



ORBUS MINISTRIES AUSTRALIA  
Newsletter – June 2017



*“He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth.” Psalm 46:10*

Orbus Ministries Australia Inc. is a Christian volunteer charity which exists to demonstrate the love of God through word and deed to the poor and vulnerable. The Orbus Centre in Daniel Village, Ngumbe, Blantyre, Malawi is a joint mission between Orbus Australia, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Blantyre Synod and the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (Australia). We invite you to visit the Orbus Australia website at [www.OrbusMinistries.org](http://www.OrbusMinistries.org), [Facebook](#) page and to visit the Orbus Centre in Malawi.

## News Brief: June 2017 (written early to mid-July)

- Orbus was founded 10 years ago this year following an email sent to Colin and Shirley Mbawa asking if they would be interested in helping their Australian friends to establish a home and school for AIDS orphans in Malawi. Join us in giving thanks to God for these past 10 years.
- Construction has commenced (with a cornerstone laying ceremony on the 3rd June 2017) of the first classroom building for the "Orbus Mission Secondary School" for OVC. The bulk of the building is on track for completion in early August.
- With a busy few months ahead you can follow the activity at Orbus through the Orbus Photo Journal: <http://www.orbusministries.org/orbusphotojournal2017.html>
- On Saturday June 24th, the Presbyterian Youth of Victoria (PYV) Mission Team arrived in Blantyre. They will be working at Orbus until 16<sup>th</sup> July and visiting different churches around the Orbus School. Feel free to follow their progress at their blog site: <https://os17malawi.wordpress.com/>.
- Additionally, a teacher from St. Andrews Christian College in Wantirna, Australia, Mrs. Gail Van Heerden, arrived on 3<sup>rd</sup> July to work at Orbus for two weeks.
- An Orbus church plant has begun in a classroom at Orbus every Sunday morning at 8.30am.
- A *Ten Commandments* intensive began at Orbus on 28<sup>th</sup> June teaching the children about God's fatherly love in providing His people with such a valuable guide for living, for understanding Him and His world, a protection from the consequences of wrong living, and ultimately for understanding how much we need Jesus Christ as our perfect Saviour and law-keeping substitute. We are very grateful to APWM for providing funds for materials to conduct this course, including Bibles, 400 WCF Shorter Catechism booklets, 10 posters for classroom walls and 10 "Training Hearts, Teaching Minds" books for the Orbus teachers.
- The Orbus Chess class has started with some curious students quickly developing an interest in learning the game. Orbus is very grateful to Nick Speck from Chess Education in Melbourne for providing lots of chess resources for this.
- Abby Assender, an extremely gifted young photographer, and member of the PYV team, has been busy taking photos at Orbus and has produced some stunning work! This newsletter mostly contains Abby's photos, just as a teaser of hopefully more to come.
- As a boost for the future vision of having an Orbus university on the same site at Daniel Village, the Synod are currently establishing a new university in Blantyre called the University of Blantyre Synod, which is due to start in September with a Faculty of Theology. It is hoped that Orbus may work with UBS to develop a campus at Ngumbe. University education is a great need in Malawi and this is seen as an area where Orbus can further benefit the local community.

*"Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."* Matt.

22:37-40



## Orbus News:

### Orbus 2007 to 2017:

We recently had a memorable dinner with the Very Rev. Prof. Silas Ncozana, past Principal of the Zomba Theological College, past General Secretary of the CCAP Blantyre Synod, and active participant in past Malawian political history, at his home, and were richly blessed by a brief but fascinating discussion on Malawi's history. It reminded me of the importance of history, that it is not only helpful to know the history of things but it is most often fascinating, especially to see how God brings things about.

So, I thought I might risk boring some of you with a reasonably brief history of Orbus, something which is in order as we mark 10 years since the founding of Orbus.

How did Orbus come about? It started with reading God's word the Bible and coming to the realization that God has a deep love and concern for the fatherless, the poor, those in need and without help, and that His people should share this same deep love and compassion and respond accordingly.

In the early 2000's at South Yarra Presbyterian Church we had a family from Malawi. I had never even heard of Malawi until I had met this family! We got to know the Mbawa family over the following years. They told us about the devastating impact of the AIDS epidemic on Malawi and how there were hundreds of thousands of orphaned children. It is no easy thing to hear of this sort of tragedy and to sit back and do nothing. The question of "What to do?" exercised our minds and many of our friends from then on?

Colin and Shirley and their three daughters returned to Malawi in around 2006 and we kept in contact. Colin then soon became a minister in the CCAP. I was studying theology, as a private student, at the Presbyterian Theological College at the time, and studying God's word made it clear that a desire to help was not enough, action of some sort was required. In February 2007 Jayni and I sent an email to Colin and Shirley asking if they would be interested in and willing to help us Australian's to start a small home and school for AIDS orphans in Malawi.

