

SOMETHING GOOD MUST GET BETTER



by Dr Viv Davies (Zambia)

The celebration of 100 years of witness at Kalene this year can be attributed to the firm foundation that was laid by Dr Walter Fisher in 1906. That foundation was Christ, whom he wanted to share by word and deed amongst the Lunda people of Central Africa.

The intervening years have been blessed with a succession of faithful servants of the Lord, who have given their talents, time and lives for the same purpose. They built on the same foundation, and the survival of Kalene as a mission bears witness to their resolve.

By the onset of the 20th Century, the scramble for land in Africa by European countries had come to an end. Colonial rule had been established, hungry for the natural resources of this vast continent, with mixed emphasis on the benefits for the nationals and for their masters from overseas. Dr Fisher had his sights on a greater Kingdom. It transcended boundaries and petty national interests. It is the reason why Kalene was established, and has survived.

The early beginnings were primitive but appropriate to the conditions encountered

in 1906 in Central Africa. Like the local Africans, he and his small team lived in houses built from mud bricks, with thatch roofs. But the vision was big, driven by a desire to share Christ. It demanded devoted application to learn and speak the language. The goal was to establish churches of African believers, schools for their education, and a hospital for their many physical needs.

All these goals have been achieved. Throughout north-western Zambia, there are scores of indigenous local churches. Schools have been assimilated into the Zambian Ministry of Education. But,

unlike the schools and churches, the hospital remains the responsibility of Kalene Mission. Financial assistance does come from government sources, but Kalene remains dependent on, and grateful for, the regular generous funding from Echoes of Service and the many items received via Medical Missionary News.

There are several reasons for this. Kalene has been isolated both geographically and by the effects of civil wars in adjacent Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Communications are still poor, with 60 miles of dirt road



Chief cooks and bottlewashers at Kalene



Kalene lady taking a break

before reaching the nearest tarmac. The greatest problem has been recruiting and retaining trained Zambian staff. Both nurses and doctors, after receiving training within Zambia, are understandably attracted by the more lucrative jobs overseas, many of them working in the UK. The ravages of AIDS have also cut short the lives of many health professionals. Consequently, Kalene has relied on a diminishing staff of missionary nurses and locally trained nurses.

The physical state of the hospital building also needs attention, although the basic structure erected by William Chapman in the 1950s remains strong. The twofold challenge is to improve both staffing and structure if Kalene Hospital is to remain

worthy of its title as a Mission Hospital, bearing the name of Christ.

At the onset of the year that marks the centenary of the work at Kalene, there is much for which to give thanks. The challenge to improve Kalene has met prepared hearts and minds in diverse places. John Woodfield, a trained surgeon from New Zealand, who is currently working in the UK, is committed to come to Kalene early in 2007. His wife Rachel is a pharmacist. Peter Gill, an orthopaedic surgeon from Sunderland, visits Kalene annually, and waits for the day when his circumstances will allow him to stay here permanently. The presence of these specialists will transform the level of services provided. Until then, my wife Chris and I consider ourselves privileged to be caretakers and catalysts at this important time of change and progress.

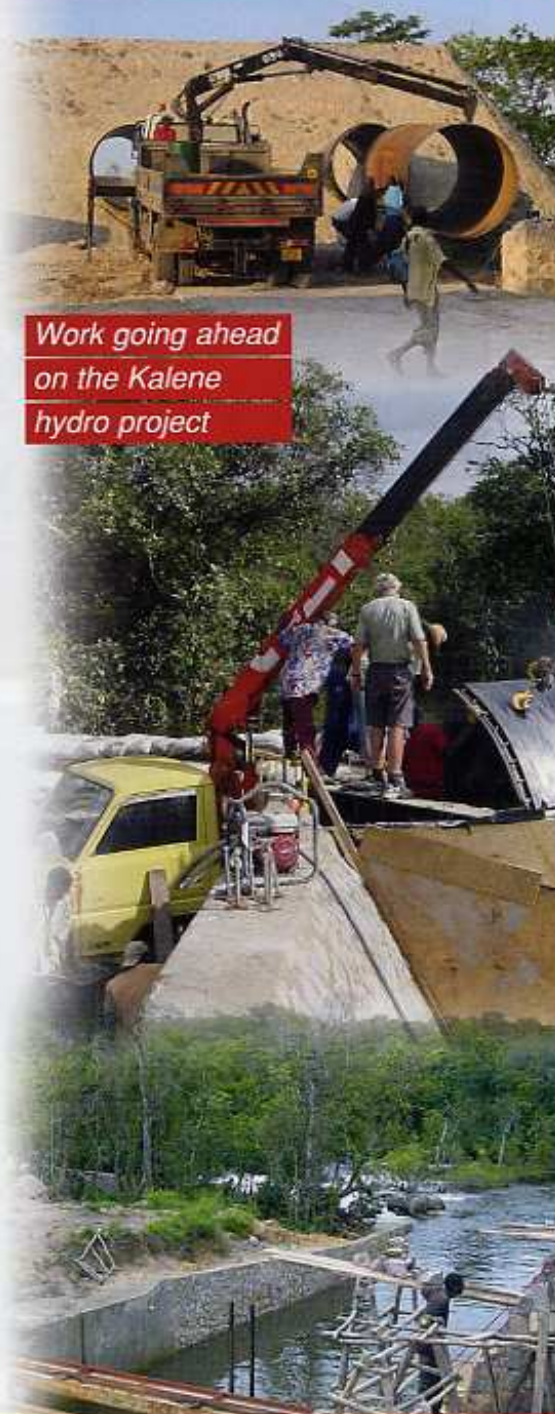
Within Zambia, Kalene has sponsored Zambian student nurses during their training to be Registered Nurses. As this report is being prepared in early February, all six of the nurses have arrived. The five male nurses seem prepared to face the challenges and disadvantages of living in a remote rural environment. The solitary female nurse quickly decided that living in the bush was not for her, and promptly left. Their sponsorship and recruitment have been costly. This has been compounded by the unexpected news that we have to pay them full Registered Nurse rates until they are accepted on the government payroll. We are grateful for the financial help that we have received from MSC Canada specifically for this purpose. Although this is costly, we feel that working without fully qualified Zambian staff would be even more costly, in

not meeting the expectations of both government and community. We pray for wisdom and true attention to the needs of these staff, that they will not only serve well, but also be blessed themselves.

Unexpectedly, the Zambian authorities have expressed great interest in encouraging Kalene to reopen the School of Nursing that was both established and run by Hilda Wadsworth (on DPG Zambia 1951-03) until its closure in 1989. This adds a tremendous challenge, but also gives hope to provide a regular source of trained staff for the future. The initiative and funding must come from the authorities, because we have made improvements to the hospital structure and staffing our priorities.

Indeed, the refurbishment of the hospital will be one of the exciting events of this centenary year. With combined commitment and financial backing, Echoes, MMN and Brass Tacks have planned for the work to commence in April. We gratefully acknowledge the resolute purpose and financial help given by all three agencies. Beginning in April, we look forward to welcoming a succession of teams from the UK who will be giving their time and talents to improve the hospital. Beginning with the drains and ablution blocks, their improvements will include the roof, ceilings, floor surfaces and some new building work.

The aims of Dr Walter Fisher are as relevant today as they were a century ago. Circumstances have changed, but the need for the gospel endures. We pray that we will face the challenge with the same resolve, and serve Christ and the community for the glory of God. The work that has developed is something good, but it can, and will, get better.



*Work going ahead
on the Kalene
hydro project*