

MISSION TO BURUNDI



December 2022



creating a community of grace

Christmas Greetings!

During this Thanksgiving and Christmas season, our thoughts return to family and joyful memories while looking back on a year that had some painful bumps, a few friends & family members no longer with us, so we think, *Come Lord Jesus, Come*. It is also a season of hope, not a hope so, because Biblical hope is grounded in God's promises to us and therefore hope is a done-deal.

Presently, we are preparing for home assignment and leaving the ministry here with the tools to carry on until we return at the end of the conference season in mid-Spring 2023. We are looking forward to sharing in-person what the Lord has been doing through your faithful prayers and gifts.



Tom working with the technician to edit a recorded program.

Rather than beginning with a single start-up, we believe God has directed us to work with numerous pre-existing churches. One of our major collaborations is with Grace Bible Church-Burundi (GBC-Bu), a denomination of about 60 churches, not (yet?) connected to a fellowship of churches around the world that teach God's grace. GBC-Bu itself is a conglomeration of pre-existing churches. Theologically, each local church retained its smattering of doctrine when they joined GBC, meaning they are in reality, all over the map. The adoption of a common doctrinal statement by members of the denomination has proved spurious. Our team has come alongside the founder, Anicet, and the church elders, to build up theological foundations being preached and taught in GBC churches. Several other small groupings of churches also want to join with us.

At the beginning of December, we held a two-day seminar for about 40 general assembly members from GBC and leaders from a couple other tiny denominations. This is one of the ways the Lord has been using us to reorient leaders back to what the Bible teaches. Periodic seminars allow concentrated time to instruct, correct and offer some gentle rebuke of false teachings. We're thankful that the Mwendapoles, our fellow GMI team members from Tanzania,

have experienced setting up Bible training programs. Method shined as a teacher-preacher when we presented a review of the major topics of the Bible ending in salvation by grace alone. We outlined the panorama of God's gradual revelation of His purpose in creating us, allowing us to fall into sin, and His heel crushing the serpent's head.



Muzumbi and Mulimu - old friends DR-Congo in Buja for healthcare.

A future effort in the planning stage is the development of a Burundi Bible Institute. GBC elders want to partner with us to establish a dedicated training program for their church members and other believers from around the country. We hope to talk more about this during our visit for conferences in the US over the next few months.

What has proved to be a *sleeper* tool that has allowed us to impact such a large number of churches in such a short amount of time has been **Bible Correspondence Fellowship/Prison Mission Association's** (BCF/PMA)



With GBC-Bu leaders Anicet & Richard, GM team members Method & Omelina, and Greg & Madeleine.

set of lessons originally purposed for prison ministry. Our partnership with BCF/PMA through use of their lessons as at-home, small group and distance Bible study has been yielding a rapidly expanding array of individuals and churches who are having their thirst for knowing God and His plan for today satisfied. We are gradually overcoming the obstacle of the several languages these lessons need to be translated into thanks for your help through one of the Christmas catalog's projects. We spend many hours converting the original lessons to simplified *international English*, then to French, then to both Congolese and Tanzanian Swahilis (different enough to merit their own versions) and finally to Kirundi, the universal language of Burundi. Kirundi is a far more difficult language than we had thought. What's different from our stand-by Swahili is that it's tonal and written Kirundi doesn't look like it sounds when spoken.

While in Burundi we've reconnected with Congolese colleagues who we knew from our time as missionaries to DR-Congo (former Zaire). Greg, a pastor and radio minister for Grace

2 Corinthians 9:8

church from Bukavu, has provided experienced anchoring and hosting for the Afya Yetu (AY- *Our Health*) radio program which now has 88 shows in the can, providing a combination of health education and Bible instruction. We believe these recordings will now have a life of their own, we pray, through re-broadcast across more stations as **public service**

for them. Our goal on our return is to connect a half-hour all Bible instruction program to AY. There are quite a number of stations on-air so our strategy is to engage with other broadcasters that will pick up the program to increase the audience size. In this multi-lingual region we must eventually add Kirundi.

Some of our Congolese friends come to Bujumbura to receive better quality healthcare for chronic diseases like hypertension and diabetes. Tom has been able to help with fine-tuning their treatment and put self-care

tools in their hands such as BP cuffs and blood sugar testing supplies so they can adjust their treatments when needed. Helping them find generic medicines in place of prescribed European brands (which can cost ten times the price) helps make what they need affordable.

From January to May 2023, we will participate in mission conferences in the Midwest as well as Alabama, Pennsylvania, and New York. We hope to see many of you during our stay and share what the Lord is accomplishing through your prayers and sacrificial gifts to sustain us in ministry. Thank you!

May you feel the hope, presence, and peace of the Lord Jesus this Christmas season and into the New Year! **Isaiah 9:6** *For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*



Theology seminar for church leaders in early December.

Love and Blessings,

Michelle & Tom



Our new Burundi mailing address is: Grace Ministries International, Tom & Michelle Sanchez, BP 7183, Bujumbura, Burundi.

Thank you all for your prayers and your sacrifice to give generously to this work and ministry. We're amazed at all that God has done in this short period of time, His hand continually moving through us in many directions to multiply followers of Jesus.

In His amazing love,
Tom & Michelle