

Interview with Ruth Hayes Shelburne by Sidney Vaughn

In past issues, we have discussed the missionary's life and experience in Africa and wondering how this was from a missionary's wife's perspective.

I asked these questions of Ruth Shelburne who was there in the beginning of this work. It's interesting to see the similarities of their experiences to the current missionaries even though many years separated them.

Ruth,

1) What were your thoughts when you first learned you were going to Africa? I dreamed as a teenager about mission work. We donated to the new Malawi work with no idea of going. When we were invited, I said to B, "If God asks us, can we say no?"

2) What were the living conditions there? We lived in an old farmhouse with mud for mortar in the brick walls. At first there was an outdoor toilet, no electricity. Water was carried in buckets from a well to a drum piped to our bathtub. The separated kitchen had a wood stove. A tiny fridge ran on kerosene. Vegetables came from an outdoor market. We had plenty of snakes, blister-bugs, and army ants.

3) How long did you expect to stay? We were committed to two years, which soon became nineteen.

4) What were your thoughts about birthing and raising children there? How did the reality compare to your expectations? We were childless when we went in 1961. Ian came in 1964, David in 1966, and Anne-Marie in 1978. We were okay with the medical facilities for birthing. Our kids safely roamed among the natural beauty and wildlife at the Mission. Living abroad deepened their education. They buddied with the Wilks children next door. Sometimes Ian or David went to villages riding behind B on the motorcycle. They had a good childhood in Malawi.

5) Did you go on village trips? Before we had kids, I went with B on many trips. Over the years I also worked in the office. Peggy and I studied the Bible with Malawian ladies and taught them sewing. I helped at the Maternity Clinic, taught adult women to read, gave medicine and treatment to children with tropical ulcers, cuts, etc.

6) What were some of your concerns when the children got older? Education and the kids' socialization were major concerns. I home-schooled our kids, then they attended a school in town. Later a retired teacher, Margaret Williams, came over and taught the missionary children.

7) What were your thoughts at leaving? We were sad to leave our long-time Malawian friends and the beauty of Malawi. It was good to be nearer our families, but re-entry required adjustment.

8) What were your scariest moments? An attempted coup against the newly independent government, with violence around the mission. Later a campfire accident where David suffered almost fatal burns.

9) What was your funniest experience? B and I were tent-camping at a village church. The pit latrine was normally just a hole in the ground, but for our benefit the brethren had installed a wooden box with a hinged lid as a toilet seat. I heard something thudding underneath the lid and ran away. It turned out to be bats whose usual evening exit had been blocked by the new box.

10) What are your fondest memories? Arrival of our children; visits by B's dad [GB Shelburne, Jr], by my mother [Odilla Hayes], and a group from Main St. [including Sidney & Anita Vaughn and Richard & Marguerite Richard]; Christmas boxes from Main St., camping and hiking on Zomba Plateau; and hearing an older Malawian woman read from the Chichewa Bible.



Blessings in the Midst of Chaos by Ben Hayes

After 8 months, our missionary team is **finally** headed back to Malawi. Becca & I, Ryan & Justine, and Eric (and our families) all arrived in the US in March for our furloughs. Although we all expected to be away for 3-4 months, Malawi closed its doors for entry until a couple months ago. As for probably most of us during this COVID time period, there have been **blessings in the midst of chaos**. Each of us got to spend good time with family and friends, and be in the States for a few events that we would not have otherwise. For those things, we are grateful.

Yet even so, we're looking forward to being back in Malawi with our co-workers and friends and in our own homes. Our family, along with Eric, plan to arrive in Malawi on Nov. 11th and 12th. Ryan and family will arrive about 10 days later. They were waiting on a passport and thankfully, it has arrived.

This furlough was very different for us as we didn't get to see everyone that we expected to see. Even so, we thank you all for your continued partnership with us and the work in Malawi.



We will be praying for you all and are thankful for your prayers as we transition back into life in Malawi.

Blessings, Ben

"Then Abraham waited patiently, and he received what God had promised." Luke 6:15

Recently, our Malawi staff shared some of their perspectives about different seasons of waiting on God:

Sister Ziona shared some of the trials of her life and then said this: "God's time, plan, and choice has been the best for me. I discovered that when we asked God to answer our prayers or solve our problems, we need to be serving actively and **expectantly**."

Brother Faith's wife became pregnant for a third time after two miscarriages. As they waited on the birth of their baby boy, many tried to convince them to abandon God and find help with traditional medicine. He shared, "Each time such advice came, Psalms 23:1-6 always came to my mind. I always said to my wife: **"The Lord is our Shepherd we shall not want."** The week before the birth they were told she would need a C-section, but they pleaded with the Lord for a natural birth. The day before the scheduled surgery, their son was born naturally! Faith shared - "These situations made us trust the Lord more and more. If He was able to change **our tough moments into happiness**, He can also do it for everyone who **trusts in him**."

We rejoice that during seasons of waiting and struggle that our friends in Malawi continue to trust and continue to expect that God will provide all they need to bring joy into the tough moments of their lives!

