

## Volker & JinHyeog GLISSMANN

### MALAWI

**Location:** Blantyre

**Mission:** Theological Education

#### **Botany and Horticulture: Fail**

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." (Gen. 1:11). Let me start with a confession, I don't do trees and plants – their names are a mystery to me. I would fail a botany and horticulture test. I might be able to name one or two plants, however I am better with fruit trees. I can identify a number of those in my garden now. Orchards amaze me with their abundance of fruits. Fruits are even more amazing as they have so many seeds and with each fruit there is so much potential to grow even more trees. The papaya fruit has hundreds of seeds!

Sometimes mission work is just like that. One seed is planted and a mature tree grows which produces fruit that falls to the ground, spilling seeds to produce more trees. But tree-growing takes time and therefore, it is a good analogy for the Christian pilgrimage.

I have been working for TEEM (Theological Education by Extension, Malawi) since 2010 and in my second year we restarted TEEM's grass-roots training programme, which is also used to train pastors, mostly in rural areas, who have little formal education. We kept promoting the course but the results did not always come. Slowly a few people started to join, among them were a few strategically located individuals who heard about our approach and saw it as the answer to their training needs. TEEM supply material and give support, but these individuals who really want to transform their communities through the Word of God - they are our fruit-bearing trees!



One pastor, Rev Mawaya, has 60 of his own parishioners in training groups at the moment! Another, Rev Swindon, trains 67 pastors in different regions. A Nigerian missionary asked for 60 training manuals to train the pastors of a small denomination. A prison chaplain came to discuss training in prisons. Last week, I went to see the Anglican Bishop of Southern Malawi who has asked us to start three groups of our new Bible Story course in three parishes here in Blantyre. As the course exists only in English at the minute, we realistically can only run it among the churches that have a good level of English.

These developments are exciting, especially, when I sit at my desk which is covered in a multitude of theological books and we plan and write new training courses, that not only address key theological issues, but also challenge our church communities to think biblically about their lives.



Photo: One of TEEM's many study groups

## Prayer Points

- Thank God for these individuals who have a real passion to equip others with knowledge of God.
- Pray for TEEM that we can continuously provide quality training material and that our outreach continues to bear fruit.
- Pray for the discussions about prison ministry and that all partners come together swiftly.