

# Matilda's Malawi

## Home Group Materials

This is designed for a single 90 minute session of a church home group, to include watching the 25-minute film.



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
BIRMINGHAM

### OPENING PRAYER

*Partnership Prayer by Fr Henry Burgess*

Heavenly Father, we thank you for our fellowship with each other in and through the family of your church. We pray that you will continue to pour out your Holy Spirit on us in Malawi and Birmingham and enable us to grow in holiness and love. Support, sustain and help us share each other's needs and blessings, joys and sorrows, and reach out to those who know not your love. We ask this in the name of Him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen



### INTRODUCTORY NOTE

*For leaders to read out:*

This DVD celebrates the Malawi Birmingham Partnership as it approaches its 50th year, using the voices of Malawian bishops, clergy, community leaders and school students wherever possible. The backbone is a day in the life of 15 year old school student Matilda Chirwa. Many aspects of life in Malawi, its poverty, its hope and its aspiration for better things, are hung on this framework, together with an account of what Birmingham, through the Anglican Church in Malawi, is doing to help.

The footage in Malawi was shot in May 2014 during the visit of Bishop David.

### NOW WATCH THE DVD TOGETHER

*Watching on a decent-sized TV screen is preferable to a laptop (a subtitled version is also available).*

*To be read out after viewing the DVD:*

Matilda Chirwa is not a typical Malawian teenager. Secondary education in Malawi is selective and fee-paying; most children's education ends with primary school and many drop out of this. Matilda is physically very small, possibly because malnutrition in her early years has left her 'stunted' like many Malawians. Her parents cannot afford to pay her school fees. But she is clever and highly motivated – she comes to classes seven days a week. (Since the DVD was made, at the age of only 16 Matilda has won a place to study for an engineering Degree.) On the DVD she also speaks clearly about the opportunities - or lack of them - open to young people in Malawi.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (See overleaf)

### PRAYER TOGETHER

Allow some time for led prayer or open prayer, depending on what your group is used to. Close by sharing the Grace together, perhaps standing in a circle.

*Find out more at:*

[www.cofebirmingham.com/malawi](http://www.cofebirmingham.com/malawi)

## DISCUSSION 1

*"Most girls in the villages, when they are getting on 15, 16, like my age, they mostly fall pregnant, and that is the end of their future. Even if they get married to a farmer, there is no solution to that. Maybe they just say, this is how I'm destined to end." (Matilda, at min 11:21 on DVD)*

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**Q.** Is it worth it our trying to change this situation for at least some Malawian teenagers when clearly we cannot do so for all? Or should we accept what many see as their 'destiny'?

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**NOTE:** Some Christians or groups of them in Birmingham are contributing towards the secondary school fees of individuals known to them.

## DISCUSSION 2

*"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich... At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need" (Paul in 2 Corinthians 8.9 and 13)*

The link with Malawi is described as a partnership, even though the most obvious aspects are us sending things to Malawi: money for projects and to support the structures of the dioceses, gifts on the containers (which go every year, not every two or three years as mentioned on the DVD), qualified people for the teachers' skills share. Visitors go and come in both directions.

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**Q.** What makes it a partnership, and what does Birmingham derive from it? Where does its value lie?

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**NOTE FOR LEADERS:** After some discussion you may want to read out Bishop David's words (to be found at min 22:10): "Christianity is the most universal and translatable of all the great world religions. The Scriptures go into all languages and our faith is cross-cultural. To see the gospel seed and flourish in a country as economically challenged as Malawi is a huge encouragement."

Canon Janice Price, Independent Reviewer of the partnership, writes: "As one body we share a common call in the Great Commandment (Matthew 22.37-40) to love God, our neighbour and ourselves. This goes beyond all material and cultural differences and brings us into a radical equality. This is the basis of friendship or companionship in Christ which is characterised by trust, generous hospitality and a willingness to be open to and learn from one another." (Review of the Link, 2014)

## DISCUSSION 3

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**Q.** What do you think it would feel like to be a Christian in Malawi? How does the worship song played as background to mins 20-24 of the DVD make you feel?

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(Comment from Richard Tucker: The song may sound slow and repetitive, but to me it speaks of the strength and stoicism of the Malawian people, the sense that "No matter what troubles life may throw at me, I will still trust in God and praise Him.")

## DISCUSSION 4

"Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people." Matthew 4.23. The Malawian Church understands itself as exercising this threefold ministry of Jesus. "The Church is not there just to preach the word of God but to act on other social issues. The Church has to fill that gap and support the orphans and the vulnerable." (Bishop Francis, DLM)

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**Q.** How can you see this holistic ministry of the Church in action in Malawi? Can you see a similar holistic ministry in your church in Birmingham? If not, why do you think not?

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## DISCUSSION 5

"[If not for school], maybe I would have been married by now" (Martha, a final year schoolgirl - at min 11:00 on DVD).

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**Q.** Birmingham has launched a 50th anniversary appeal 'Supporting Education across Malawi' to contribute to education in Malawi by funding a girls' hostel and classroom blocks in the four dioceses across the country. Would your group be prepared to support it? Would you urge your church to give to the appeal?

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