

# News from Namitembo

I'm finally back to Seattle, but honestly, my heart is still in Malawi. Today's insert will include some pictures of a few of the people I've spent time with – just to give you a flavor of what the visit was like.

First, about our friend Fr. Owen. He's in good health and good humor – and is still an amazing man to follow



around. I do think we wore him out, as he acted as our personal chauffeur and guide, in addition to his regular duties. It's hard to describe his schedule... when a part goes out in the mill, or with one of the parish cars, for instance, he's usually the one to make the 2-hour drive to Zomba, picking up groceries, negotiating a wild dirt road with 30 degree slopes in places.



The parish is the largest "employer" in the area, with its schools and other works – and he is the man in charge, with no secretary or bookkeeper. He naturally oversees all construction for the main parish and its seven outchurches, their primary schools, two

high schools, and the Trade School. He likewise is responsible for overseeing their eight Church Councils and the overall Parish Council – and all the pastoral works that this entails. Whew.

Another man I'd like to introduce you to is Fr. Phillip. Phillip is from Namitembo, and was assigned to the



mission almost two years ago. He's also has the role that we would call "Vicar for Education" within the diocese, and until recently was also diocesan head of Liturgy. Phillip celebrated Mass with one of the small Christian communities while we were there (as Clare Mallahan can attest – those young girls in the picture



are teaching her liturgical dance), and also took me out for a day, to visit the sick. Among others, we blessed a man who was probably suffering from tuberculosis. [As most people know, TB is considered an opportunistic infectious disease (OID) connected with HIV/AIDS. The infection rate in Malawi is 14%, but much higher in the southern, rural sections of the country.] As noted elsewhere in the bulletin, Phillip just might come to Seattle to visit, during September – details pending!



Fr. Frank is another amazing priest, pictured here officiating at a wedding. The wedding, by the way, is being held outside the home, on a Friday morning, in the company of their family and other friends from the small Christian community – who have planned their reception later that afternoon. Frank is 91 years old,



and has been in Malawi for over 60 years. He was the master builder for the cathedral in Zomba, a generation ago. He's slowed down a bit, but has a very keen, dry wit, loves to play cards, and enjoys a gin & tonic before dinner!

We also had the occasion to meet with Bishop Thomas Msusa, who was ordained bishop not long before our visit two years ago. Bishop Thomas officially oversees the Agriculture and Trade School at Namitembo, with Owen as his on-site representative. He's a very energetic 44 years old, and made a special stop at Namitembo on his way between Zomba and the neighboring diocese of Mangochi –



where he has also been serving as interim administrative head of that diocese too, upon the untimely death of its bishop over a year ago. Anyone want to trade places with the African clergy? They seem to work pretty hard...

And speaking of the Trade School, pictured with the bishop and Owen is Mr. Rex Chipeta, Administrator of the school.

Rex and his family live right at the site of the school, and he celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday during our visit – shown below is his wife Lucy, together cutting the cake. (Lucy is a very talented woman in her own right –



more about her another time.) The school is very much alive and well, and construction is still proceeding. Enrollment needs to improve, especially from the general area around the mission; school fees are a concern, along with the probable need to provide some student housing at the school; but I'll write more about that and other school issues in a coming report. The trades currently up and running are the computer lab (most of their students passed



their certification tests) along with tailoring, masonry, and carpentry/joinery. Pictured here are some of the carpentry students outside the classroom — three of the students are young women!

***More to come!***  
***— Denny Duffell***