

OCTOBER 2020 ISSUE

TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF MPONELA
REFORMED CHURCH

Contents

- Back to Mponela - 01
- Welcoming an RPC Pastor - 02
- ARPC Leaders Meeting - 02
- Reformation Conference 2020 - 03-04
- Upcoming Activities - 05
- Weekly Activities - 05
- Prayer Items - 06
- Donate - 06

Back to Mponela

BY JJ MATANDIKA

I will begin my article with Psalm 73:1-2 which reads: "Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." The psalmist here reflecting upon the goodness of God a conviction which came after a long struggle with what he saw happening in the world namely, the prosperity of the wicked.

My movement from Mponela to Blantyre was a deep struggle which prompted my coming back. Coming back gave me a renewed sense of peace in my heart. As I shared my story with family and friends I was overwhelmed with how most of them welcomed the development of my coming back. Mwapanga chiganizo chabwino (you have made a good decision), my uncle concurred.

Talking about the ministry at Mponela two things affected the young church plant: COVID-19 restrictions and my movement to Blantyre. In the providence of the Lord, the government lifted gathering restrictions the same time I came back to Mponela which meant that we could resume most of our church activities. While it is true that attendance was significantly affected during this period of time, there is still hope that the church will survive.

A leadership vacuum for the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church was also felt while I was in Blantyre. Several interactions with pastors, elders and deacons in our church network impressed upon me the fact that they were like sheep without a shepherd. My commitment will be to make sure that as leaders we are walking together and carrying the vision of the ARPC forward together.

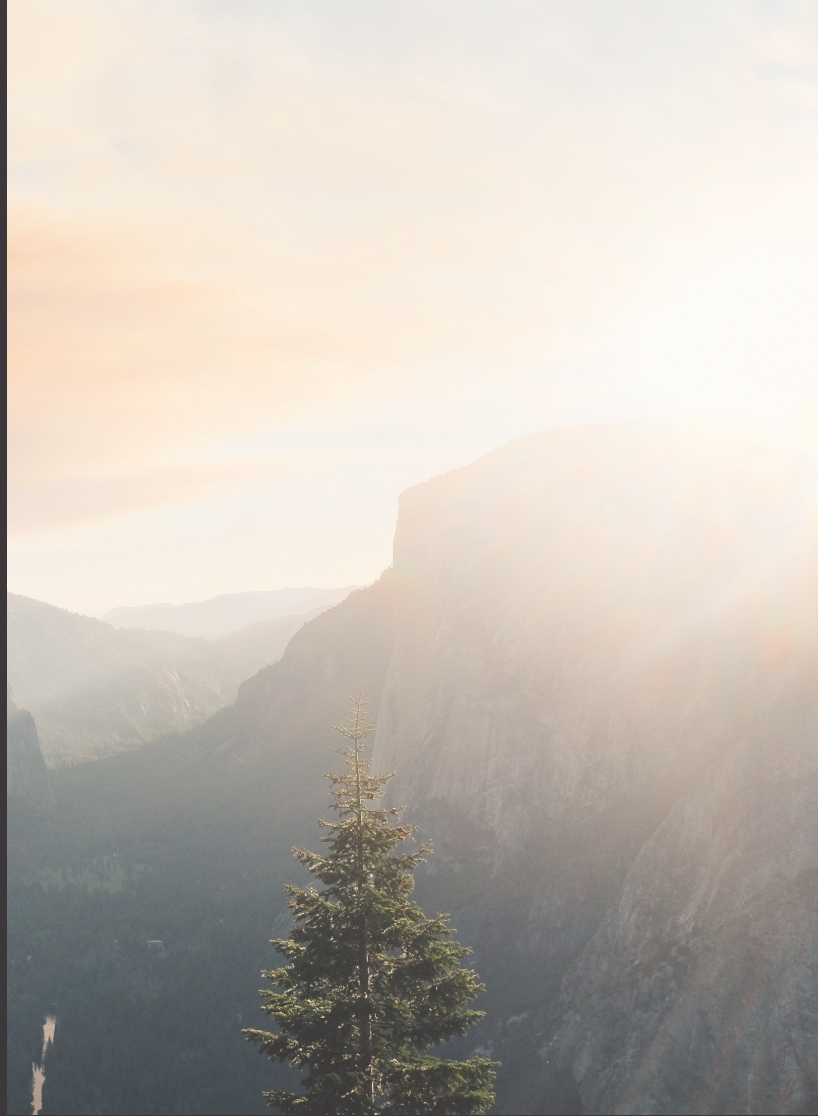
Psalm 73:16-17 reads: "But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end." Sometimes we may wonder why the work of God is met with great difficulties while our unbelieving friends seem to have an easy pass in life. But if our focus is on what our eyes see today, we are certainly bound to lose hope.

