



Greetings from Bujumbura, Burundi!

We recently returned to *Buja* after five and a half months on home assignment. *We are grateful* for the warm welcome from partner churches who held mission conferences or invited us to share our ministry with them from Wisconsin to Florida, to Long Island, guided by many prayers for travel mercies on our behalf.



*Children's class at Eastport Bible Church*

During our home assignment, we stayed in the recently purchased and renovated *Simtowe House* in Wyoming, Michigan, at the entrance to Grace Christian University. We were blessed by this cozy house and *are grateful* to those who remodeled, organized, and supplied the needed furnishings that allowed us the comforts of 'home.' While in Wisconsin and Florida, we had the opportunity to visit with family and friends. In Florida, Michelle's father had been in declining health and passed away in March. *We are grateful* for being able to visit with him while he was still able to converse in January and again in March during his final days.

Here in *Buja*, we moved back into our apartment in the Muslim 'Asian Quarter' neighborhood, and *we are grateful* to our landlords who kept this place vacant for the months we were in the US. Tom immediately had many requests for medical help from our home, treating the many day laborers for health problems they typically just live with because they can't afford the available care that might cost less than ten or twenty dollars. One individual has a lump on his upper chest and Tom is suspicious

that it may be cancer. Another man whom Tom treated a few days before we left for the US, had severe wounds on his buttocks from being beaten with rods for stealing. The wounds were akin to third-degree burns with dead tissue all the way down to the muscle. Tom trained a friend of the man to do daily dressing changes and gave him supplies including a jar of honey as a burn salve that they could affordably replace if it ran out. Though we haven't seen him yet, we were told that his wounds healed completely in about 3 months!

Before we left Burundi in December, we developed a proposal for formalized Bible training to prepare leaders for ministry in their home churches and deepen their knowledge of Christ and His word. Our original plan entailed using the *old model* of month-long student sojourns to a dedicated centrally located location. After receiving advice to compare our draft plan with a strategy developed by our colleagues in Malawi, our approach underwent some major changes. Our revised plan will utilize one-week training sessions that will be held in partnering host churches around the country. These sessions will be close to where the students live and will allow them to quickly put into practice what they learn.

God has blessed the discipling and Bible training ministry in Burundi during our absence. Method and Omelina Mwendapole (our partner team members from Tanzania) continued to lead general training seminars in rural and small-town churches we are fellowshiping with while we were in the US.



*With our team members, Method and Omelina*

Preparations for *Berean Bible Institute-Burundi* (BBI-Bu) are moving forward and we hope to begin the first training module in two to three months. If you'd like to contribute to the start-

up costs of BBI-Bu, please visit [gracem.org](http://gracem.org), click on Projects, and then on *Berean Bible Institute-Burundi*. We are grateful to those who have already given to this project.

Buja sits in a plain at close to 2,500 ft elevation, thus keeping daily temps in the 80s F despite the close proximity to the Equator. Most places in the interior are up in the mountains. Traveling seminars give our team an opportunity to scout out future potential training environments. In mountainous areas it is very cold at night, all the way down to the 40s F. Before you chuckle, remember that most homes are stick and mud, open to a tin, or leaf roof, with breezy door and window frames with mostly no glass. The sweaters and long underwear we brought with us, normally out of place in the tropics, will see use when we're up there.



Tom at Parkside Bible Church

We are rethinking the format of the *Afya Yetu (Our Health)* radio program and realize there are advantages to switching to a podcast offering 100% Bible teaching in Swahili, French, and eventually, Kirundi. The most significant advantage is having a measurable audience size. We should be able to interact with our audience if we offer a live, real-time format that allows for call-in participation. The changes will ensure that the program better aligns with our goal to disciple and teach theological truths to a wider audience.

We're in the process of renewing our Residence Visas through our sponsors, Hope Africa University (HAU). Tom met with the university rector, Victor, to discuss our part-time schedules. Michelle will begin teaching a writing class at HAU as well as teaching Fundamentals of Academic Writing at the Great Lakes School of Theology. Tom will also be spending some time in the classroom in the coming semester. His clinical practice will be housed in Amazi Water Headquarters' (a Christian well-digging organization) family clinic, which will also be open to the public. *We are grateful* for HAU's sponsorship and for the opportunity to teach at HAU with the gifts God has given to us.

#### Please keep us in your prayers:

- For the start-up of Berean Bible Institute and for four partner sites that agree to host week-long Bible school sessions in key geographical locations.
- Cash-in, cash-out... During our first week back, the government announced that the two highest denomination bills will no longer be legal tender starting the next day! Thankfully, everyone has 10 days to either deposit them or spend them. We chose the latter. Pray for God's grace to protect the poor since these disruptions catch them unable to act in time because they live hand-to-mouth and the day's capital goes for food and tomorrow's re-supply of things to sell.
- Our teaching assignments - that class sizes will be manageable.
- That the fruit of the street ministry would see participants established in churches.
- Pray as we add Bible-teaching podcasts to our radio outreach.

Thank you all for your faithful prayers and generous financial support!



*Praise the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good! His faithful love endures forever, Psalm 106:1*

In His gracious love,  
Tom and Michelle

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