



The Garbat-Welch's in Africa Newsletter



Luta, Jeremy, Jathniel and Azai are PC(USA) Mission Co-workers serving with the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Happy New Year! We hope your new year has started well. Ours has certainly started in a busy way, with some great news: we have finally gotten our work vehicle road worthy again! Here is a taste of that saga:

Lilongwe is the capital of Malawi, and feels to me (Jeremy) like a large and bustling city. We have our routines and parts of town we frequent, and we know how to get around and function pretty well. At least, that's what we thought until we had to do it without a vehicle of our own for 6 months. While we were in the USA on Interpretation Assignment, the work van (which we also have access to for personal use) was in an accident. Fortunately no one was seriously injured. Unfortunately, the driver of the truck that sideswiped it didn't stop, so we've been left handling the repairs on our own.

We have often said that life happens slower in Malawi than in the USA. A great example is that it took us 6 months to get windows repaired on a vehicle! One factor is that our vehicle, a VW Caddy

Van, is extremely rare in Malawi (as in, there's only one other one we know of) so the only way to get parts is to have the dealer order them and pay in advance. Usually they order from South Africa, but I have a suspicion that they had to go farther afield for these. Another factor is that even though we are in the capital, the car dealer does their business through their Blantyre office. This means that after I would have a discussion with the agents in Lilongwe, it would be a week or so before they would get the information back from their Blantyre office. So even when we finally put in the order, it was about 2 weeks before the order was submitted. A third factor is that car repair shops seem to be very busy! When I first dropped the van off at the "panel beaters" (which is what body shops are called), I counted a few dozen vehicles in just one of their lots!

During this time, we got to learn new aspects of Lilongwe. We had taken taxis, minibuses, Tricycle/Tuktuk/Bajaj (lots of names for the same thing, a three-wheeled moped), and kabazas (bicycle taxis you sit on the back of while) in the past. But after six months of using them nearly exclusively, we have quite the network of drivers to call upon. This has given us new opportunities to practice Chichewa, learn culture, meet people, and even learn new routes through traffic. Always useful to know! It has also given us new appreciation for the methods many Malawians use to get around

town, and the cost of commuting when you don't have your own car.

A few times, we had unplanned opportunities to walk from one place to another. On any given drive through town you will see many people walking, whether it is along main roads or taking foot-path short cuts through the neighborhoods. I (Jeremy) have gotten to learn a few of those, and walking has let us get a different feel for the city. It has given me a chance to see life at a different pace.

We have also been blessed by friends giving us rides, and on a few occasions letting us borrow cars for a week or more while they were out of town. It has helped us see God's provision in a simple thing.

We are thrilled to finally have the van back! The freedom is wonderful. At the same time, we hope that we will remember some of the lessons we have learned, like not rushing out every time we think of something but planning our trips, so we can have more time at home. Or remembering that having to wait for a taxi who is thirty minutes late on occasion isn't the end of the world. Or that a walk instead of a drive can give a lot of time to think and to meet people we wouldn't otherwise encounter.

We are grateful that our New Year has begun with the gift of vehicular freedom. As your New Year begins we hope that it good things have come to you

as well. And in the midst of frustrations, we hope you will also find helpful lessons and unexpected gifts.

In Christ's Service,
Jeremy for the Garbat-Welch's