

CENTRAL AFRICA MEDICAL MISSION
LUTHERAN MOBILE CLINIC - MALAWI
January 2019

In our newsletters we often discuss LMC – the Lutheran Mobile Clinic. As Lutherans we have had conversations about how we show Gods love by providing primary health care to people in the rural areas of Malawi. We have also talked about the Clinics and how our primary focus is on mothers and young children while also providing outpatient services and HIV Counselling. But what is seldom discussed and what makes LMC unique is the fact that we are mobile.

Unlike our sister clinic at Mwembezhi in Zambia which is static, at LMC all services and supplies are brought to the people. On an average day, 10-12 medical staff make their journey to clinic sites by using the ambulance for transport. The current villages are Suzi, Thunga, Msambo, and Mwalaulomwe all of which are within an hour's drive from Lilongwe. Early each clinic day, all supplies, equipment, medications, and in the case of Thunga Village - additional water, are loaded onto the Ambulance for the day's journey. At the end of the day everything is offloaded, and supplies are restocked ready for tomorrow's clinic.

The vehicles not only perform the mundane tasks of taking staff and equipment to the clinics but are also equipped with markings, lights and sirens for emergency transportation of patients to the general Hospital in Lilongwe. Recently a very pregnant woman came to clinic and was found to be in labor, she was immediately put in the ambulance and was transported (with lights and sirens) to the Chiwamba health center. The baby was delivered in the back of the ambulance three minutes after we arrived.

Our vehicle of choice is the Toyota Land Cruiser. The version we use here in Malawi bears no resemblance to the Land Cruiser that is seen on the roads in the United States. Ours are tough, ruggedized, 4 wheel drive vehicles that can reliably carry up to 13 people plus a roof rack loaded with equipment and supplies over poorly maintained dirt roads. In Malawi, the Toyota Land Cruiser Ambulance is everywhere, and is the choice of both government and private health care providers.

Currently we have two ambulances, both are Land Cruisers, the older one is 8 years old and is getting to the stage where repairs become more numerous and costly. The newer vehicle is 5 years old. Every week over 900 patients depend on LMC to show up. Cancelling clinic due to vehicle repairs is not acceptable. The reliability of these vehicles is paramount as we simply cannot have them in the workshop for any extended period of time. For that reason, we replace them on a five year cycle - before maintenance becomes a problem. This year we will replace the older vehicle. A new Land Cruiser is not cheap, a vehicle delivered to Malawi costs a little under \$40,000, but when we consider the road conditions, the number of people and supplies we transport, reliability, and the availability of parts, the Land Cruiser is the only option that makes sense.

It is hard to overstate the importance of these vehicles to the medical mission here in Malawi. Simply put, they put the "mobile" in Lutheran Mobile Clinic and are as vital to our operations as blood pressure cuffs and malaria medications. As our Central African Medical Mission team continues the effort to raise the funds for the new ambulance we ask for your prayers to bless this work and your support to allow us to continue to show Gods love to the people of Malawi.

Gary M Evans,
Clinic Administrator