



Christmas Greetings from Tom & Michelle Sanchez!

Opening of Burundi & Visas

Great news that many of you have likely heard via Team Burundi on Facebook is that the international airport in Bujumbura opened in November with a mandatory predeparture and post-arrival negative test for CoV-19. We made reservations to depart on the 14th of December but on Thanksgiving Day we received a notice that the Brussels to Bujumbura leg of the flight was cancelled with no explanation. So, we rebooked for the **21st of December**, which was likely a “God thing” since, in our eagerness, we were cutting it razor-close to be able to have Burundi visas stamped into our passports and back in our hands by the 14th. This is an example of God working through

prayers asking Him to work in the details to get us to our field of service. ***Please keep praying that we will have them in hand before the 21st.***

A Burundi WhatsApp group we are part of has been a source of information, ideas, and connections for our future life and work there. We put out a call for leads on lodging for rent and immediately received a couple of tips. We reserved a furnished apartment (another answer to prayer!) in the largely Muslim and Hindu Asian Quarter of Bujumbura. We have been warned about the extremely loud, five-times-a-day, call for prayer issuing from four nearby minarets—loud enough that, we’re told, you cannot talk over the sound. The apartment block is also

on a commercial street so it is noisy during the day, but typically the din dies down quickly in the evening. We have a desire to include outreach to Hindus and Muslims in addition to the mostly black African people we will encounter at Hope Africa University. We picture the Lord issuing a gentle admonishment to use those calls as times for us to pray for the people we are called to reach.

Dodging CoV-19

Another item of thanks and continued prayer is that with all our traveling around the U.S. while taking reasonable precautions governed by un-politicized science, educated opinion, and allowing for some normal human interaction, we have had no symptoms suggestive of CoV-19. This fall, we attended mission conferences in the Northwest and made stops along the way in Minnesota, North & South Dakota, and Montana. Several churches held meetings by Zoom or watched recorded video presentations, while others continued to meet in-person with various levels of distancing and mask use. During all of this there were people who had been or were currently infected or became infected after our departure. Knowing people who have gone through or are currently experiencing this illness has made it real. There will certainly be at least a partial base of herd (natural) immunity in place before a vaccine is available to most



In the Northwest with fellow missionary travelers



With our daughter Samara & husband Phil at the Oregon coast

people. It would be nice to be among the first vaccine recipients due to the extra risk associated with travel and eventual exposure to risk at the HAU hospital (Clinique Van Norman), and yes, we are getting up there in years.

We're geared up for 6- and 10-hour flights to Bujumbura while constantly wearing a mask. We have to show evidence of a negative CoV-19 test done within 72 hours of departure from the U.S. and then on arrival we will be tested again while we stay in quarantine at a specified hotel. If everyone arriving on the plane tests negative, we will be free to circulate. If we test positive... by faith, let's not go there!

What's waiting in Burundi?

Our partner missionaries from Tanzania, **Method and Omelina Mwendapole**, have transitioned to Bujumbura from their previous home and ministry in Mwanza, Tanzania. They have found a house to rent and are concentrating on learning Kirundi while we will study to get closer to an academic level in our use of French.

We need to obtain residence visas before our initial entry visa runs out; please pray for that to happen.

Hope Africa University (HAU) has assigned an officer to help us work through the immigration aspects of getting settled in. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with HAU to invite us into the country and provides the broad outlines of our part-time role there.

Bible Correspondence Fellowship lessons are currently being translated into Kirundi. These lessons will be used in prison ministry but are also useful tools for general Bible teaching. We plan to start with Bible studies, chapel services, and radio programs to begin ministering and bringing the gospel to Burundians at HAU and all over Bujumbura. We will need transportation soon and want to find a motorcycle to give us time to shop around and look for the best deal on a used SUV-type vehicle.

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Praise

We are thankful for the extra time we've had with family, a reserved furnished apartment, and the Lord's timing of our departure.

Prayer

A seamless arrival to Bujumbura with luggage, CoV-19 testing and quarantine, residence visas, a French language tutor, purchase of a motorcycle and car, continued good working relationship with the HAU director and staff, and a first set of radio programs that quickly garners an audience. If you'd like to help purchase radio time, please visit <https://gracem.org/project/voice-of-hope-radio-time-burundi/>

Overall, we're at about 95% of our full support level and it would be a blessing to leave the U.S. at 100%. If you have been contemplating a place for a portion of your offerings, we believe our work is a great place for a one-time or monthly contribution!

During this season of Advent, we're grateful for the hope, joy, and love He has brought to us by the *coming* of our Redeemer and that He is *sending* us to help spread the good news in Burundi!

In His amazing love,

Tom & Michelle Sanchez



Caught a real reindeer!