

## October 2022 - TWT Malawi

### Soil health training for sustainable agriculture

July and August was busy with agricultural training. We ran two soil health trainings at our place and we also began agricultural training in three different communities. The focus was on soil and water conservation. To motivate participation, training on feeding the soil without inorganic fertilizer was done. This is a huge issue for farmers because of the astronomical fertilizer prices but we pray that it will bring about the needed change; a change that is hugely important: a commitment to maintaining healthy soil.



Throughout the training, we discuss the biblical basis for agricultural development. Key to all development is living in right relationship with God, others, self and the rest of creation. Respectful and responsible husbandry of all farm resources entrusted to us by God is the spiritual foundation for a godly farmer and good practices.

Once various ways of organically feeding the soil was discussed and practically done, the training introduced the whole farming system to make best use of the compost and home-made fertilizers. Conservation farming is a system that maintains soil health and structure and greatly increases moisture content in the soil. To conclude the workshops, participants were encourage to pray about starting a farmers' study group in their villages to involve others. Farmers will find it much easier to make the change to conservation tillage in groups. The major contributing factor of poor harvests in Malawi is the degradation of the soil, yet this issue is often ignored. While climate change is a reality in Malawi, it is a relatively minor factor in poor harvests compared with the issue of impoverished soils.

We hope that through the training new farmer study groups will form whom we will encourage and support over the next few years as they transition to a new system of crop husbandry that emphasises soil health and water conservation.



## **Bible training**

While doing these workshops, we also built relationships with a few pastors who joined and hope that they will get their churches involved in the Bible training as well. The Bible training has been slow in taking off. We are working with some churches but have struggled to see new groups started. We are praying for a good partner denomination. The courses have mostly been written. Some are now in Chichewa and others still in translation. Martin recently taught our new course on sermon preparation to a group of young adults.

## **Soil and soul restored in two Farmer study groups**

Soil and souls are restored through biblical and practical training in neighbouring villages where we live, about 9km west of Lilongwe. Two farmer study groups were formed last year through Justin's encouragement and training. They are working well together and have responded with new hope as they see their vegetable gardens beginning to flourish through reduced tillage, mulching, compost application and companion planting.

One farmer who was about to sell her land because she could not raise a good crop has gained new hope as her vegetables are doing much better.

