the website at www.ShepherdsCross.com or call 918.342.5911 for further information.