



NAMIKANGO  
MISSION

JUL-AUG  
2023

# *Class of 2023*



## **Discipleship Training Institute**

**Empowering African communities through  
Christ-centered transformation**





# The First Graduation

by Ben Hayes

It was a beautiful morning, the stage was decorated, and 17 students eagerly awaited the completion of two years of hard work. The graduation for Namikango Discipleship Training Institute's first cohort took place on July 18, 2023.

The US team and I were all able to be present for this incredible event. For me, it was moving in several ways. When I looked at the graduates on stage with their diplomas, I saw years of work to get DTI ready (much owed to Eric, Ryan, and other staff members), hours of teaching preparation, and wonderful moments in class with each of these students.

Not being able to have Ryan, Eric and others there who had taught or done so much with DTI, along with Becca

and my family, was hard. But the joy on the faces of each of these graduates and their stories made the event so powerful. When some of these students came, they doubted that they could even handle the academic rigor of the program. To reach this day and graduate was not only an academic achievement, but a personal victory and motivator for their lives moving forward. They have completed a really difficult program and are equipped now to bless their communities. We will stay connected with the first group as they begin to serve.

The next cohort is scheduled to start in September with 18 new students. We're excited about the next group, what God has already started to do and will continue to do through them! Please be praying for all of them.



## Ben & Team to Malawi

I had the blessing of taking a two-week trip to Malawi in July with 7 individuals from different parts of Texas and the US, including the Kessler Family (*New Beginnings Church, Houston*), Robert Lee (*Board President, Denver*) and Nathan Keller (*Anna St. CofC, Amarillo*). We were also blessed to have Schalee Sanchez (*The Branch Church, Dallas*) join us for a few days.

Traveling with this team was a wonderful experience, and I'm so grateful to each of them for their support of Namikango and the encouragement they were me and the Namikango staff.



# My Malawi Experience

by Elliot Kessler

My family and I took a trip to the Namikango Mission in Malawi in July 2023. I wasn't sure what to expect. All I knew was that I was excited to escape for a little while.

The trip happened during a turning point in my life. I had just quit my job, and I wasn't sure I even wanted to go to college for the semester. But I felt rushed. Everyone around me had a path. They were going to work and taking summer classes. Many were taking four classes or more for the fall semester, and I wasn't sure if I was taking any. Everything was moving so fast. I felt pressured to try and keep up or be left behind, but I wasn't sure how to speed up. Everything felt so overwhelming.

Malawi culture reminded me to slowdown. Everything reminded me to stop and enjoy life. It's not something to be rushed through. Taking it slow is okay. It's more important to stop and remember why you're doing something than it is to do it without purpose. I remembered who I was living for—not to please people or to catch up with society. I was living to worship God, and I only remembered that by slowing down and taking a breath.

One of the best examples of this way of living is how much walking they have to do and the impact that has on Malawi culture. Only a small percentage of Malawians have vehicles. Most of them walk wherever they need to

go, which includes going from the village into town and back again, which is a long way. Because of this, events tend to take a little longer to get started. Most things occur later than the time that was set. A church service held at nine might not begin until ten. In Malawi, it's not important when the event begins, but that it happens at all. And the importance of an event is emphasized by how long it takes. To respect the time of others because of how much walking everyone must do, events take longer to make them worth attending.

**Malawi reminded me to slow down and think about the purpose of my next steps. It reminded me that I wasn't living for anyone but God and God alone.**

Western culture is in a hurry. We're always rushing from one part of our lives to the next—middle school, high school, college, career, retirement. Life becomes a checklist. We forget to stop, breathe, and remember who we're living for. The people of Malawi aren't in a hurry. They take their time. They enjoy their time with one another, and they make their events last because they understand what's important in life. It's not about getting things done. It's about experiencing God's beautiful creation and enjoying it with others.

This is only one of the many things Malawi and the people of Namikango Mission taught me. I learned a lot about life and God. I saw people who were excited to worship and loved to be together. Everyone was peaceful and full of joy, and I hope to bring that with me to share with others.





NAMIKANGO MISSION  
PO Box 16528  
Lubbock, TX 79490

NONPROFIT ORG US  
POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 764  
LUBBOCK, TEXAS 79424

## connect with us

**BEN HAYES – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
806-544-0549 – [ben@namikango.org](mailto:ben@namikango.org)

**ROBERT LEE – PRESIDENT**  
720-998-2066

 [namikango.org](http://namikango.org)

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# UNDER THE MANGO TREE



## Malawi Board

One of the key events during our visit to Malawi was meeting with the Malawi board. This board is now fully in place with 8 godly, talented individuals from Malawi, along with myself. Having Robert Lee there for the first board meeting was a blessing. We had an all-day meeting on Saturday, getting to know one another, as well as going through many items for the future. The next step will be a joint meeting with the US and Malawi boards. Having had this most recent meeting, I'm more even more excited about the future of Namikango.



## Lion's Challenge

Schalee Sanchez (the granddaughter of Roland and Wanda Hayes) is helping to initiate a fundraising campaign called "The Lion's Challenge" that will feature some of her story and connection to Namikango. We will be promoting Namikango's ministries through a series of videos and seeking to engage new partners to join and expand what God is doing in Malawi. If you have not connected to Namikango via social media, do so and follow the campaign! It will kickoff on September 14th, two days after the National Day of Charity, and run through the 21st.