

# Martin Mlaka writes from Malawi...

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Dear Reader,

I, Martin Mlaka was born on 7th August 1964 in a family of eleven children and I was third born from last. Our parents migrated to Malawi from Mozambique during the war between the natives and the Portuguese. My father was a self-trained general fitter and my mother, a colonial trained primary school teacher whose earnings did not allow for an African extended family.

I started school at the age of six but soon afterwards my father asked me to help raise the other ten children and dependents because of their minimal resources. Eventually he brought me 13 goats and nine sheep to look after in a very thick forest where lions, tigers, leopard, hyenas, cobras and other dangerous animals were a threat to my adolescent life. I was a pathetic looking boy dressed in rags and without a single pair of shoes. I lived on wild fruits and rabbits. A whistle round my neck and a very sharp phanga knife in my right hand and a spear in my left were ready for any danger for I knew that my brothers' and sisters' future depended on the life of each goat or sheep. By 1983 I had 250 goats and a 150 sheep because, apart from breeding, we were also buying some into the flock.

Sometimes I go through those tough memories and say to myself: 'Dad, why did you whip me when I lost a goat or a sheep in the bush as I tried to run away from the fierce animals? You didn't even allow me into the house until I found the lost ones and brought them home while my brothers were enjoying their sleep.' Even now as I write, tears are dropping onto my lap top keyboard. As if this was not enough, in 1984, the same brothers, whom I educated came to sell the entire flock and I was left without schooling and without food, a miserable looking 20 year old still in standard eight. Without knowing God and Christ His Son, I came to Blantyre, one of the commercial cities in Malawi, where by grace I got a job as a messenger at a computer company.

In May 1985 I gave my life to Christ Jesus and discovered that my surname 'Mlaka' simply means 'A victor'. This encouraged me so that, with a wage equivalent to 53 United States cents per month today, I began studying privately up to form four and thereafter to City and Guilds level doing electronics. My employer seconded me to various big clients in Malawi as their engineer in-charge including the American Embassy and the Malawi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I accepted a calling to serve the Anglican Diocese of Southern Malawi as a volunteer Head of Stewardship and Evangelism/ Evangelist in 2002, and became a full-time coordinator of the department in July 2004 before proceeding to theological college in Nairobi in September the same year.

My experience as a shepherd helps me to understand both Christ and His ministry. The goats, by God's secret design, are more vulnerable to fierce animals, especially when they have deserted their shepherd, while the sheep are kept safe even when they are lost. So I understand better now when the Scripture describes Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God and the sinners as the goats. The painful experiences have also made me realize the importance of team work. I am able to coordinate and delegate the stewardship and evangelism to make our ministry in the Anglican diocese of Southern Malawi easier and affordable. *Rooted in Jesus* groups are forming in parishes to ease the work load. Apart from my ministry course at Church Army/Carlile theological college in Nairobi, the teaching we received from SOMA – in 2006 from the Revd Patrick Whitworth and the *Rooted in Jesus* by the Revd Dr Alison Morgan in 2007 – have greatly changed the reason for our ministry approach from mere preaching to 'discipleship making'. This year alone I have trained 79 people in discipleship. .



The youngest Diocese of Southern Malawi serves close to 50,000 Anglicans in the seven overpopulated districts that cater for over four million people of various religions and beliefs. As part of our holistic approach, in the four years that we have been in existence, we have managed to build one maternity clinic, buy a private secondary school, establish 42 adult literacy education circles, set up several projects on perma-culture farming, fund small loans to poor women, build seven primary schools, distribute relief food/items and 37,000 mosquito nets to expectant mothers. The biggest challenge is how to effectively serve these over populated districts. I have to use public transport to the nearest places and travel long distances across the bush on foot and use canoes to cross rivers and ordinary bicycles to reach out to a targeted village. I am still dreaming of an off road motorbike! My 2008 evangelism schedule for the year, ministry stories and updates can be accessed on the diocesan website: [www.angsona.org](http://www.angsona.org) or through Alison Morgan.

It is my broken hearted prayer that the Lord will help me to safeguard my life time calling to serve others from serving the flock to serving the people of God as a servant minister of the Word. May the Lord God receive all the glory as His Grace continues to grow, moving me and the entire diocese from one glory to another and give you the unceasing passion to continually pray for us. God bless you all.

Martin Mlaka

*Martin Mlaka is the Evangelism Coordinator for the diocese of Southern Malawi. He oversees the Rooted in Jesus programme which he invited SOMA to introduce to the diocese in 2007. For more information click [here](#).*

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