Coming back to Mponela clarified certain things I didn't understand very well even before I had made a decision to move to Blantyre. Truly God is good to His people even when we may not fully comprehend what that means. Serving the Lord is the most profitable business we can do in this life and the life to come. The psalmist realizes that there is nothing and no one who can fill the gap of relying upon God. "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:25-26).

Welcoming an RPC Pastor

BY WILICKS LASTON

Our brothers and sisters from the Reformed Presbyterian Churches in Kasungu welcomed Pastor Martin who replaced Pastor Nkhoma. Pastor Nkhoma has been assigned churches in Ntcheu. It was a pleasure for me to be part of the service. Pastor Dan taught from the Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A number 78. Pastor Elliot preached from Ezekiel 36: 23-31 on the true identity of a Christian. Pastor JJ presided over the welcoming part and read from 2 Timothy 4:1-5 on the necessity of preaching the Bible.



ARPC Leaders Meeting

BY NELSON PANGANANI

We had a meeting for Associate Reformed Presbyterian Churches in Dzuwa. During the meeting we heard reports from all the four churches: Dzuwa, Kapangalika, Bwemba and Mponela. In addition we talked about the development of the church in training church leaders, brainstormed ways of financial sustainability. The theme for the meeting was "looking at ways to ensure a bright future for the ARPC in Malawi."



Reformation Conference 2020

BY JJ MATANDIKA

In the providence of the Lord, leaders from several churches will gather together at Mponela Reformed Church from October 30-31 to celebrate and remember the events of the Protestant Reformation when Martin Luther nailed the ninety-five theses challenges the papacy and the abuses of the church in 1517. We hope and pray that this will be a drawing table whereby reformed presbyterian churches in Malawi can start brainstorming ways of strengthening our bond in the area of evangelism, missions, and church planting in Malawi and surrounding countries.

We have a very rich heritage of the reformers who put their lives at risk for the sake of the gospel. To share their faith is a huge privilege which we should not take lightly. I hope that we will be encouraged to carry on their legacy.

Speakers at the conference will include: Rev. Dr. George H. Kalengo a church minister in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Nkhoma Synod. He likes this quote from John Calvin: "A dog barks when his master is being attacked. A true reformer contends for the truth." It is sad that today pastors who claim to serve the Lord are not contending for the truth as Jude 3 encourages us. I hope and pray that this conference will be one way of seeking to contend for the truth.

We will also have Rev. van der Bas a missionary in the Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPC) from Hersteld Hervormde Kerk (HHK) in the Netherlands. He quotes John Calvin on his coming to living faith: "The LORD taught me to be obedient to Him and to His Word." Many people today in churches have no intention to be obedient to God and His Word. They want to obey whatever their spiritual leader says. This is what breeds crippled churches. I pray that the church will go back to the Scriptures like the Berean Jews: "...they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

