

PHOEBE FAITH CHIFUNGO
Biography

Date of Birth: 18th May, 1972
Nationality: Malawian
Profession: teacher, preacher, missionary, Presbyterian
women's advocate



ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS:

2011-current: PhD student at the University of Stellenbosch.
Title: Re-evaluating the Role of Women in the Church in Malawi.

2004-2006: Master of Theology, majoring in Practical Theology and Christian Education from Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, South Africa.

2002-2003: Post graduate diploma, Practical Theology from Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, South Africa.

1993-1997: Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies with a minor in Christian Education from the African Bible College, Malawi.

1988-1992: Likuni Girls High School, Malawi with a Malawi Schools Certificate of Education.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Current: Teaching at William Murray High School in Nkhoma. My main aim is to disciple the students in Christian values and belief. I start every class with a short devotion

2006-2007: Worked briefly as a lecturer of theology at the College for Christian Ministries in Lilongwe, Malawi.

2004-2006: I also worked as women's coordinator and adult literacy coordinator at the Evangelical Association in Malawi

My main responsibility was to help Malawian Christian women to stand on their own, and to be empowered spiritually as well as socially. This we did through helping the women with small business loans.

Through preaching and counseling, we instilled hope that, although they are poor and that they are female, they are still precious in the eyes of God.

Through adult literacy programs, I also helped the poor women to learn how to read and write.

1997-2001: I have worked as high school teacher in different schools when I had the opportunity to do so.

BEING A GENERAL SECRETARY'S WIFE

By virtue of being the wife to the general secretary, I have become a leader among the Presbyterian women in the church. The Presbyterian Church of Central Malawi has over 1.5 million members; over 70% of the membership is women and girls. My role is to fight for women in the church to be considered equal with men, because they were also created in the image of God. I preach, teach and disciple the women through the Women's Guild meetings.

OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

International speaker

July 2103: Presented a paper in Cape Town, South Africa on **Women in Africa and The Church**.

July 2012: Presented an academic paper on **Women and The Church** at St Pauls University in Kenya, NETACT (Network for African Congregational Theology).

June 2011: Speaker at **Reading of Acts Conference in Africa** Pretoria and Cape Town (RSA), NETACT.

2011: Presented an academic paper on **Gender and The Church** at Stellenbosch University, NETACT.

June 2010: Guest speaker at world vision international in Los Angeles (USA) conference.

Have also organized and facilitated "Reading Acts in Africa" with church leaders in Malawi.

MY BACKGROUND AND CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

I was born in a nominal Christian family of eight children (four boys and four girls). My father, as an elementary school teacher, was a civil servant. It was hard to grow up because my father did not earn enough to take care of eight children. Unfortunately, in

1988, my father died. At that time, I was 15 years old and I was in grade eight. The same year, I was selected to go to high school. To be selected to enter high school in Malawi, especially for girls, was a very rare opportunity, but there was no one to pay for my school fees, so it was very hard. Well-wishers started to sympathize, and finally my stepsister started to assist me.

It was a big struggle to find clothes, shoes and pocket money for my school. Back home, my younger sisters all got married because that was the only way to run away from the hard conditions at home. It was hard for my mother, since she was only a peasant farmer in the village, and she was forced to marry one of my father's relatives because such is the custom and culture in my village. Life was very unbearable.

As if this was not enough, when I finished high school, in 1992, my stepsister chased me from her home, trying to force me to get married because I was a grown up girl. So from that point on, I was destitute. I had nowhere to stay, for many of the Christian friends could only keep me for few days. For me, living in Lilongwe was the only opportunity to further my education and get a job. Going back to my village, which was 300 km away, would have been the end of my dream of getting a higher education and become self-reliant, which would allow me to help my sisters and brothers and my mother.

But because I had become a committed Christian while in high school, I prayed to God for his help. I trusted that God would keep and sustain me.

I thank God that, now I am educated and am able to work and raise up my own family, I can also encourage other younger women and girls to get a better education.