



## Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

### Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

---

Muli bwanji, friends.

Warm greetings on behalf of our partners and friends in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi. Here are a few updates for you!

#### **HEALTH**

Over the last 6 months, Malawi has experienced a significant increase in the number of people affected by cholera. With nearly 59,000 reported cases and 1,754 deaths, this disease, most commonly spread through contaminated water, continues to put a strain on communities, and has now become the worst epidemic of the disease that Malawi has experienced. Medical clinics throughout the country are working hard to treat patients, and the Ministry of Health is providing ongoing cholera vaccine clinics in several regions in an effort to help protect people from this disease.

There is rising concern that the recent storm, Cyclone Freddy (more details below), which brought widespread flooding, mudslides and wind damage, will exacerbate the cholera epidemic, food insecurity, and mental & physical health struggles across the country. In response, our siblings in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi have established a plan to assist communities/congregations which includes: educational materials for cholera prevention/treatment/testing, training for leaders who can assist this specific need, and medical & health/hygiene supplies. As a synod we have established a campaign for 2023 that will include funds to assist the ELCM with these efforts.

#### **BISHOP ELECTION**

ELCM staff, pastors, evangelists, and congregations are looking forward to July when the church assembles in Blantyre for the election of the first bishop of the newly established Blantyre Diocese. The celebration will continue in late November when the bishop is formally installed and the new diocese is consecrated.

#### **AUGUST VISIT**

For the first time since 2019, we will be traveling to Malawi to spend time with our partners in ministry! Eight travelers will depart on August 4 and return August 19th. While away, we will visit parish partners in Zomba and Chimvu (both in the southern region), see some of the newly built wells, take in some Malawian culture, and engage in important conversations with Bishop Bvumbwe and the ELCM staff about recent difficulties and future ministry we can do together. Please pray for this group as they prepare for the journey!



## DEEP DRILLED BORE WELLS

With the help of former Bishop Bob Berg and his two granddaughters, Emma and Claire, our partnership with the ELCM has included the ministry of building wells. With persistent struggles of disease, drought and famine, wells can make a significant difference in a household or community's ability to thrive.



In recent years many congregations and individuals have contributed to this fund, sharing the resources needed for the ELCM to build these wells in communities that have significant need for access to clean water. **THANK YOU** for this ongoing support! Water is truly life-giving – and having easier access to it can help prevent illness, allow girls an education and increase their safety, it can provide irrigation for gardens, and so much more.

If you/your congregation are interested in learning more about helping to fund a well, please let me know!

## CYCLONE FREDDY

In late February and early March southeast Africa was impacted by Cyclone Freddy, the longest lasting tropical cyclone on record. Malawi experienced the most significant devastation as the storm created heavy rainfall, catastrophic flooding, and subsequent mudslides, especially in the southern region of the country. Over 1,000 people died, 1,700 were injured, and more than 500 are still missing. Nearly 1,000,000 people lost their homes, and the government has established more than 500 camps to shelter these families. Many households lost entire crops and the cost of food has increased 300-400% in the last couple of months. It is estimated that 2.3 million people will face hunger as a result of this storm. It is probable that these difficulties will intensify the existing cholera epidemic, while disproportionately affecting children and women.



After declaring a state of disaster, surrounding countries and global organizations have begun to send aid. And, we are doing what we can to help ease the burden on our siblings in the ELCM. Both the ELCA and the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin have sent initial relief funds to our partners in ministry there. Again, **THANK YOU** so much to each and every one of you who have contributed to this fund so far. Due to the magnitude of damage, we will continue to gather and share monetary gifts during 2023 for the purpose of storm and cholera relief. If you are feeling called to share a gift you can do so using the following link: <https://nswsi.org/giving> , or sending a check to the synod office. You can also find the link for the 2023 campaign flyer here: <https://nswsi.org/malawi>

Mphatso Thole, Companion Coordinator & Communications Director in the ELCM, has written an article (see page 4), sharing the story of Estre Yona, an ELCM congregant from the Kasokeza Parish in southern Malawi. I hope it helps to provide a closer perspective of the kind of impact this storm has had on our friends there.

### NEXT STEPS

As we continue to seek how God is calling us to accompany our siblings in Malawi, to respond with compassion, and to share the gospel, I invite you to pray with me:

*God of grace and mercy,*

*When the waters are rising and there is no firm place to stand, it can feel like life has been swept away. Draw near to our siblings in Malawi in their time of need and protection.*

*Support them as they rebuild what has been ruined. Strengthen them with your assurance and hope. Surround them with compassion, provide what they need. Do not let them drown in sorrow, but raise them up to new life in your promise of rebirth, already claimed in Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*(\*From All Creation Sings, Augsburg Fortress)*

I am so grateful for your enduring and faithful response to this partnership. Your continued generosity, prayers, support – ALL the ways you show up for our partners in Malawi – is greatly appreciated. And, please feel free to reach out to me any time for further conversation, partnership support, or educational workshops regarding our accompaniment with the ELCM.

Together in Christ,

*Laura Ramlow*





ESTRE Yona, member of Kasokeza Parish, Lower Shire Deanery of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi is living in shock after experiencing traumatic situation during the night when her family was in panic due to heavy flooding induced by cyclone Freddy.

The flooding claimed lives of her husband and the child.

Awakening with shock during the night of tragedy, Shadreck, the husband to Estre rushed to a room where six children were sleeping and picked Maureen, the youngest child going outside their house unknowingly where they met their fate.

Estre saw her husband and child washed away by the flooding.

With God's grace the woman in a minute of tragedy thought of saving her five remaining children by pushing them to climb and cling to the house pole while one part of the wall fallen down to the heavy flooding.

With sorrowful gesture, Estre continued narrating that together with her children they remained clinging to the pole from the night of the tragedy until morning when people came to rescue them. What was most scary was that during the 6 or 7 hours of the disaster, the family endured heavy down pour of rains.

The community of Group Village Headman Dzambatuka, Traditional Authority Chiputula in Chikwawa, Malawi was the most hit by the cyclone in the east bank of Shire River in the district.

The death of Shadreck and his child Maureen is the first reported fatal case affecting directly to Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi.

Despite the death of her husband and child, Estre Yona is still strong and remaining faithful to God. She is healing from the pains and now regularly attends church services as she described of her remaining family members miraculously rescued.

The houses of the whole village were washed away and she is taken care at the house of well wishers while most of her community members are residing in temporary camps in the area.

Reported by:

*Mphatso Thole*

Communications Director – Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi

