

Elburg, 8 December, 2023

"The assemblies then throughout the whole of Judaea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified and walking in the fear of the Lord, and were increased through the comfort of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 9:31)

Beloved brothers and sisters,

The Lord has made it possible for me to visit Rwanda from 8 to 22 November.

During this trip, I was often reminded of the above verse about the early days of the Church. The Lord is bestowing in Rwanda both inner edification and outward growth. In general, the brothers and sisters walk in the fear of the Lord and with the encouraging voice of the Spirit in their hearts, resulting in spiritual strength and numerical increase. They are very grateful for this, especially as in our many conversations they highlighted their own weakness and the need for constant prayer. They experience that where the Lord blesses the work for Him, the enemy is all the more active.

Bible conference in Nyamata

This time, the three-day Bible conference took place at the Bible Centre in the town of Nyamata, about an hour's drive south of Kigali. This Bible centre contains a spacious meeting room on the ground floor. The Christian bookstore is on the first floor, where there are also a number of bedrooms. This floor served as a dormitory for about 20 sisters. The remaining brothers and sisters were accommodated with families in the towns of Nyamata and Ntarama.

Behind the Bible centre, the brothers had built a provisional kitchen where sisters prepared meals. The organisation of this conference was very well prepared so that it was orderly in every respect.



The topic of this conference was the first Peter's letter with the directive: " But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps" (2:29,21)



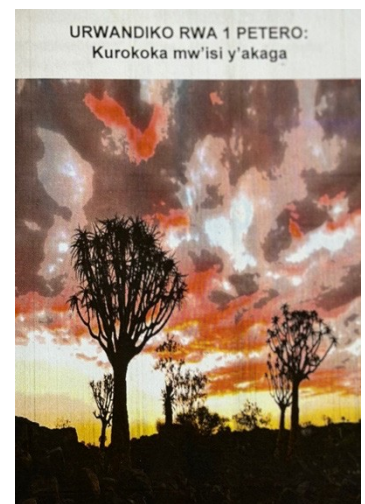
Brother Mukama Gérard had translated an overview of this letter and also the comments of F.B. Hole on 1 Peter in Kyniarwanda, of which he had printed several dozen copies with the printer of the Bible Centre in Kigali.

The brothers who usually participate in the discussion, were able to prepare well with, among other things, these editions.

We can look back with great gratitude to the Lord on the reflection of this letter, which greatly encouraged us all. Again and again we were reminded of Christ's suffering:

- 1) The suffering during the three hours of darkness on the cross, the Righteous One for us unrighteous, that only He endured.
- 2) The unjust suffering, during His walk here on earth, in which He is an example to us.

Several local brothers regularly participated in the discussion for which I am very grateful.



Seven brethren from Mambasa / Mputu, north-east Congo, had undertaken the long and dangerous journey to Kigali to participate in the Bible Conference and have the opportunity to share with me



several aspects of work in the north-east Congo. Their visits to assemblies are still hampered by rebel presence and very poorly maintained roads. There are over 600,000 internally displaced people in Goma, who have fled their villages and towns due to persistent rebel attacks.

They include brothers and sisters from the locality of Kitshanga. Recently, rebels looted their meeting hall and Bible Center.

Yesterday, I received a photo from one of the brothers of his elder brother who fled his village with his family of seven children (see photos below).

Discussions by members of the DBTCR

At the beginning of my visit, the annual meetings of the members of the Distribution of Bibles and Christian Literature Foundation (DBTCR) took place. This foundation looks after administrative and material interests, such as Bibles, Christian literature, Bible centres, meeting halls and so on, for the benefit of national and local administrators in Rwanda.

Among other things, we decided that Bible conferences will henceforth be held at the Nyamata Bible Centre to reduce costs. The second floor can function as a dormitory, most of the brothers and sisters can be accommodated with families in the area, and the large plot offers enough space for a permanent kitchen. The local brethren are also considering facilities for youth camps on this large plot.



I am very grateful that the brethren concerned clearly see both the difference and the connection between the DBTCR (an administrative body) and the local assemblies (with their own spiritual responsibilities). DBTCR members understand that this membership does not give them any authority in matters of their local assembly. Discussions took place in a brotherly atmosphere, in good harmony.

Spiritual and numerical growth

The current work in Rwanda started in the 1990s through contacts of brothers from



Robert Gschwind.

French-speaking Switzerland with believers in Rwanda. These believers regularly received Christian literature from Switzerland. The brothers from Switzerland corresponded with them, especially brother Robert Gschwind (Yverdon).

In 1999, I was asked by brother Jean Moinat (Rolle) if I could combine one of the visits in Uganda with a visit in Rwanda.

< [Brother Robert Gschwind, July, 2007](#)

After a time of prayer, the Lord opened the way for my visits followed, often together with brother



In His great mercy, the Lord has blessed His Word to such an extent that there are now meetings to the Name of the Lord in seven places, and there are groups of believers in four places that are regularly visited by local brethren. Three of these groups would like to start breaking bread, but must first meet the building requirements of a public meeting room. Depending on the location, costs range from 20,000 to 80.000 €. A prayerful topic, as they cannot now fulfil the Lord's wish: "Do this in emembrance of me".

