

Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art
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Dear Friends –

On 1st November 1976 I arrived at Mua Mission with the commission to establish what is now Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art.

As the fortieth anniversary of its foundation approaches it is time to celebrate the many blessings that God has bestowed on us in this remarkable place. I think of the artists who have gathered here (some departed, many still active, and a younger generation that promises well for the future) and their work – in wood, paint and many other media – which now beautifies churches, homes and institutions throughout Malawi, Africa and the World. I think of the many friends – Christian and those of other faiths, clergy and lay, from Malawi and ‘beyond the Lake’ – who have supported us in our endeavour. And I think above all of the warm embrace of the people of the parish and the surrounding communities – Chewa, Ngoni, Yao and others – who have welcomed us to their hearts and opened to us the treasure house of their traditional wisdom.

As part of his education a carver is taken into the forest and invited to compare the value of his work to the life of the tree that he has taken to create it. Only if art dignifies a tree will Kungoni Centre accept a carving for sale. Furthermore, carvers are encouraged to become the eyes of their people: to allow reflection and social commentary on what might otherwise be disregarded or lie hidden. The skill that they have acquired over four decades allows Malawian life in all the glory of its gay variety to be appreciated.

I am delighted to be able to lend my support to the initiative of the Kungoni Art Project. May it serve to recall so much that has been good here and to inspire those in a Malawi increasingly forgetful of her identity who still care about what makes them special – in their culture and their art – among the children of God!

As I embark upon the second half of my eighth decade I hope to find time to reflect further on the wonder of the Creation that we inhabit. So much is being lost: the forests that used to surround Mua Mission have been felled for charcoal; and the animals that used to inhabit them are hunted or die for want of a home. At the Open Day of August 2015 we staged a play to encourage people to reflect on the damage that they are doing before it is too late. By work to record what we still have – trees and flowers and traditional life – and to give artistic expression to its immense worth I hope to make my own small contribution to restoring the land, so that Malawi might become once again a bountiful mother to her people.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Fr. C. Boucher'.

Claude Boucher Chisale

Mua Mission, August 2015