

Robert Gideon of the CFCM Committee writes:

Dear brethren,

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

When Jesus commanded his disciples to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15), He was also commissioning present day church leaders and believers at large to take the gospel into the world. And "all creation" in this case includes children.

Children make a good percentage of our churches' and country's population, and they need to be reached with the gospel. We need to invest the Word of God in their lives, so that when they grow old they should not depart from the faith. There are more benefits than can be imagined when we invest spiritual things in children. A young fruit tree can live long and produce more fruit as compared to an old tree. So, children's ministry needs to be prioritised because, being part of God's creation, children are precious before Him.

May the good Lord bless you abundantly.

Amen

PRAYER POINTS

- Praise God for bringing 85 pastors to the Phalombe conference to be challenged about children's ministry. Pray that this will result in greater support for the local Sunday school teachers and Bible club leaders.

- Pray for guidance as CFCM assesses the effectiveness of the pastors' conference and determines how to expand this strategically.
- Thank God for the 150 children who heard the Gospel at CFCM's Easter 5-day club in Karonga. Pray that the Word they heard will stay with them and change their hearts and lives. Pray too that local Bible clubs and churches would be able to provide ongoing teaching to every child who made a commitment.
- Pray for work going on in the UK to establish a charity specifically to raise awareness and funding for CFCM in Malawi. CFCM will continue to be a partner of **zambesi mission**, but not solely dependent on **zm**.
- Pray for seminars taking place in Neno, Mangochi and Dowa during the months of May, June and July, and for arrangements being made to train teachers on the island of Likoma in Lake Malawi during August.



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CHILDREN FOR CHRIST MINISTRY May - July 2022



PASTORS INVESTING IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

CFCM is continually looking for ways to support and encourage the Sunday school teachers who attend seminars. Many of them deal single-handedly with classes that are too big. The wide age range makes it hard to provide effective Bible teaching. Many struggle because they have no resources and sometimes no Bible of their own.

One common concern is the lack of interest and help from church leaders. Many pastors do not think children's ministry is important and they do not mind what goes on in Sunday school, so long as the children are kept quiet. Some would never lower themselves to address the children, so they have a low view of those who do. No wonder Sunday school teachers can feel their role is insignificant and get discouraged.

Inside we hear how CFCM are encouraging pastors to get more actively involved in children's ministry.

PHALOMBE PASTORS' CONFERENCE

Work began in 2021 to organise a conference for pastors on the importance of children's ministry and to encourage pastors to be involved. 85 pastors attended this pilot conference on 18th March 2022.

The day started with a session by Elevate Mizinga about why reaching children with the Gospel is important. Joseph Jeke then highlighted the challenges that Sunday school teachers face and the important issue of safeguarding.

Pastor Robert Gideon led a session on the importance of Sunday schools and community Bible clubs. In Malawi, just as much as in the West, there are increasingly strong influences pulling children away from the Church, so Gospel teaching directed at children wherever they are gathered is critical.



Robert Gideon leads by example. Despite his busy life as pastor of Chileka Zambezi Evangelical Church, acting deputy General Secretary of ZEC, and part-time lecturer at the Evangelical Bible College of Malawi (EBCoM), he finds the time to join the CFCM team as they go to Bible clubs. He also prioritises speaking to the children in his own church (pictured above). He explains how some of his own church elders query his use of time, much like Jesus' disciples in Matthew 19: 13-15.

"I observed that Sunday school teachers were reporting late for church, so I myself took the responsibility of teaching the children, aided by my wife. Now we have a vibrant Sunday school and we enjoy teaching and doing different activities with children. One of my church elders came to me while I was in the middle of teaching children and suggested that I should attend to other issues which needed my attention. I told him that I would deal with those issues once I had finished teaching the children. I demonstrated to him that what I was doing was equally important, because God does not want that any of the little ones should perish."

He told pastors at the conference that they could actually learn from Muslims. The importance of teaching children is very apparent in their faith. Every day after school, not just once a week, children attend madrassa to be taught the beliefs and practices of Islam. Experience has shown that children immersed in Islam's beliefs throughout their childhood rarely deviate from it in later life. Pastor Gideon asked "why do pastors in Malawi behave as if children's ministry has no value?"

The final session of the conference covered the role of the pastor in children's ministry in the church and in the community. This was followed by small group discussions, so that pastors could consider everything that they had heard and plan a way forward.

Lackson Makawa reports, "pastors recognised that they have been neglecting an important part of church ministry by not valuing children or their Sunday school teachers. They also figured out that some child violations happen because the pastors do not take the children's safety very seriously. All they see is the adult church."



There were several fruitful outcomes from the conference, including the establishment of a welfare committee to meet the needs of Sunday school teachers. Pastors made a commitment to meet regularly with their Sunday school teachers to hear about their challenges and to help and encourage them. They will also ensure that all Sunday school teachers are trained by CFCM, and that the churches support this training financially. CFCM praises God for this remarkable opportunity and is thankful for the evidence of changed hearts and minds. Our prayer is that these pastors will keep the commitments they made and that Sunday school teachers will be emboldened and empowered.

TRAINING FUTURE PASTORS

CFCM is thankful for the opportunity to train future pastors at EBCoM, so that from the start of their ministry they will prioritise evangelism amongst children in the church and communities they serve. 38 students attended a seminar in February and many of them are now involved in running CFCM Bible clubs during term time. Through these men and women, who end up in all areas of Malawi and Mozambique, the profile of Sunday school and Bible clubs will be raised.