Still, waiting with faith can be very hard! Things are tough in Malawi. The International Monetary Fund recently stated, **"Malawi's economic outlook has worsened (since May) . . . with the accelerated spread of the pandemic in the country."**

Namikango Mission **employs over 75 Malawians. We provide support to over 1,500 church leaders, 2,000 school children, and over 120 village savings and loans groups** along with many others. Right now, the Mission means more than ever before! We have two major steps to support our staff and leaders at this time:

- Encouraging staff by being able to pay them a livable wage during this difficult season. With all that has happened in 2020, we have held steady but are running through our financial reserves. We need to raise **an additional \$55,000 (The equivalent of 3 months of salary)** to continue to pay our team and get over this hump.
- Providing materials and local jobs for our Construction Team as they renovate the campus for the new Discipleship Training Institute. This will provide at least 10 families with income to take care of their family's needs in these difficult days. We **need \$100,000 to make this happen!**

Like the people of Israel waiting on the Messiah and Christians all across the world waiting on Christmas to arrive, we are waiting on the funds needed to bring hope, transformation and encouragement to the people of Malawi!

As I asked in last month's bulletin, will you join us in bringing hope during this season of waiting?

Will you make a gift of **\$100, \$200, \$500 or \$1,000 to provide for the needs** of our Malawi staff during this season of waiting? **In the words of Sister Ziona, I am expectantly waiting on the Lord and your response to the need we have for the work in Malawi!**

Blessings,
Ben Hayes,
Executive Director



*Be sure to visit the new website in the works now at www.Namikango.org.
There are three amazing videos at the bottom of the Resources Page that I encourage you to view. -sv*



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A Disbanded Church Can Live On by B. Shelburne

When the Namikango Mission office at South Houston checked their PO Box last month, they were blessed to find a donation for \$50,000. It was from the Evergreen Church of Christ, a country congregation near Coldspring, Texas.

The congregation, born in about 1900, had a great history. Hosting student preachers from South Houston Bible Institute was just one of their good works. But the church eventually dwindled to a handful of members. They disbanded, sold their property and sent the proceeds to help replace aging, crumbling buildings at Namikango Mission in Malawi.

Congregations have lifetimes just like people do. There are the joyful, exciting years after a church is born. There are the long, fruitful years in God's service. The church building is the scene of many happy weddings, comforting funerals, sharing of the Gospel, ministry to one another, continual worship, and thanksgiving to God. The lives of many members are built around what happens in that building. There are treasured memories.

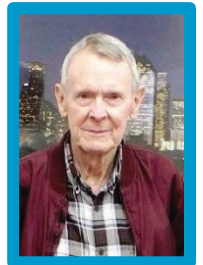
But there comes a time, especially for many rural congregations, when, even if the church does its best, it slowly declines. Young people move away. The local economy collapses. Key leaders grow old and pass away. Finally, the few

remaining souls realize that they cannot keep the church going any longer.

The demise of a local church is as sad as the passing of a loved one. When a faithful believer dies, **that is not the end**. Because of what Christ has done, the spirit lives on. There is also a way in which a disbanded congregation can live on. When the assets of the church are invested in a worthy ministry, in that sense the **church lives on** and continues serving God. What a testimony!

A dying congregation might divide its assets among a list of ministries. But there is a benefit for making a single, large gift. Smaller gifts are easier to raise, and smaller ministries will regularly get them. But large needs are much harder to raise funds for. Not discounting the value of smaller gifts, we know ministries facing capital expenses like the building of new facilities greatly need the size of gifts that a disbanding congregation is in a position to give.

If your congregation is in decline, the happiest thing that could happen would be revival. But if that does not happen, the congregation might pray to know the best way their **church can live on** is through another ministry that can continue to reach souls for Christ. Namikango, with such exciting new opportunities for outreach, is one such ministry.





Please accept this donation in memory of Susan Hayes's mother and Ben & Ryan's grandmother. In loving memory of

Maxine SoRelle

Iris Atchison ♦ Kalith & Vaughn Brown ♦ Caleb & Chelsea Francis
Danny & Donna Francis ♦ Rock Creek Church of Christ
Truman & Mauriene Hayes ♦ South Houston Bible Institute
Paul & Sheryl Stokes ♦ Sidney, Karen, & Robin (Hughes) Vaughn

Thank you for all the years of faithful service.

In honor and admiration of

Sidney Vaughn

Horace & Wenona Hamilton
Truman & Mauriene Hayes
DeAnna Respondek
Darleen West

Sam Tambala – Village Bible School Coordinator by Eric Gephart

Sam Tambala joined Namikango Bible School in August 2015 as a Bible teacher. He has been with us five years. He came at a time when we still had classes running on campus. Although he was fresh out from his college studies in Tanzania, he was very instrumental in strengthening the teaching staff that was here. Being new, he humbled himself and was keen to learn from other staff members.

Since joining Namikango his life has improved spiritually, physically, and economically. Working closely with the existing Namikango team, Sam has grown in his love for the Gospel and for a God who pursues us. His understanding of grace has enabled him to learn much in his role and aided him in being effective in dealing with hard issues that congregations bring to us for resolution. He has grown into a wise, godly,

young man, able to give direction and Biblical insight. Sam Tambala is a good and trusted team member when it comes to evangelism in uncharted areas. His joyful and kind spirit are almost unparalleled among our staff, which allow the message he shares to be mirrored in his own life.



At the beginning of this year he was promoted to be the Village Bible School Coordinator. He supervises and oversees the activities of the Bible schools in all centers in Malawi and Mozambique.

Recently, he got married to Tendai, a partner who will serve with him moving forward. Looking to the future, his prayer is that God will help him to achieve the goals for Discipleship School in the Village Centers as well as for blessing on his new family.