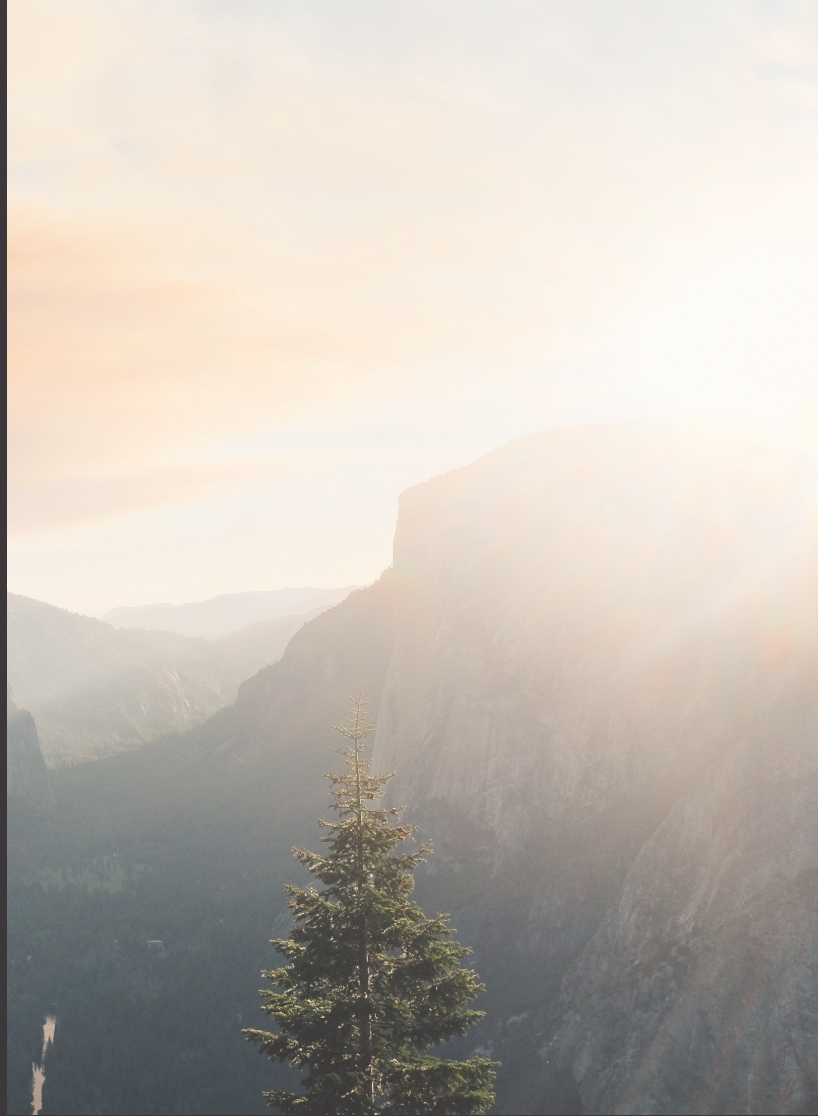
Dr. Joster M. Jumbe currently serving as Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry (CARM) Africa Director will also speak at the conference. He quotes John Knox who said: "You cannot antagonize and influence at the same time." It is very important to remember that as we seek to present the genuine message of hope that we need to do so with great gentleness and respect. Peter says: "...always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

Pastor Khembo Elliot serving as pastor for the ARPC congregation in Dzuwa and National Field Director for Pace Academy Foundation in Malawi. He quotes Martin Luther who said: "From the beginning of my Reformation, I have asked God to send me neither dreams, nor visions, nor angels, but to give me the right understanding of His Word, the Holy Scriptures; for as long as I have God's Word, I know that I am walking in His way and that I shall not fall into any error or delusion." The church today needs to be reminded of this truth.

Reformation Conference 2020

BY JJ MATANDIKA

Rev. Nedson K. Banda currently serving as Dean of Students at the RPC Seminary in Zomba. He quotes Graham Miller who said: "The unity of the church must aim at nothing else, but unafraid agreement to yield obedience to the Word of God." The key to unity should always be obedience to the Word of God. Anything else that is simply tradition should never be the focus or center of any church union.



