

Melrose and Peebles Presbytery
World Mission Group
Meeting of WM Congregational Representatives
Sunday 1st March 2020 - Innerleithen Church 2.00pm

The Convenor of the WM Group, Dr Fiona Burnett, welcomed the Congregational Representatives to the meeting and opened the meeting with a reading from Acts 11 and in prayer.

The programme for the day included hearing updates on the actions agreed at the last meeting of Congregational Representatives in 2019.

To this end, A PowerPoint (PPT) of the New Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between our Presbytery and Zomba Presbytery, Malawi, in October 2019, in Zomba during the visit by members of Congregations within our Presbytery. This latest iteration of our Partnership with Zomba, sees the emphasis move away from a Presbytery to Presbytery relationship to encouraging Congregation to Congregation Links. Over the 5 years of the MoU it is hoped to see, among other things,

- An increase in the communication flow between linked Congregations within the Partnership.
- An increase in the knowledge and awareness within Congregations of Church Life in the Partner Presbytery.
- Congregational Link Persons (CLP) identified in each Congregation who will be responsible for coordinating the Communication between the Linked Congregations and ensuring that the Minister and Session Clerk are kept fully informed on all matters of the link.
- The establishment of specific projects which command the interest and garner support from within Congregations in both Presbyteries.

Eve Hartswood gave a PPT presentation on the recent visit to Zomba, during which the MoU had been signed. She also shared some of the things she was doing to promote a wider ownership of the partnership Stow and Heriot have with Luwatala

A report was presented on the *Thondwe Girls Project*, an offshoot of the *Days for Girls Project* – a nationally run charity, providing kits for girls to use during their monthly menstrual cycle. This project has seen around 600 kits being provided, each one providing washable pads to cover a girl's entire monthly cycle. Each Kit should last around 3 years. A local project has started in Zomba to allow these Kits to now be made locally.

There was an update on the Presbytery's two supported trainee Midwives, Geoffrey Matias and Limbikani Poolokera. Geoffrey, who graduated as a Midwife in the summer of 2018, is hoping to move from his current temporary contract with the Malaria Alert Centre to a full-time position within the Mulanje Mission Hospital, in the Southern Region of Malawi serving 80,000 people living in 72 local villages. Thanks was expressed to all individuals and congregations who have raised money to help support Geoffrey when he hopefully moves to Mulanje and becomes a member of the midwife staff. It is hoped that Limbikani will graduate in October this year. It was noted that Geoffrey has already delivered 1200 babies!

After reporting on all that has transpired since the last meeting, the focus moved to 'going forward' in partnership.

The meeting was challenged by hearing of what is already up and running in Thondwe Congregation and Community linked with the Congregation and Community Innerleithen

Traquair and Walkerburn (ITW) Parish Church. Stow and Heriot are now working closely with ITW in some shared new initiatives.

All agreed that Communication is the key to creating, maintaining and developing Congregational Links. As an example, the meeting watched a video message from the Revd Picklen Chafulumira, in Zomba relayed by means of WhatsApp, an app readily available to both Apple and Android Smart Phones. The group shared the many ways WhatsApp can be used both on a 'one to one' basis but also on a 'Congregation to Congregation' basis.

Mindful that there is a wider concern in the Presbytery beyond Malawi, Fiona showed a video of the visit to Tripoli in Lebanon made by Earlston church last year. It was reported that the informal link between the two churches is progressing. The possibility of developing some sort of link with churches in Syria was discussed with the emphasis on prayer and learning about each other's situation being suggested. This potential relationship will be a slow process as we learn more about each other and develop lines of communication.

As Fiona brought the afternoon to a close, it was clear folks were both encouraged and challenged to take their own Congregational Links forward. Fiona pledged the Presbytery World Mission Group's support to any who might require it.