



December 2018

Dear Friends,

The talk turned to money and suddenly faces became more serious. Smiles disappeared, worry lines were evident. It has been the same wherever I've been, from the former refugee area in the north of the Diocese of Lake Rukwa, to the shores of Lake Tanganyika and the highlands in the troubled south. Over the last three weekends I have been travelling with a team, visiting a number of our churches, giving the news that there is no money. There's never any money. We are, after all, in one of the poorest areas of one of the poorest countries in the world.



The eye-catching Christ the King Cathedral, Mpanda

Whenever I got up to speak, I explained how, as a diocese, we started out with nothing. But, rather than still having most of it left, God has enabled us to grow. The story is often told of how, in the beginning, the diocese only had one small church building and a congregation of about 30 people in the town of Mpanda. People love stories and so I told the tale of how, over the past eight years, we have been able to acquire three plots of land, build offices, a nursery school and two houses, buy three vehicles, take on development projects and an office staff of 14 people,

not to mention building and consecrating the new cathedral in the centre of town. It's encouraging to look back and see how far we have come. Even so, our budgeted expenditure still far exceeds the income we receive from our congregations and this deficit needs to be addressed.

The opening of the new cathedral was an uplifting occasion, an outpouring of thanks and celebration. The work was almost finished by the opening date and many guests from far and wide joined with the local congregation in dedicating the building to the glory of God. In all, there were more than 800 people in attendance and the local congregation took great pride in being able to see what they had spent so much of their own time and resources to build.

Entertaining all the guests and completing all the finishing touches has, however, left us with further bills to pay. The diocesan synod, which met immediately after the opening of the cathedral, was made aware of the financial situation we face. We feared that people may sink into despondency



Bishop Mathayo speaks at the cathedral opening

at the size of the task that faces us. But after some initial gasps and sighs, what we saw was a growing determination. We, synod decided, must be the answer to the problem. As a result, this last Sunday, in every church in the diocese, fundraising events took place. It didn't raise a great deal of money, but it was a step in the right direction, on a long, hard road.

It's been a privilege and a challenge for me to be involved in the life of a very young, very poor diocese in a challenging part of the world. I came to provide training to lay leaders of local congregations and I am thankful that I have been able to establish a training course

for them. I hope that the materials that have been developed will continue to be used in the future. Kevin and Karen Flanagan, missionaries from CMS Australia, are presently learning more Swahili so that they can work more effectively in the diocese. Kevin, who has a heart to pastor and train leaders and along with local help, may be able to develop the course.

Much of my time here has, however, been spent supporting and assisting Bishop Mathayo Kasagara. He has a huge load to bear, leading of the diocese. The stresses and strains of the physical, spiritual and financial state of the diocese have taken their toll and he is currently in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania's main city), receiving treatment for a number of ailments. We are praying that he will soon be sufficiently recovered and refreshed that he can resume his responsibilities.

After almost four years here (although I have been in the UK for most of this year) I am preparing to leave the diocese and return to the UK. I have already begun to say goodbyes and it's not easy. Some things I will miss, some things I won't miss, but I will miss the people. Overall, I am thankful to God that I have had the opportunity to live, learn and grow with brothers and sisters, seeing God at work in the changes and chances of this fleeting world.

I am also looking forward, sometimes with trepidation, to the new challenges of parish life in rural Lancashire. I will leave Crosslinks early next year and take up a post in the Diocese of Blackburn, closer to my family.

With my love and thanks to you for your partnership with me in bringing God's Word to this part of God's World.

Paul

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