With their positive response things got underway in Australia to establish Orbus, with the outlining of an initial plan, the choosing of a name (Jayni), designing of a logo (Rachel Stasse), the setting up of an advisory panel, the writing of a constitution and other things. There were plenty of like-minded friends at PTC, South Yarra PC and among our wider friends, who mostly all knew Colin as well, so there was no shortage of willing participants to help out.

The first Orbus funds were dispatched to Blantyre in June 2007 to register Orbus Development and Aid in Central Africa Limited, and thus Orbus was launched! With Colin and I to choose three directors each the founding directors were John Wilson, Vin Lopes, myself, Richard Chaponda, Elliot Mulange, and Hastings Thembakako.

Over the following years the strategy changed and the model changed, from one of sending money to one of sending people to work alongside our Malawian brothers and sisters to try to help more directly. My family and I had come to the realization in 2009 that we should go to Blantyre to help with the work. We made our plans and finally arrived in Blantyre in May 2010. Much to our dismay the Synod transferred Colin away from Blantyre to Zomba in around February 2010, leaving us without our key contact and friend and wondering whether we had made a mistake in coming!

This change of circumstances, model and strategy led to the disbanding of the old entity and saw a new Orbus structure, established on September 23rd 2010, in partnership between the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) – Blantyre Synod, the Presbyterian Church of Victoria and Orbus Australia.

A single donation from Australia earlier in 2008 had provided the funds to purchase the 20-acre site in Daniel Village, Ngumbe from the Malawian government. So, having surveyed the surrounding village chiefs, community leaders and church leaders it was decided in June 2010 that our plans should be changed to focus more on education for OVC rather than on a residential home, as the extended family most often steps in and cares for orphans, and they were better off in their villages with extended family.

From this new start the Orbus Centre was officially opened on 31st July 2010. Then we opened the Orbus Nursery School for orphans and vulnerable children on September 6th 2010. This was followed with the opening of the Orbus Primary School for orphans and vulnerable children on September 5th 2011 with a single Grade (Standard) 1 class.

While we did not see a lot of Colin at Orbus after in 2010 or over the following years, the arrival of the PYV team in June/July 2017 saw us catching up with him again when we all had lunch at the Mbawa home with Shirley and two of their daughters. They are a special family and we give thanks to God for them and for their introducing the Australian friends to this equally special country of Malawi.

We give thanks to God for the many friends of Orbus over the years, you know who you are and I ask that you forgive me for not mentioning everyone by name. However, at this time it is fitting to make particular mention of the early work of some friends in Malawi such as our good friend Lameck Chitela (without whom Orbus would not be what it is today), and a special mention also to Blessings Kanike, also Colin, Richard, Rose, Elliot, Hastings, Flossy, Ellen, Rhoda, Felix, Leonard, Davey, Benson, Mjojo, Evelyn, Esme and Triphonia, as well as a special mention of our Head Teacher Wills Mbewe and current teachers, Grace, Martin, Mphatso, Elton, Florence and Samantha.

In Australia, trying to mention all the people God has built Orbus out of is fraught with danger, as some are bound to be missed due to the sheer number. But a special mention should be made of the initial directors (listed above), and each of the advisory panel members of the initial structure, being Jayni, Bill Medley, Rob Boyle, John and Sue Steendam, John Stasse, Stuart Bonnington, Dean and Sandy Carroll, and David Manly, who have all remained involved in varying ways since then. No doubt a second mention of the fireless involvement and work of Vin Lopes, Rob Boyle, John Steendam, Bill Medley and John Stasse is very warranted too.

Then there are some of the serial volunteers at Orbus including John, Sue, Rob, Doug, Diane, Steve, Michael and Dorothy. Along with the myriad other visitors over the years, and the numerous donors and supporters of Orbus, such as APWM, PWMU, PresAID, the faithful members of the Frankston PC, SYPC, Maroochydore PC, and others too numerous to mention. They are friends of Orbus, cherished and never forgotten, friends who have planted seeds at Orbus for God to grow. Praise God for these generous people and their selfless desires to help those in need in the name of Christ Jesus.

We give thanks for the way the relationship with the CCAP Blantyre Synod has worked so well over these past 5 years and we really thank God for the Synod. They are a blessing not taken for granted. Special mention should be made of the early friendship of our good friends Rev. McDonald Kadawati, and the current General Secretary Rev. Alex Maulana (the first and second Malawian trustees of the Orbus Centre), the past Education Secretary Lester and current Education Secretary Moses Kasitomu.

We praise God that now, in 2017 Orbus has 380 children enrolled from Nursery through to Standard 7 and is about to start Standard 8 and Form 1 of the new secondary school, God willing, in September 2017.

We praise God for all the people who have become such an integral part of Orbus since 2007, in both Australia and Malawi and we recommit this project to God's glory and for the help of orphans and vulnerable children in His name.

