

September 2009

“Pregnant woman gives birth to a stone. ‘Bewitched’ claims husband”

“Man resurrected by witch doctor six months after his funeral”

Newspapers are rarely dull in Malawi! These are just a few of the headlines that have appeared in the national newspapers in the last month. Speaking to people about these incidents has been very revealing. A few brave souls go against their cultural grain and say the stories are nonsense. Most people are troubled or even frightened by them – citing them as evidence of the pervasive, ongoing power of witchcraft. The stories provoked a debate in the national press. Is witchcraft real? It’s an interesting one for the church. On the one hand, the Bible is clear on the existence of supernatural malevolent power, and tells us not to get involved in occult activity. On the other, the fear of witchcraft has a tremendous grip on the lives of many people – a fear that is often stoked up by fire-brand preachers who peddle deliverance from its power. As a result we meet Christian people who pray fervently that their child will not start ‘flying at night’ (the trademark of witches) and live daily in fear. I can’t recall the exact quotation, but CS Lewis said there were two errors we could make about the devil. We can ignore him or pretend he doesn’t exist – the error of most Western secularists. Or we can pay too much attention to him, and live in terror of his power. Perhaps this is what we see in Malawi. Please pray for church leaders in Malawi that they will provide balanced, truthful Biblical teaching that sets people free.

The College of Medicine hosted the University graduation in August. It was so encouraging to see 42 new doctors acknowledge the ‘Helsinki Declaration’ – the modern equivalent to the Hippocratic Oath. Having been here a year now, Neil knew many of them well, so despite having to sit on the stage for 4 hours in academic dress, he enjoyed the occasion! Many mission hospitals are struggling because of a lack of doctors – please pray that the Christian graduates would obey the call the Lord to work amongst the poor.

Things are settling down again at Embangweni after a turbulent few months – the projects officer was suspended pending investigation for misuse of funds. All building work was stopped, but has now resumed with the quadruplex nurses house at roof level, and the refurbishment of the water supply and toilet block at the secondary school well under way. We are very thankful to the Lord for the clear, godly leadership of Rev John Gondwe – the head of station.

The kids enjoyed their ‘winter’ break of July and August and are now back to school. Family highlights in August included the visit of Aunty Keren, snorkelling off a boat in Lake Malawi, being stuck in our car behind a herd of elephants in Liwonde and the arrival of Ginny. Ginny (short for her real name – Guinness – which the kids are ashamed of) is a Great Dane / Rhodesian Ridgeback cross and has already outgrown her first basket. She is just the right



combination of scary looks and trustworthy character for a guard-dog!

Thanks to those who have been praying about the children's spiritual life. Ben did most of a Christianity Explored course with some friends over the holidays, and we've helped to set up an early teens bible study / fellowship group on alternate Friday nights which will meet in term time. Here are some more prayer ideas...

- Pray for church leaders in Malawi as they teach about witchcraft and demonic powers. Pray their teaching will set people free, rather than enslave them to fear.
- Pray for those mission hospitals that are struggling to get medical staff – Ekwendeni in particular is short.
- Pray for Rev John Gondwe at Embangweni – that he would have wisdom as at times he makes some very difficult decisions.
- Pray for our growth in Christ here. We were challenged recently by a sermon in church about our attitude to the poor people we see and work with every day. Pray we'd never forget that "rich and poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all" (Proverbs 22:2).
- Pray for continued progress in the child-protection work. We've managed to identify a specific child protection worker (for the city!). Pray that he will get the resources and support that he needs from his managers to do the job properly.

Thanks for taking the time to read this.

With love Neil, Sara, Ben and Grace Kennedy

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(FYI – From the UK- letters can take 1 week if post is good, usually 3-4 weeks, but parcels seem to be taking anything up to 6 months! Sending any parcel over 2Kg is expensive.)

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