

Sharing the Western Spirit All Around the World

The journey to Malawi

BY CAPTAIN TED HORWOOD –
globe

Our journey to the mission field started officially in 1985. But, I expect within God's sovereignty, we've been on the road for most of our lives.

Debbie's youth was steeped in a household that was oblivious to the gospel. Her father was always stuck somewhere between jail, drugs and trying to keep a hold on life. Her mother struggled to keep the family together, and as a result worked in a bottling plant each day, and many nights. Debbie grew up on her own for the most part, also caring for her younger sister. Therefore, Debbie's salvation experience was literally a kingdom of darkness to a kingdom of light experience.



malawi

Captain Ted Horwood (left) shown with members of the Blantyre, Malawi corps.

I, however, grew up in the Army, just like my father and mother. Hollywood Tabernacle was my church home. There, tradition and program shaped my life. But unlike Debbie, who made a conscious decision to live within God's love and guidance, I didn't know any other life. My salvation experience took place when I realized that Christian form and function don't equate to relationship and communion.

After we were married we sensed a prompting to full-time ministry, and an acute desire to live in a missionary context. We accepted a corps assistant job at the Monterey Corps. There, our promptings were affirmed. But, we knew the procedure of the Army which did not allow officers into a missionary capacity for 5 years after commissioning.

Nevertheless, although our missionary hopes and our officer call could not be reconciled immediately, we entered CFOT in 1990. We made our desires known to Lt. Colonel Bill Luttrell and Major Rob Saunders, the principal and vice-principal respectively. Then the most amazing thing happened. They had begun work in the Marshall Islands, and wanted to expand throughout Micronesia. As we were preparing for Commissioning, we were asked the impossible, by what we knew to be Army standards. We were asked to pioneer the work on the island of Guam. Who would have imagined sending newly commissioned lieutenants to an island which could be barely seen on the map, was an eight-hour flight away from DHQ, was closer to four other THQs, and there to begin a ministry where none existed? Surely, we sensed God's hand on our lives.

We spent three and half years on Guam. It was an appointment which shaped and forged us. And it prompted a renewed passion for further overseas ministries. After a short but fulfilling appointment to Santa Monica, we were asked to come to Malawi, Africa.

The Army's work in Malawi is young and under-developed. Unlike our time on Guam, the foundation had been laid, but the structure needs formation. That is the ministry which we are currently experiencing.

Our move to Malawi was filled with some family challenges. The kids began attending an international school. They were often teased because of their American accents and mannerisms. The curriculum is British, which excluded parental involvement much more than our children were used to, and the students were (and still are) predominately Hindu and Muslim and from wealthy government ministers or company executive families.

Debbie, too, experienced challenges. She began as the commanding officer of the Blantyre City Corps only a month after arrival. The culture being very different to our own, it took time to learn and cultivate a true love for these new people. In addition, only the local language, Chichewa, was spoken. She assumed her appointment, and that very weekday she was required to conduct a traditional funeral. Seventeen more funerals would be conducted before the year was complete.

As missionaries, one of the biggest tasks is to develop a trusting relationship with the people. Slowly but surely, the people began to accept Debbie and some great ministry opportunities in Blantyre began. Now after almost three years, she has been re-appointed as the Regional Youth Officer, equivalent to something somewhere between a DYS and a TYS.

She is thrilled to have this appointment and has a real burden for the spiritual welfare of the young people in the Army. However, everything is being formed at the grass roots level. There are barely any resources, and most of her work with the youth in Guam and the States cannot be translated to the youth in Malawi. Nevertheless, the response from the field has been overwhelming. The young people feel that they now have value and that their

little voice is finally being heard. Decisions for Christ, Youth Evangelism Teams, Boy's Ministries and Sunday Schools are springing up in every corner of Malawi. It is really, truly exciting to see how the Lord can use a missionary to facilitate movement and growth, with little money, little resources and know-how.

Malawi is a country in transition. A democratic system of government began five years ago. Where at one time there was a strict code of justice (including crocodile pits), today crime is quite prevalent. As a result we had two destructive break-ins at our house. As we cowered in the bathroom, thieves ransacked the house and went off with a lot of our effects. They also put our son Micah through a good year of unsettledness and a longing for what he felt was "safe-America." Nevertheless, these challenges have further molded us as a family, as Christians, and have equipped us for a more effective ministry.

My ministry began as the Malawi representative of the Salvation Army Leadership Training College (SALT). Based in Zimbabwe, this institution coordinates the supplemental and required teaching for officers and local officers throughout Africa.

After two and a half years, I was then given the additional responsibilities for all the project work. This is equivalent to all the social services which take place in Malawi. A large portion of my work includes HIV/AIDS work in the villages where traditional rituals take place and rapidly transmit the virus. Orphans are another result of the AIDS in this country, and we are trying to assist with support and care.

Now we have been in Malawi for three years. It is a privilege to be here and represent the Western Territory. We have sensed supportive prayer, and received tangible support. Our hope is to return to Malawi after our homeland furlough in May. We look forward to the continued shaping that the Lord has for us.