**"Blessed is he that considereth the poor"** (Psalm 41:1). Many people give (or think they are) their money to the poor, the weak, the helpless, and the needy in a hurry and without thinking whether that is the best way to help them; and many more give (and do) nothing at all. Psalm 41:1 tells us that we should "consider" the poor i.e. we should analyze their particular situation, prepare plans that will really help them, not just on a short-term basis but longer-term structural help, we should involve them in these plans and then we should wisely and thoughtfully carry these plans out, again together with those in need. Perpetuating past practices of sending money or goods without really knowing where they are ending up will just achieve more of the same corruption and orphans and the genuine poor will continue to go unhelpt. As Charles Spurgeon said, "We can do more by care than by cash, and most with two together." Orbus aims to do what we can to provide this type of considered help for orphaned children.



*"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 7:12*

## Australian Visitors:

Here is a brief run down on just some of the activity of the PYV team and Gail Van Heerden at Orbus during their continuing blitz of love, generosity, compassion, thoughtfulness, selflessness, happiness, energy, hard work, perseverance, patience, and contagious joy since their arrival at Orbus. For further insight into the PYV Team's valuable ministry please visit their [blog page](#) and browse through each day's entry.

This amazing team hit the ground running and have not stopped. They have made 380 children very happy over three weeks; conducted Bible talks most days; taught songs to the children (which fill the air as children skip around the school at play time); gifted sports and school resources; played lots of sports with the children; helped out in various classes; marked school work; supervised (invigilated) exams; helped the teachers in various ways in classes; visited orphans in their villages, providing groceries and gifts; bought paint and painted buildings; bought new playground items; conducted a thorough nursing clinic for 380 children, taking some to a local doctor and some to the hospital for more tests, and sadly discovering some serious issues in a couple of children, which if left untreated could have possibly been quite tragic. (We praise God for this and see His providential hand in the team having two nurses).

Recently a few of us visited one little orphan girl in her village after school and found that she had been coming home after school and singing the songs the team had been teaching at school. Malawians learn much through music and dance, and the effort that the PYV team put into the songs they have been teaching at Orbus have been a big hit, echoing around the school and around the villages.

Seeing the children after school not wanting to go home, but waiting to give the team hugs and high fives, is heart-warming. I think there will be some sad children, and team members, when it is time to say goodbye.

This has been reflected in Gail Van Heerden's classes too. She has been such a blessing to many staff and children in various grades, teaching, invigilating, marking, singing, colouring, loving, sharing, and caring. One of Gail's main problems though was that she has had trouble getting the children to leave the class for recess or lunch, as they do not want the classes to finish!

They also visited many local churches around the Orbus school, enjoying joyous Sunday mornings of wonderful Malawian worship.



*“Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

*Matthew 28:18-20*



### **Orbus Church Plant:**

A "Prayer House" here is a new church plant, with a Session, deacons, a congregation, a choir, but no minister. The "CCAP Orbus Prayer House" is a church plant out of the nearby Nansengwe CCAP church. It is a vibrant church, with lots of children, some Orbus teachers and their families, a police family who live on the Orbus grounds, and some locals from the nearby Malawi Housing Corporation houses. Funds have already been committed and initial planning is already underway to build a church/chapel building on site.









Lameck (above left) has almost completed the first Orbus secondary classroom building.

### Prayer Requests:

- Praise God for the 10 years since He founded Orbus and all the people He has used.
- Pray for Colin and his family. We thank God for bringing them into our lives.
- Praise God for the starting of a church plant at Orbus.
- Pray that God will build this church and that it will be a rich blessing over many years to the community at and around Orbus.
- Praise God for the PYV Team.
- Praise God for Gail Van Heerden.
- Give thanks for and pray for the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian - Blantyre Synod.
- Thank God for Lameck and the builders who have almost completed the first secondary school building.
- Please pray for the millions of children who suffer through the extreme poverty and struggles in Malawi.
- For the children attending the Orbus Centre to put their trust in Jesus.
- For the provision of the children's material needs.
- Give thanks for Wills and the Orbus teachers, Lameck and the staff and volunteers in Malawi.
- Please pray for energy, perseverance, resources, wisdom and guidance for the plans to commence the Orbus secondary school in September 2017.
- Pray for the things which need to be completed including: building, new desks, text books, Year 8 teacher, Form 1 teacher, proposed boarding facility.
- Prayer is invited regarding the longer-term plan for technical training and university at Orbus.
- Please pray for John and Sue Steendam as they prepare to depart Melbourne in a few weeks, and that God will go before them to prepare the way for them. John has not been well recently, so please pray particularly for wisdom and God's protection.

In Jesus,

*Craig Manners*

Executive Officer  
Orbus Ministries Australia Inc.  
[craig.manners@orbusministries.org](mailto:craig.manners@orbusministries.org)

*“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the cause of the widow.” (Isaiah 1:17)*



Web: [www.OrbusMinistries.org](http://www.OrbusMinistries.org) Email: [admin@orbusministries.org](mailto:admin@orbusministries.org)