

# MISSION TO BURUNDI

JUNE  
2021

creating a community of grace



We are settled into a burgeoning ministry here in Burundi. The choice of where to live in Bujumbura entailed one important slice of our work as witnesses. People in our new neighborhood are getting to know us as the unusual western Christian people who live in this gritty, largely Muslim and Hindu part of town known as the Asian Quarter (AQ). Hundreds, maybe thousands, of nominal Christian Burundians flock into the AQ daily as workers in the Muslim-owned shops and homes. It is insightful to pick up bits of conversation of passers-by from the street below that echo up to our windows in the cool of the evening when the streets, thankfully, quiet down. We're the foreigners who shop locally on foot, speak Swahili, are content to live in this dense commercial district, and who get people laughing by tossing a basketball to random passers-by on Tom's way to the playground.

We settled into this part of town following in the footsteps of a younger missionary couple who wanted to live where there is a great need for Christian witness. To get open witnessing off the ground, Tom has been holding weekly Q&A sessions on a street corner that was launched when he was halted and drawn into an out loud conversation one day with a man who had questions he



Our first Bible study with students. We've grown to over twenty attenders the past few weeks.

wanted to pose to the guy passing by carrying a Bible.

Several of the attenders of these street-corner sessions have heard that Tom helps people with health problems, including one man who is nearsighted. Tom "just happened" to have (God is so good in the details we could never plan for) among the reading glasses we brought with us to Africa, a pair of near-sighted glasses that were in excellent condition except for a break in the center frame. You can always depend on African ingenuity to be able to fix something like that acceptably to the wearer. Sure enough, the man came back a week later wearing the glasses with no detectable repair to the frame. His beaming face showed that he could see very well.

Corner church attenders have eye and ache problems that are run-of-the-mill but cause a lot of misery, e.g., allergies, colds, flu, joint pain, and lumbago from carrying heavy loads for a living. In case you're wondering, virtually no one gets tested for CoVid and though some resident foreigners have tested positive, and no more than a tiny fraction of people do anything remotely protective, yet there is no sign of an outbreak.

Listeners return to our weekly street sessions proclaiming they are non-miraculous, but very practical healing or improvement. God is using acts of kindness to add compassion to teaching. The miracle is gospel-inspired, your-hands-through-our-hands generosity to the recipients from continents away, right to their back yard here in the Asian Quarter. We consider ourselves blessed that God has led us to live in this culturally diverse area as a way to evangelize and witness in Bujumbura as we seek to plant and

expand the first Burundian-led GMI associated churches.

Another way we'll reach widely into the city of Bujumbura and potentially throughout Burundi is via a radio program. We found that there are a good number of radio stations in Burundi's largest city, making the market competitive. Tom has been invited by the station manager to provide pre-recorded, ten-minute messages for use on *Destiny FM*, a Christian station. These messages will help us to develop an audience so we can expand onto other Christian and secular radio stations. We're starting discussions on how to best launch a regular half-hour program once or twice weekly by purchasing the air time. We're tapping into the experience of Gregoire Masango of *Radio Kahuzi* in Bukavu, Congo, who is finally able to come and visit with us as CoVid travel restrictions are easing somewhat. Gregoire is a co-worker and friend from our days in Bukavu who has spent 25 plus years producing Christian content on the radio. The Christmas project for the radio work is well funded. Thank you all for giving so generously last December!

We hold a weekly in-home Bible study in partnership with a Burundian couple who are also committed to outreach in



At Emmanuel Bible Church where Tom will begin preaching a series of messages for four weeks.

the AQ. Attendees are mostly students from the University of Burundi plus a few neighbors we've invited. The number who attend is growing and we want it to spill over our capacity so we can divide and multiply. We're using Discovery Bible Study methodology which keeps everyone attentive and interactive. Students are asked to share insights they've gained with others and apply what they learn between study sessions. One of the attendees excitedly told the group that he shared with friends what he had learned and invited them to come along next week, and there they were!

Guest preaching is opening doors to Bible teaching among existing churches that are open to hearing our messages and use of study materials we offer such as *Bible Correspondence Fellowship (BCF)* lessons. Since much of what we offer is in English, we've formed a translation team of four people in partnership with the Burundi and East African branches of *Evangelism Explosion International* to get more teaching and ministry tools translated into Kirundi and later, to French. After we get a few BCF lessons completed, next up for translation are Fred Vinton's book on how to witness to Muslims and a discipleship handbook. Producing readable materials that convey the intended meaning has been a struggle. We're confident that with our newly-expanded team of four translators working together, we'll have quality materials that fully express God's love and what it means to follow Jesus Christ.



*Translation team meeting.*

2 Corinthians 9:8



*Street corner evangelism on the corner of our apartment block*

#### Prayer points:

- To deepen relationships for Muslim evangelism. We have made acquaintances in our neighborhood among Muslim shop owners. Street evangelism seems our best option right now though most participants are Burundian Christians and unchurched people.
- That the Spirit will spark interest and commitment of Pastor Claver to start a prison ministry in Burundi using the nearly-finished translation of several BCF lessons into Kirundi.
- That Tom has patience with the poorly-qualified students admitted to the Nursing Master's program at Hope Africa University. Many are not at the required level of French or English needed to profit from available donated textbooks or online lectures.
- Michelle is working to improve her French and hopefully her students will be up to par in French at the start of the semester in August. English is likely a lost cause for most.
- We need to find an office space to rent to establish an organizational presence and to serve as a place for small group gatherings.

#### Family Update:

Rebecca is working her first job as an RN at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan on the night shift while caring for our 12-year-old granddaughter Sophia. She is staying strong in a very tough environment, advocating for teamwork where little existed.

Simeon and Myra continue on in Cambodia. Simeon teaches English and Myra is at a local elementary school while she continues online study to add to her qualifications in counseling. They offer their rented home with its beautiful surroundings as a place for Cambodian Christians and missionaries to have some respite.

Our daughter Samara and husband Phil have recently moved to Chiang Mai, Thailand. Samara will work as a counselor at a Christian counseling center while Phil continues his work with orphanages in the region.

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