

Merry Christmas!

May the Lord bless you with special, memorable times with your families, church family, and friends as we celebrate the Savior's entry into the world. As anticipated in our June letter, we returned to the US in July after visits with Samara & Phil in Thailand and Simeon & Myra in the Philippines. When we arrived in the US, we visited our daughter Rebecca and granddaughter Sophia in New York. Since then, we have been mostly occupied with visits with supporters, churches, and family members from Michigan to Oregon. Tom travelled solo to the Pacific Northwest Mission Conferences, while Michelle stayed behind for some medical appointments. Thank you to all who hosted, planned conferences, and provided a wonderful reception and exchange of stories and advice on the Lord's working in our lives.

One of the benefits of leaving our country of service for an extended period is that we can hand over some of the work in the field to leaders in the churches in Burundi who may eventually have responsibility for these ministries. Our time away from the field empowers these African pastors and church leaders to step up and take on duties that they might not have attempted otherwise. I refer to Africans rather than just Burundians because, for now, Congolese and Tanzanian pastors are also part of this group that assists with the work here. As we train and equip pastors and church leaders here in Burundi, our goal is for the ministries in Burundi to eventually be totally in the hands of Burundians.

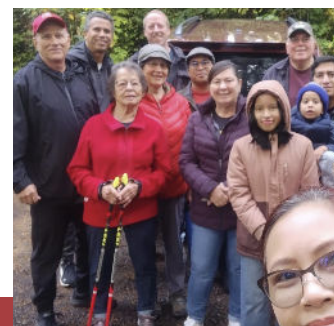
It is a blessing and a sign of overall continental progress that we have many qualified and trusted colleagues among our former co-workers from neighboring countries. When they come from the Congo or Tanzania to help teach BGBI courses or serve as translators, they are blessed by the opportunity to earn income and by the cross-cultural work they're doing when they join with us. They also discover for themselves that fellow Africans in neighboring countries have very different cultures and habits.

Ministry Updates:

- **The "hallway" medical clinic** continues treating ultra-low-income people for free, six mornings a week, under the care of Kitoka Luyuba, a Congolese nurse.
- **Burundi Grace Bible Institute (BGBI)** sessions at two established locations have continued through the 3rd and 4th week-long modules under the direction of our GMI teammate, Method Mwendapole.
- **BGBI sites have doubled** from two to four under Method Mwendapole's leadership. We believe the Lord wants us to continue expanding the BGBI sites until we get to six or eight locations around Burundi in the next couple of years. A potential limiting factor is the cost of each session for food, lodging, classroom rental, teaching supplies, visiting teacher transport (from either Tanzania or DR-Congo) & salary. This comes to about \$750 for a week-long session. Now that we have four locations and would like to do at least three modules per year in each site, that comes to about \$10,000 per year, with money transfer and exchange expenses included. For four sites, that is considerably less than it would cost if we bought land, then built and maintained four buildings in fixed locations. The



One of the BGBI Bujumbura classes after a module held this fall



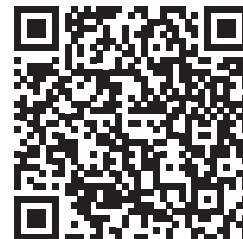
On a hike with missionaries and church members in Port Orchard, WA



With Joe Campos and Pastor Todd James in Leavenworth, WA

facility rental is the lowest budget item, costing from \$20 to \$120 to use a classroom for a week. At the higher cost, the space for student lodging is included! If you'd like more information on the BGBI program, please go to gracem.org and click on the Projects tab to learn more about our projects.

- **Bible Correspondence Fellowship (BCF) lesson expansion.** Under the leadership of our Congolese brothers Richard, Mulimu, & Gregoire, previously translated BCF lessons are being used as a Bible study template in churches in the rebel-controlled zone of **eastern DR-Congo**. Our brother Eddie Phiri is also using these lessons in a similar way in **Zambia**. Richard owns printing equipment but needs help to purchase paper, ink, and pay labor to print the lessons. Your gifts financed the first printing and distribution of lessons several months ago, and now they are ready to repeat the process, which includes a seminar on how to teach the lessons. After a prolonged period of violence and war in the region, peace is arriving at an auspicious time, providing an opportunity to conduct the seminars and reach beyond the city of Bukavu to the surrounding regions. Participants in the BCF outreach typically arrive in Bukavu without having eaten for a day or two. The meetings are an opportune time when we would also like to extend a hand of care and love by providing a provision of food to them.
- Our Congolese brother, Luyuba, is continuing to teach 1400 Congolese **junior and senior high students at a school in Burundi** using the **BCF lessons**. If borders open between DR-Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, we can reintroduce this model in schools in the DR-Congo. The BCF lessons previously received a good reception in the Congo when Tom visited in November of 2024. Inauguration of the lessons in the Congolese schools was hampered due to the expansion of the war between factions in the region.



Scan QR Code to
stay in touch!

Prayer and Praise:

- Praise God for the good news from the central African region of the US-brokered **peace agreement** ratified in early December. God may be using the international attention to create political and financial pressure to force solutions on a quagmire of competing interests in the region.
- Praise God for the expansion of the **BGBI modules**, for His financial provision, and for the continued growth of this vital ministry.
- Pray for the **BCF lesson** distribution as a church-based Bible study guide in Burundi, Zambia, and the DR-Congo.
- **AI** seems to hold strong potential to expedite the **translation and preparation of courses** based on existing materials. Pray that we will learn to use AI skillfully and carefully to surmount the enormous amounts of time it takes to edit and translate English textbooks and create course materials in French, Kirundi, and Swahili.
- **Pray for Michelle**, who is in the process of having some health issues investigated while we are in the US. Please pray for answers and an accurate, timely diagnosis.

Thank you all for partnering with us! We appreciate your faithful prayers for the work God has called us to! *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, Romans 15:13.*

Tom & Michelle

CONTACT US:

ADDRESS: Tom & Michelle Sanchez, B.P. 7183, Bujumbura, Burundi

EMAIL: tom.sanchez@gracem.org, michelle.sanchez@gracem.org

FACEBOOK: Join the group "Team Burundi"



GRACE MINISTRIES
INTERNATIONAL