

MISSION TO BURUNDI

DECEMBER
2021

creating a community of grace



Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord (Luke 2: 11). At this time of year, we are prompted to remember God's graciousness in providing the way to reconcile with Him through the miracle of Emanuel, God with us.

In these first ten months in Burundi, we have been meeting people from all walks of life that, we believe, the Lord has brought before us. Along the way, we've made friends who we envision will partner with us in future ministry. Our goal to disciple Burundians for leadership who will go on to establish a Burundian-led church is gradually coming to fruition. A highlight of our week is the 9AM Thursday morning street-corner outreach to mainly day-workers and passers-by who we wrote about in our June newsletter. Once we got started it has become so anticipated that there has been no interruption ministering to this group where life as a daily grind comes close to being literal. One of the regulars even called Tom out for starting late one rainy morn-



Injured day-laborer

ing! The men are in raggedy, torn, filthy clothes that are so repeatedly worn that we can remember people in part, by the sameness of what they wear.

Outreaches are attended by a group of about 20 or so "regulars" who have never forgotten the first teaching topic: that people, even standing or sitting around in the open on a street corner are the church. They have clearly taken in from God's Word that His church has nothing to do with brick and mortar, much less stained-glass and steeples. When a newcomer poses the frequently asked question "Where is your church?" the regulars answer in Tom's place. They give the definition of a church from Scripture accompanied by chuckles, smiles, and an urgency that indicates their confidence in the security of God's love knowing that they are the church right here where they are.

The informal clinic held after the teaching and prayer is for any day-laborer with a medical need. The vast

majority of complaints are musculoskeletal and arthritis issues that come from a hard life of carrying loads on their heads or shoulders. We estimate that the compensation on a really good day is 3 dollars. Picture guys emptying semi-trailer loads of 50kg (110#) sacs of cement in and then later, out of an owner's shop to the retail buyer's pick-up truck. They get covered in the grey dust and are obviously breathing it in. The medical mask-making cottage industry here will supply us with a large order so these guys can avoid breathing in this harmful dust. If you want to know more, look up the NIH's "health hazards of cement dust" and you'll get that the hazards are more than the direct effect of obstructive lung disease, as if that weren't bad enough.

Along with Baudouin, in-person Bible study continues in the Asian Quarter with a group of University of Burundi students. We also help with the Mwendapoles' Bible study held at our new GMI office rented in the middle of the downtown area. We envision that the two groups will



Tom with his clinical students visiting a village to teach health and wellness



Bible Correspondence Fellowship seminar trainees



Thank you for partnering with us!

grow into churches led by members who have been discipled into a well-rounded understanding of the gospel of the Grace of God.

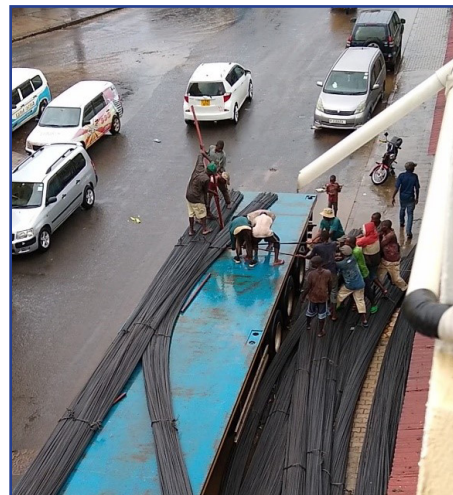
Our half-hour Swahili language radio program called Afya Yetu (Our Health) is now broadcast on two different radio stations in a combination of five morning and evening slots with the recent addition of Voix d'Espoir Radio, affiliated with Hope Africa University. The programs provide a mix of health information in a conversational format plus teaching from the Bible that connects with the topic. Our group of panel members are from Burundi, DR-Congo, Tanzania, and Tom with a range of accents that we think appeals to the Swahili-speaking segment of our diverse community.



Afya Radio Team. The man second from the right is Kitoko Luyuba, an old friend from DR-Congo now a pastor in and refugee in Bujumbura.

Our Kirundi translators have completed work on the discipleship guidebook as well as several Bible Correspondence Fellowship lessons including one-page Bible studies. We need the Muslim evangelism training book and many more of the BCF lessons, so they will stay busy for another year or more!

We both had CoVid-19, 20, 21 22?... when will it end! Tom's first bout in late July, despite the 2-shot Pfizer vax was followed by Michelle's prolonged experience where, at the worst point, her pulse-ox readings dipped to 89. Tom had a second bout in mid-September, that time marked by the classic persistent total loss of smell and taste. We're on a regimen that includes Ivermectin and are on the upswing. In central Africa, we believe we're likely awash in a swirl of variants from north, south, east, and west. There have been some CoV attributed deaths around us, anecdotally among generally older (50+) people with other chronic illness. We get frequent medical assist calls, not just from fellow missionaries but from people in the community, including Muslims and other ex-patriates. They call wanting help figuring out what's wrong and how to get through whatever is ailing them without having to go to the hospital. The most dramatic case was a neighbor who had symptoms of a potentially deadly pulmonary embolism which proved correct and was flown by air ambulance to Kenya for treatment. Before Tom saw him, he was entertaining the thought that he just needed to self-medicate at home. Tom took four nursing students to a Christian rural health center for a week of extra clinical time among staff members who are highly motivated to see them improve on basic skills. They are far behind the level



Day-laborers unloading tons of rebar

expected for their level of education.

Answers to Prayer: Pastor Claver, with a group of about 20, attended a two-day seminar on how to start a prison ministry and how to use BCF lessons. Michelle is advancing in her French study. We found and rented an office right in the middle of the downtown area where we are easy to find.

Prayer Requests: To fill our Bible study sessions to the brim and beyond. Pray that prison ministry will get off the ground under Burundian leadership & initiative. We would love more feedback from our radio audience because without it we cannot get a good handle on the impact.

We are grateful for your prayer support and gifts to the ministry in Bujumbura, Burundi, to keep us firmly planted in His calling on our lives and to minister in this place at this time. *Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests (Luke 2:14).*

Love and blessings,
Tom & Michelle