

# Malawi and More ....

**Peggy Van Laere**

I traveled to Malawi, Africa for many reasons, but primarily because God pulled me there. Many Malawians here at First Presbyterian Church have family and friends in Malawi. The people there in the warm heart of Africa were a gracious and welcoming people. They are a happy, hard-working, and faithful people. I have a deep gratitude for the people we met and for the things we were able to accomplish.

In 2005 our church funded a nursery school in the remote village of Chibanzi. Currently approximately 100 children each day six days a week are educated and fed. We are the primary support of this operation and money is sent quarterly. A kitchen and feeding center was added in 2008. Ministry of Hope in Malawi oversees this operation. In 2009 a Primary School building was erected with church assistance. Included was a teacher house and pit toilets. A second block was then required with another teacher house before the Ministry of Education would take over the financing and hiring of teachers. Since March of 2011 thousands of bricks have been made and the foundation for the second block has been made. On Monday, September 19, 2011, the day after our visit, the school was to have opened. Teachers had been interviewed and hired. Praise God! There were many children awaiting the start of school. Many eight and nine year olds who have not yet been to school. The Balog fund is providing funding for this second block. I have always had a special place in my heart for children and education. The Christmas Offering in 2008 went to the operation of a maize mill. Fifty six shallow wells were constructed and installed and are up and running and provide an adequate water supply to Chibanzi. Forty different villages including Chibanzi participate in Africa Bags. The workers making the bags receive wages and funds provide support for the feeding program.

Chibanzi now has a great new minister and wife who serve the congregation of about 4,000 adults with 16 prayer houses. They treated us with great respect when we visited. They certainly are appreciative for the support from South Bend, Indiana. Their church had 100% attendance at the HIV/AIDS training. Their church leadership group was very focused and intent on future plans. In worship on Sunday, following the training week, they presented their drama and lesson entitled, "Who is your neighbor?" wearing their Malawi Matters t-shirts. We were impressed! The people of Chibanzi are working together to take care of the orphans and help the sick.

God did amazing things... 500 students from 43 congregations came, learned the facts, explored methods to teach them and developed an action plan to institute in their churches, schools and villages impacting their memberships of over 400,000 adults. It became clear to me that the life saving message of HIV/AIDS will be heard.

Shallow Wells:



## Bricks for School