Reformation Conference 2020

BY JJ MATANDIKA

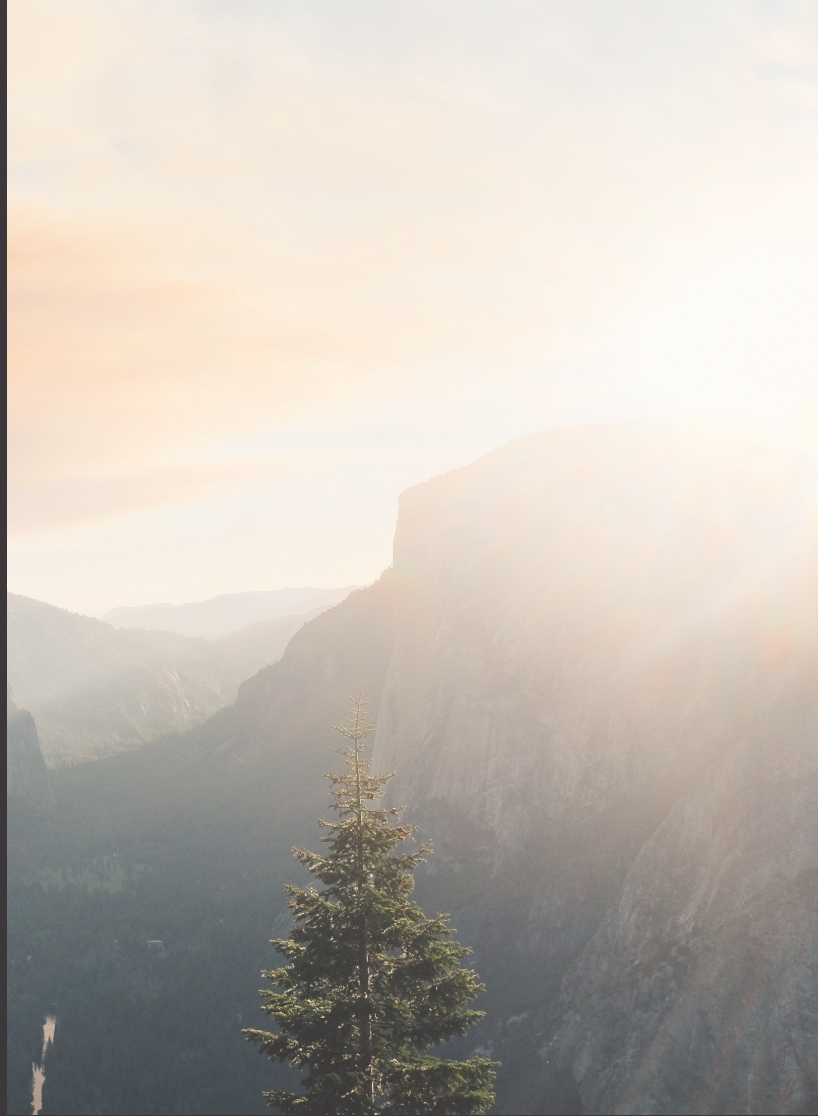
I am also humbled to join these older brothers as one of the speakers. As we reflect on the reformation events, I would like to concur with John Calvin who said: "Peace is not to be purchased by the sacrifice of truth." Desiring to be at peace with others is a good thing, but if we have to do it at the expense of truth we better think twice. In an age in which relativism is worshipped, we have to learn the importance of obeying God rather than mere opinions of men.



Upcoming Activities

BY RODWELL TEMBO

Major activities upcoming in the month of November include having a joint meeting of Reformed Presbyterians from Dowa, Kasungu and Lilongwe. The meeting will be held in Dzuwa. In the month of November we will also resume our small group meetings every week at Mponela. In our sermon series, Pastor JJ will continue going through the basics of the reformed faith to help us understand what defines a reformed church.



Weekly Activities

BY JJ MATANDIKA

Weekly activities continue as usual. Sunday morning Westminster Confession of Faith lessons continue. Sunday afternoon Heidelberg Catechism lessons continue as well. Tuesday's we will continue having theology lessons with church leaders. Wednesday afternoon midweek service. Friday is evangelism day from morning till evening. Other weekly programs for the youth, women and men will be announced in each group.