I felt strongly about visiting these new groups. The brothers and sisters concerned had already invited me several times.

It is also always important for me to meet them in their own home areas and living conditions. Getting to know them, talking about their circumstances, studying the Word together, heavily outweigh the tiring long journeys on roads with many hairpin bends in hilly Rwanda.

Nyamagabe and Nyaruguru in the south

A group of brothers and sisters live on two hills on either side of the town of Nyamagabe. They need a public meeting hall to get permission to hold meetings. The desire of both groups is to have a Bible centre and meeting hall in Nyamagabe, as they can be a "visible" testimony there. In fact, this town is on the main road from Kigali to the south. They are happy to walk down from their hills to break bread and hold other meetings together in Nyamagabe.



[Nyamagabe and Nyaruguru](#)



[Matimba](#)

Matimba in the far north:

It is encouraging each time to see how the Lord can use the brothers and sisters in Rwanda to expand His work.

Years ago, two elderly sisters moved from Ntarama to Matimba because a field was made available to them there. They testified of their faith, a group of interested people arose, brothers from Kigali visited them regularly, conversions took place and now there are about 30 brothers and sisters who wish to start breaking bread. T

They already have a plot of land, but no meeting room as funds are still lacking. However, the local administrators gave them one-time permission to hold Bible studies in a tent on the plot in Matimba.

Kirehe in the east

Some years ago, a young sister from Nyamagabe married a believer from Kirehe. She testified of her faith in conversations with the women of this village. A growing group of believers emerged who were visited by several brethren from Kigali and other places at the urging of this young sister. The Lord blessed His Word in this regard that conversions to the Lord took place and a group of believers emerged who receive regular Bible studies from brothers from Rwanda. >



Publications and translations

The translation into Swahili (Congo) of the four volumes of the commentary on the New

Testament by F.B. Hole is yet to be revised in the coming months. Brother Mukama Gérard has a very good knowledge of the Swahili of Northeast Congo, having grown up there. He will therefore help brothers in northeast Congo complete the translation into Swahili (Congo). These four volumes will also be translated into Kyniarwanda during 2024, and also into Lhukonzo and Luganda (Uganda) and Swahii (Kenya).

The printing company in Kampala will soon print 30,000 copies of 14 tracts in Swahili (Congo) at a reasonable price due to the large number (420,000). The local brethren in eastern Congo will therefore have enough stock for the next three years.

This month, the final proofreading of the 217 spiritual songs translated into Swahili (Kenya) by brothers Mtavi and Norman (Kenya), Thembo Festo (Uganda) and Mukama Gerard in the border town of Busia (eastern Uganda) will take place. The same songs have been in use for several years in Uganda (Lhukonzo and Luganda), so that during Bible conferences in Busia, participants from Kenya, Western and Eastern Uganda and English-speaking visitors from abroad sing the same songs in terms of content.

Over the past decades, I have seen time and again the importance of spiritual songs for meetings of local assemblies whose content corresponds to biblical truths.

Brothers Festo (l) and Gérard (r) > will also translate a brochure about Daniel into Swahili (Congo) to be used at the boys' camp in Mputu (north-east Congo). Brother Festo will have two hundred copies of it printed.



Prayer topics:

- 1) Last week of December: youth camps in **Mputu, northeast Congo**, in which brothers Thembo Festo and Kasereka Dario from western Uganda will also participate. Due to high road insecurity, they will fly there with MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship).
- 2) Late December: youth camps in **Nyamata, Rwanda**, with the participation of brothers from Europe.
- 3) January 2024: Youth camps in **Western and Eastern Uganda** with the participation of Redekop and Paul Meijer and a team of young people.
- 4) Funds for the camps in Uganda and for several meeting halls in Rwanda
- 5) Spiritual insight and concentration for the translation of F.B. Hole's commentaries on the New Testament into five tribal languages.

In recent months, you have continuously shown your love through prayer and practical support, for which both the brothers and sisters involved and I are very grateful.

Receive, beloved brothers and sisters, my heartfelt greetings in our faithful Lord,

Your brother in Him,

Hilvert Wijnholds



Despite dangers and bad roads, local brothers still try to attend as many meetings as possible



Yesterday, **7 December**, I received from one of the brothers from Mputu a photo of his elder brother who has fled his village with his family of seven children to a refugee camp near Goma



Message from brothers from the cities of Minova and Goma, received today:

*Mass displacement of the population from surrounding villages towards the town of Minova caused by heavy fighting on **Friday 8 December** between the national army and rebels.*

These displaced villages are some 15 km north of the city of Minova, causing widespread panic among locals. Even in Goma, there is panic. The rebels want to encircle the town of Goma. Minova is the only road left to supply Goma.

PS: A brother from Mputu / Mambasa writes just now (Dec 8, 9 PM):
"Let us pray for the brothers and sisters of the assembly in Mayuano. Insecurity continues and civilians are being massacred by rebels. Some brothers and sisters and their families have already fled to our Bible Conference Centre (BCC) in Mputu tonight.