

MISSION TO BURUNDI

JUNE
2022

creating a community of grace



Our goal to disciple Burundians for leadership who will go on to establish a Burundian-led church is gradually coming to fruition.

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities.
Romans 13:1



Gas lines require armed police to keep the peace.

This is often a difficult verse to be obedient to. We have to remind ourselves of this command when laws here create new hardships and inconveniences. The general population has little in the way of support from the government even as oppressive restrictions to their daily lives undermine their meager livelihoods. We

are saddened by the authoritarian callousness of government of the rich, by the rich, for the rich. In the face of this we frequently remind ourselves of Paul's words from Romans 13.

Recently, the Burundi government started enforcing laws that drastically reduce the ability of churches to obtain registration or function. Many existing churches meeting in schools or other rented space will lose their registration because the rules require congregations to own the buildings and land where they meet, be located no closer than a half-mile radius from any other church and that pastors must have college degrees. Enforcement is beginning but there has been push-back that we pray is blessed.

Another law enacted and enforced a few months ago forbids the use of motorcycles, 3-wheeled motorized rickshaws (aka, tuk-tuk's), and bicycle-taxis (about 30 cents to go up to a couple miles) within most of Bujumbura. Burundians use these types of inexpensive transport to get to work, get their kids to school, and to move mostly locally-produced goods in and around the city. This has affected those who transport

people, mattresses, produce, and jerry-cans of raw milk in order to make a living. All these middle-men (mostly women!) traders



*Preaching at Grace Bible Church Bujumbura –
An emerging partner in ministry.*

buy as much as they can carry in a big plastic sack or basin (oranges, avocados, tomatoes, onions, etc.) from the small-plot garden farmers who need to get their harvest to market at critical times. We way over-buy produce sold by the women selling door to door and give it away. The impact of these laws is harshest on the poorest people.

We have been in Bujumbura for over a year and have made our home in a 3rd-floor apartment in the center of the mostly Muslim Asian Quarter (AQ). Besides half a dozen mosques in this roughly one square mile, the AQ is Grand Central for densely packed shops selling hardware and building materials. While our main purpose for being here is to disciple Burundians to go on to establish a Burundian-led church, our ministry continues to day workers who come from the outskirts of the city every morning in droves to carry out the manual labor of moving bags of cement, steel, tiles, toilets and washbasins on and off trucks. The men are typically rail-thin, so when illness strikes, they weaken quickly. Side-walk clinics and consultations are part of our daily routines.



Our Health radio team concluding a recording session.

The *Afya Yetu (Our Health)* radio team meets every two to three months to record up to a dozen half-hour programs that explore health concerns and regional beliefs and treatments. The discussion format in Swahili features participants from Burundi, DR-Congo and Tanzania.

A Bible lesson that is as directly related to the topic as possible gets worked in for up to 10 minutes of the program. *Afya Yetu* is on two radio stations on different days and times. Some recent topics were on nutrition. Myths encountered included whether eating beans causes poor vision, that the use of disposable diapers with 'something' in the liner is a western plot to diminish the virility of male children later in life, whether wild fruits of the forest are safe to eat, that eating palm kernel nuts causes anemia, and that people should not drink water when sick with diarrhea because some insist that fluid intake will make it worse. Moving away from these ideas will save lives and encourage healthy practices such as the consumption of palm nuts and beans by under-nourished children giving them a needed caloric boost. We have confirmed listeners as far south as Baraka on the heavily populated DR Congo side of Lake Tanganyika and on the Burundi side all the way into Tanzania.

During a week of leading Bible study during chapel at Hope Africa University, about 1,000 students were given copies of the Introductory Bible Lesson from Bible Correspondence Fellowship. The chaplaincy told us they want to use BCF lessons as a requirement for all students. We expected that Kirundi would be the primary language students

would use, but it turned out that for the majority of HAU students it's French. We have now placed French translation at the top of our list to get at least the first



March GMI executive meeting with Burundi and Tanzania teams.

dozen lessons finished and available for use in Burundi, DR-Congo, Cameroon and anywhere else that French is needed.

Prayer Requests:

- Please pray with us as we work with church leaders to improve understanding of the Word.
- Rift Valley Fever, an often-lethal disease for cattle, sheep and goats, is threatening the meat and milk supply.
- Language study for our team.

Thank you all so much for your continued prayer and financial support that keeps us sustained and moving forward!

Love and Blessings,

Tom & Michelle