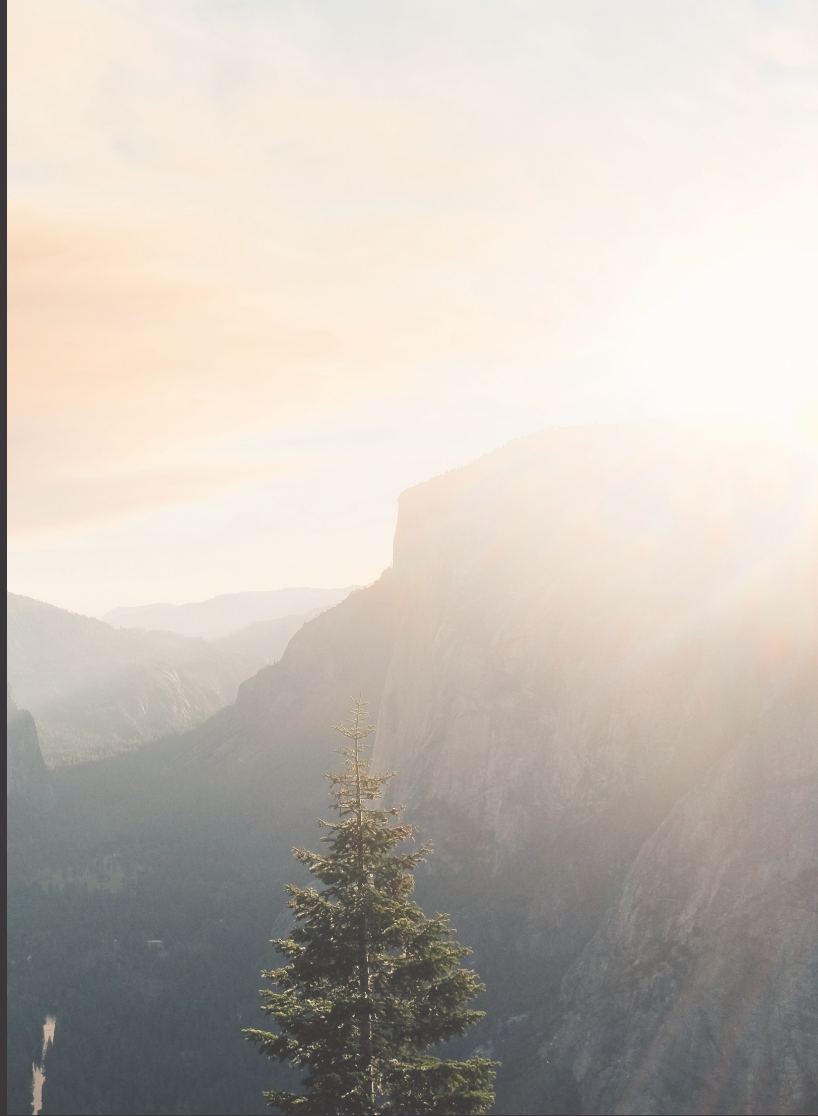


Prayer Items

BY JJ MATANDIKA

Below are our praise and prayer points:

1. Praise the Lord that we are able to resume gathering as usual.
2. Praise the Lord that COVID-19 are on the decrease in the country.
3. Pray that the Lord will continue providing for us.
4. Pray that the Lord will provide money to buy land for the church at Mponela.
5. Pray for the upcoming reformation conference in all preparations.
6. Pray for a successful ministry in the upcoming month.



Donate

BY JJ MATANDIKA

Our ministry depends on financial giving and support from well-wishers who feel called to partner with us. Please consider supporting us on a monthly basis or one-time. Your support will be greatly appreciated. In Malawi support can be sent through Mponela Reformed Church account at Standard Bank of Malawi. Account number: 9100003767334. In USA, support can be sent through Grace Church Laguna Niguel. Please ask for details. Elsewhere please contact me at jjmatandika@gmail.com.

