

# Gary Brough - Malawi

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Dear friends,

We've just returned from travelling in Zambia for a combination of work and family holiday. After a few days wondering at God's creation in a national park - leopard, zebra, giraffe, elephant, and more - we drove to the capital city, Lusaka. We enjoyed the comforts of a big town and worshipped with a local church community.

During our travels, I read a post by Ray Ortlund, contrasting the garden and the city in scripture that struck a chord not just because of the change in scenery but also the outlook for the work we're involved in:

"God will not merely re-create the Garden of Eden for us. He promises a whole new world, combining both the Garden (His creation, Genesis 2:8) and the city (our invention, Genesis 4:17), His creation perfected, our invention redeemed — a sparkling new garden/city world, filled with resurrected followers of Jesus!"

We celebrate a resurrected Jesus, victorious over sin and death. No work of our hands can ever compare to His. Yet He invites us to co-labour, and sometimes we see a shadow of His creation and redemption patterns in the work He puts our hands and minds to. What a privilege. What a hope.



We were in Lusaka because I delivered the Emerging Leaders Programme to a group from the Synod of Zambia. A lot of extra work has gone into adapting the format into a manual that participants can then use to train others, so it was exciting to roll this out with those who held various leadership positions in the Synod, presbyteries and youth department. The change in the course format is not just about being useful now, but also in the future. The next step will be to translate the printed manual into local languages.

Within the programme, we begin by looking at how we lead ourselves because if Christ is not our foundation, and our character isn't shaped by a relationship with Him, then we're building on sandy ground. I tried to explain the concept of a "shoogly peg" to our participants, but we decided the sandy ground made more sense! Whatever the metaphor, this part of the programme always gives more conversation, particularly because the pressures on leaders often make them feel forced to build in their strength.

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We're home in Mzuzu before I head to Harare to deliver ELP again with the Synod. It's a cold 19 degrees and still raining heavily. We wouldn't expect this much rain now, as people are drying and harvesting their maize. The harvest has brought relief in food prices, with maize at the market now around 50% of what it was at its peak. But the irregular rains mean the harvest is low, leading to a longer lean season and higher prices in months to come.



When we returned from Zambia, we found the shop shelves are increasingly empty and prices continue to rise. An import ban on agricultural products is creating a trade rift with our Rift Valley neighbours. The usual banana vendors are not to be seen, even along the captive audience of drivers in the fuel queues.

The garden and the city here and worldwide need the resurrected Jesus. But while we await His return, He gives purpose to our labours and perspective to our struggles. Though the rains aren't enjoyed everywhere, they give newly planted tree seedlings a better chance to thrive. We distributed small grants to congregations around Malawi from the Church of Scotland Stamp Appeal. From Karonga to Phalombe, projects were selected to plant trees to improve the environment, restore farmland, improve nutrition, generate income, and provide sustainable timber sources. This has also been an excellent opportunity to discuss the practicalities of nurturing the trees and the importance of caring for God's creation.



The girls are doing well at school, though sadly, they said farewell to close friends who've moved on because of a new work post for their parents. We didn't think we would get to say goodbye in person until by "chance" they found us hours from home, broken down by the road! Eilidh is currently working on her science fair project – testing the efficiency of homemade alternatives to charcoal. She selected the project because she wants to help protect forests.



We all had a great time on safari in Zambia, the big city (to us), and Victoria Falls. Before we moved here as a family, I travelled to Malawi, India, and Nepal for work. When asked if I missed the family, I'd say "no, I don't... but I miss that we don't experience this together". Occasionally, I have to remember what a privilege this experience is for us as a family. And the last two weeks of travel to Zambia have been such a reminder. We wondered at God's creation in the wildlife on safari, in glorious sunsets and drenched in the mist of one of the world's seven natural wonders. And we did it together.

As always, thank you for walking with us in prayer, encouragement and support. These past weeks have reminded us afresh of the beauty and brokenness of this world—and the hope we carry in Christ. Whether in the rhythms of leadership training, the joy of travel, or the quiet work of planting trees and preparing school projects, we

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are grateful to be part of something far greater than ourselves. May we all continue to catch glimpses of the garden-city to come, even as we labour faithfully in the here and now.

With love and gratitude,

Gary, Jacqueline, Eilidh, Morven and Caitlin



Enjoying creation at South Luangwa National Park, Zambia