

**Edinburgh 1910: “Roots and Fruits” in Malawi and Zambia**      **Margaret Millar**

Through the ages Christian mission has changed in understanding and practice. It is concerned with the proclamation of the gospel and Christians' involvement with the world. The role of a missionary too has seen many changes for we are called to live in a changing world. All Christians are called to face the new challenges of their times.

Being a member of Friends of the Overseas Churches I was given a good grounding and during my time at St Colms College I had the opportunity of reading extensively about missionary work. I elected to specialise in African Studies and was interested in the changes that were taking place in the various countries in the continent at that time. Meeting missionaries home on leave and leaders from the overseas churches helped to fill out the picture. My first expectations received a blow when the Committee proposed sending me to Pakistan to teach missionaries' children – not quite what I was expecting! Fortunately members reconsidered their proposal as some were not sure that the task of teaching missionaries' children was the right one for a person who felt called to be a missionary. When an invitation came from the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Malawi for a missionary to train Women's Workers and establish a Women's Training Centre the Committee proposed appointing two of us who were in training at that time.

During my time serving in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian I helped establish Chigodi Women's Training Centre, preparing courses for lay leaders and writing Bible Study Material for the Mvano (Women's groups). When there was a staff shortage at Kapeni Teachers' Training College the Church Leaders asked me to join the staff there. As the Centre was on a firm footing I accepted the challenge and moved to Kapeni. As well as training the women to be primary school teachers we also encouraged them to be Sunday School teachers and play an active part in the women's groups. When this came to an abrupt end and I could no longer work in Malawi I was invited by the United Church of Zambia to become Deaconess Tutor.

Deaconess House is situated in the Copperbelt on Mindolo Campus with the Theological College. Student ministers and Deaconesses started each day with worship in the Chapel and sometimes shared classes. I taught some subjects in the Theological College. It was good to share training and fieldwork together. There was also an opportunity to meet with Christian leaders who came from many African countries to be trained at Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation. The United Church of Zambia recognised my call to the ministry and I was ordained at St Margaret's, Kitwe.

I shared with fellow ministers in the service of God's people in Kitwe Consistory and Copperbelt Presbytery. I was privileged to serve a new congregation –

Kwacha East. At the first service held on the ground where the church would be built 300 people gathered for worship. In just two years the congregation grew to over 2,200 cared for by 48 elders in districts. Early on, the congregation faced two problems. As there were not enough school places for children beginning Grade 1 the congregation undertook the building and staffing of a class for such children. The other problem was the beginning of caring for members with AIDS and counselling their families.

To cope with the growing number of churches we were involved in training elders and lay preachers using 'Theological Education by Extension in Zambia' (TEEZ). As there was never an adequate number of ministers many of these fine lay people gave outstanding service. It was a rich experience as together we shared many joys and sorrows as we gave pastoral care to people. I am grateful to these fellow ministers for all they taught me about the African ethos and culture which greatly enriched my life and made me more aware of my own lifestyle. I hope in turn I helped them to understand and respect another culture.

I was chosen to be Chairperson of Kitwe Consistory for two consecutive terms. During that time we had many good Ministers' Fraternal meetings and benefited from sharing with ministers, pastors and priests from other churches. We started a joint venture to give pastoral care to patients in Kitwe Central Hospital. Care was also extended to relatives and staff.

In 1991 I was appointed Moderator for the newly formed North-Western Presbytery, an area where the UCZ had not worked. Other missions had set up work there but the people had felt they were neglected and asked the UCZ to help them. There are three major language groups in the Province and churches were established with each group. Later I became Bishop of the North-Western Presbytery.

I had the rare opportunity of visiting all the Presbyteries of the United Church and so was familiar with the variety of work because each Presbytery had roots in different missions, the London Missionary Society, Methodist Missionary Society, Paris Evangelical Missionary Society and the Church of Scotland.

Today there is no longer the Missionary Societies that did the pioneer work instead there is the Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action and the Council for World Mission. The Church of Scotland has changed through the years from Foreign Mission to Overseas Council to World Mission and Unity and now World Mission. Relationships have changed within these bodies and the churches that were established where the early missionaries had pioneered. There are new patterns of consultation, sharing insights or new initiatives with one another. Partnerships are formed as new ways are sought together to fulfil God's mission to the whole world.

The early missionaries followed Christ's commandment to preach, teach and heal. Mission stations were established with a church, a school, a hospital and

sometimes a craft was taught. In some areas the Government now has the responsibility for education and medical work. There are new challenges for the church and government in the medical field with the problem of AIDS.

God called people to be missionaries and called African Christians to take up leadership roles not only in the church but also in government ministries. The Holy Spirit is always at work leading and guiding Christians who are open to the Spirit. God still continues to call people to service in the Church in a variety of fields. My life has been enriched by the experiences I shared with African Christians. God fulfilled in me a call I felt at an early age to be a minister. It was in God's way and in God's timing.