

Dehnerts in Malawi



December 8, 2007

Mwaswela Bwanji!

Happy New Year everyone! We are just a few days away from starting our second semester at African Bible College. Many of the students are probably quite busy trying to raise the funds to return to classes. **Pray for them to have what they need for tuition & fees.**

We have had some interesting reading and experiences lately regarding the common issue of witchcraft in Malawi. I was given a book written by an academican in the Malawi University system about a particular "diviner" that practiced exorcising witches in Malawi from the 50s to the 80s or 90s. He was very famous throughout sub-Saharan Africa with people coming to him either to deal with diseases or because their village required them to go due to being accused of witchcraft.

It was evident through eyewitnesses that he possessed some extraordinary form of power in his ability to "know" a person that he had never met before and to indicate the number of crimes they had committed as witches – usually murder. If he determined that the person was a witch indeed, he would have his assistant slice lines in their face and put "medicine" in that would take away their powers. People would voluntarily go to him if sent as it would be an admission of guilt if they did not agree to go. At times there were a thousand people in his little village (usually only hundreds!) waiting to be seen. As is common for diviners here, he would take some form of drug that would "bring the spirits in" so that he could "read" the individuals he saw.

This book prepared me a bit to find out this week that friends of ours have an employee at their house that has just been rumored to be a witch. She came to our friend a number of months ago to explain, in tears, that she had been asked by her pastor to be in charge of the offerings – it isn't just as simple as taking a bag and getting it to the bank the next day. She knew that she would be under great pressure by people to give them financial help because she "had the money". Also, there would be those that were envious of her position. She has been bold and uncompromising on not giving away the offering of the church and it is possible folks have indeed decided to start a "witchhunt" because of this. It simply takes one individual who is bitter to start it all!

The incredible fear of witches means that often someone who is believed to be a witch will be murdered. She has been advised to go far away and not come back. The police came and got her the first night when they found out she was being accused and put her in jail for the night to keep her safe. The jail here acts as a "city of refuge" that you read about in the Old Testament. Because of the "mob" mentality, things of this sort require a place of safekeeping until the furor dies down. The village chief and her pastor are trying to settle things down. **Agnes and her family could really use your prayers during this time.**

Continue to pray for us as we consider ways of providing good theological instruction to the local church leaders. If you have access to good theological works, please let me know. We will be publishing a list soon of works we wish to begin providing to churches here.

Finally, we had a wonderful time with Britney over Christmas and a special visit by our dear friend's son, Patrick Wood. Thanks for your prayers that she get here! She is safely back at school!

By God's Grace,
Kelly, Connie, Britney, Joel, Shea and Janelle