

Presbyterians Sharing . . . April 2011 Update

Presbyterians Sharing is the national fund supporting the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.



Mike Burns giving the benediction at St. James Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Blantyre, Malawi.

Learning to Dance

Your gifts to *Presbyterians Sharing* have helped send The Rev. Michael Burns and his wife Debbie to serve the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Malawi (CCAP). Mike is an associate minister at St. James Church, helping meet the CCAP's need for qualified ministers. Debbie is looking forward to discerning a position in Malawi that will allow her to use her God-given gifts in ways and areas that fit with what is needed by the people there. Read more at www.presbyterian.ca/ministry/world/staff. The following comes from their blog.

I co-officiated at my first wedding on a Saturday morning with my colleague, Rev. Songola, and he assured me that the next one would be all mine! The wedding was originally scheduled for 8am on Saturday, but a presbytery meeting was called for 8:30, so Rev. Songola simply called the families and told them their wedding was now at 7. Can you hear the cries of outrage if I called a family in Canada and told them their wedding was moved up by an hour with only two days notice?

I arrived at the church at 6:45am and there seemed to be very few people about for a wedding that was supposed to start in 15 minutes. Rev. Songola informed me that the family had called and told him that they would be ready at 7:30am. The wedding ceremony

finally began at 7:45. I was pleasantly surprised to see that the couple was one I had met at my very first service at St James, the Sunday that their banns were first read. Malawian weddings in the CCAP follow a similar order to PCC weddings with most of the same elements. The only difference is the entire marriage ceremony is conducted first and then the couple sits and listens to the sermon. Following the sermon and a prayer the register is signed and it becomes official. The minister then leads the wedding party out of the church, a few pictures are taken with the minister and the clergy take their leave.

Immediately after the wedding Rev. Songola and I drove to our presbytery meeting, an executive meeting preparing for the annual general meeting of full presby-

Presbyterians Sharing

Goal for 2011: \$ 8,515,000

Received by March 31, 2011: \$988,532

Received by March 31, 2010: \$988,509

Thank you for your faithful support of *Presbyterians Sharing*. Let us continue to work and pray together as we encourage congregations to reach and surpass their commitments in 2011.

tery the next Saturday. Seventy ministers and elders crammed shoulder-to-shoulder into a small classroom. The meeting went for most of the day.

I attended the 8am English service on Sunday morning. I was not preaching or convening the service, but was acting as the moderator as Rev. Songola had done at the 6am and would do at the 10am (this means I had to sit in the big chair behind the communion table for the service). It was “Revival” Sunday and the evangelism committee had planned the program and supplied the preachers. The service was very lively, beginning with four choirs and then the congregation singing three praise songs. The second song was about “dancing for the Lord” and the whole congregation began swaying, clapping and singing. Suddenly, Rev. Songola ran up the chancel steps, grabbed both my hands and said, “I hope it is alright, but we are going to dance!” To the congregation’s delight we danced for the entire song! I am sure I would have died of embarrassment in Canada, but it just seemed so natural to dance with each other behind the communion table. Debbie also did some dancing. She was handed a baby part way through the service and held him for about 30 minutes during most of the choirs and praise songs.

As the moderator it is also my job to welcome visitors. The clerk in charge of the announcements calls forward the visitors at the end of announcements. I then come forward, formally welcoming them and extending the right hand of fellowship. At the end of this particular service I also consecrated the chairs and vice chairs of a number of church committees and pronounced the benediction. All in all a very enjoyable worship that gave new meaning to “dancing for the Lord.”



The Gift of Food: On February 22, 2011, Mike and Debbie attended a food distribution coordinated by the Blantyre Synod. Food was provided by Presbyterian World Service & Development and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, and the distribution was overseen by Glenn Inglis, who is supported by *Presbyterians Sharing*. Read more on Mike and Debbie’s blog.

World Day of Prayer in Malawi



Debbie loves her new World Day of Prayer outfit.

Every year different churches host the Women’s World Day of Prayer. This year it was St. James’ turn.

A week before the service I was told to purchase a special cloth designed for the day. A tailor who attends St. James made me an outfit in time for the service. I was touched that I was encouraged to wear a traditional Malawian outfit so early in my stay. It made me feel part of the celebration as I joined many other women wearing the cloth as well.

Being new to St. James, I was told to arrive at 8 am to hear various choirs and that the official service would start at 10. Shortly after eight I arrived and could hear music inside the church, but the women who greeted me told me that it was a recording, as none of the choirs or organizers had arrived yet. We went into the church and sat down. For the next two hours more women came, many getting up to dance, sing and laugh with one another. I must admit, the impatient part of me kept thinking, “I thought the choirs started at eight” but I did get caught up in the relaxed and happy atmosphere and soon realized that a wonderful celebration of women was taking place, just differently than I expected.

At 10:15 the worship leader, a session clerk and Amayibusas (minister’s wives) were invited to sit together in the chancel area at the front of the church. For the next two hours we were blessed as the choirs, full of joy and praise, went up and down the aisles singing, hugging, laughing and dancing with one another. The “official” part of the service had still not started when I had to leave at noon with St. James’ other Amayibusa, Golda. Still, I felt that I truly had celebrated World Day of prayer. By that time hundreds of women had gathered and at least 12 choirs had sung. When I walked past at 4:30, the service was still full and joyous and did not sound as if it would be ending anytime soon.



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