



Dear Team Burundi Partners,

Just recently, we pulled out an old file and had a bit of fun reading over our prayer letters from the 1990s. Seventeen years later, as we prepare for ministry in Bujumbura, Burundi, we thought we might cringe at what we had written. We were pleasantly surprised that our perspective on life as missionaries in Zaire has not changed. A theme that comes through many of these reports is a sense of humor and confidence amid strife that included occasional gun-and-mortar fire in and around Bukavu in the newly renamed Democratic Republic of Congo. These letters have shown us that through God's grace and mercy we were able to follow His vision and will for our lives of growing the church in Africa. We want to keep this perspective from our youth alive along with the sense of security only God could have given us during a period of uprisings and civil war.

These past few months, the Lord has been preparing us to return

to that area of Africa. We have started deputation and shared with many of you our plans for establishing a new Grace Ministries International (GMI) field in Burundi. We visited churches in the West Michigan area to present our ministry vision and have been blessed by the reception we've received. We reconnected with old friends and shared stories of growth and challenge as we go through and pass middle age!

It's been encouraging that many supporters from our earlier days in the Congo are renewing their partnership with us and joining Team Burundi.

One piece of news from Burundi is that a new president (rector) has been named to lead Hope Africa University (HAU). We were initially concerned about this change because we had met and established good rapport with the previous



Tom and Michelle with the Killion Family

rector during our visit to HAU last summer. After contacting the new rector, Victor, we were assured of a continued desire to partner with us. We praise the Lord for Victor and that we'll be able to continue as planned. Teaching at HAU part-time is our entry-point to develop and nurture African leaders and work with them to plant and mature self-sustaining locally-led churches. We're excited to open this new field and contribute to GMI's Vision 2023 by planting a Burundian Grace Church using our teaching positions at HAU as a doorway into the lives of students, faculty and the people of Burundi.

As we've mentioned previously, we will first go to assist the national church leadership in Kabwe, Zambia, for a short time before our move to Burundi. We will build on prior work of missionaries and volunteers who conducted intensive workshops last summer for church leaders. This summer a

teaching team that includes Grace Bible College (GBC) professor Phil Long, local pastors, and other leaders is going out to conduct seminars for leadership that will lay a strong foundation for our time with the Zambian church next year.

Our other focus while in Zambia is to strengthen the Grace Center Church (GCC) in Kabwe. An exciting development is that we are in discussions with GBC about having Worship Arts students come alongside us for a study abroad term. We see a definite need for these students who have gifts that complement ours. GCC will benefit from their musical and creative talents in this vital church ministry. GCC, which meets in the headquarter building of the Grace Church of Zambia, can serve as a model for other churches.

This August, we will finish our teaching contracts and continue

to raise support at conferences in the fall. We'll head to the Northwest and hope to finish deputation by the end of 2017. Lord willing, this will enable us to be with family for Christmas before leaving for Africa in January 2018; however, we'll need to be fully funded before saying our good-byes.

Please pray that our support will continue to grow throughout these next six months. We're thrilled and eager to serve the Lord in Africa and by the prayers of His people, we will soon see our calling to Burundi come to fruition. Please praise Him with us as we have been offered a house to rent in Kabwe, Zambia, which would allow for a seamless transition to our first stop of ministry!

May the Lord bless our partnership as together we increase the reach of His grace,

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