

Rwanda Direct Newsletter

Spring 2020



As this newsletter goes out, Easter is fast approaching, the summer birds are returning to nest, the days are getting longer and everything else is uncertain. A Rwanda Direct team visited Rwanda in February and so there is much to report, yet that seems like a distant memory as the Covid 19 disease has taken hold of the world. With regard to Rwanda, I think the best we can do is to point you to the Rwanda Direct Facebook page where updates will be posted as news arrives - <https://www.facebook.com/rwandadirect/>

February 2020 Visit

Our Treasurer Barbara Willingham writes -
It felt very emotional to me to return to Rwanda, after previously visiting in 2008, not helped by the fact that my outward journey was delayed by 2 days due to Storm Ciara. My immediate impression was one of great modernisation - ATM machines, smart phones, new tarmac roads in addition to all the new commercial buildings constructed in Kigali since I last visited.



- It was great to see and stay at the new conference centre at Scripture Union for which Rwanda Direct raised a lot of money to initiate the building project.
- The welcome we received from everybody we met was overwhelming. In Byumba we saw the Hannah Project feeding vulnerable children and visited the home of one of these children.
- In Kigeme we saw how Grassroots Churches are growing and the difference they are making to people's lives practically and spiritually.
- In Gahini we heard of their financial struggles but also their hopes for the future under the leadership of the new Bishop.
- In Kigali we saw the planning of new parishes in the suburbs where there is a growing population but lack of churches.

God is at work in Rwanda and it was a privilege to meet the people he is using to fulfil his purposes.



Kigali Diocese

At the heart of our visit was wonderful fellowship with both old and new friends. In Kigali Diocese, there is a new Bishop – Nathan Amooti. He used to work in the diocese, moved to be Bishop of Cyangugu in SW Rwanda, and he's now come back to replace +Louis Muvunyi. His Diocesan Secretary is Manasseh Tuyizere who is well known to us. +Nathan's request to Rwanda Direct is to help support them in one of their top priorities, and that is evangelism. There is a large chunk of the Diocese, to the north west of Kigali, in which there are very few churches and indeed few Christians of many denominations. So, they are placing a Missionary Archdeacon into the area to lead the planting of new churches. It's a great act of faith and trust in the Lord. They had someone in mind, Archdeacon Alphonse. When +Nathan asked him, he said "yes" because God had already spoken to him! A sacrificial decision!



Theological Education Challenge

This raises one of the key issues for the Church in Rwanda. The government has decreed that all pastors and priests must have a degree by 2023. Currently few do. The reasons for this decision are good, as in certain denominations (usually 'new churches'), there has been some very poor leadership and dangerous preaching. Archdeacon Alphonse is a very experienced and respected pastor and is studying a diploma course in Kinyarwanda at Kigali Anglican Theological College (KATC). He has no degree and as he doesn't speak English, he cannot study for one. In the new area the church has identified a bright young Christian who is full of faith called Emmanuel. He has studied in English at secondary school level gaining a good grade. The plan is for Emmanuel to study at degree level and be ready in 2023 to take on the leadership of the new churches, with Archdeacon Alphonse under him, thus following the new law. This could well happen all over the

country to enable the church leadership to remain in place and for the churches to stay open. Much grace and wisdom will be needed by young and old!

Meeting with Christians, Emmanuel is on the far left, Archdeacon Alphonse part hidden, second from right.



Kigali Anglican Theological College (KATC)

What a change! Rwanda's new Archbishop Laurent Mbanda has been able to raise considerable sums of money and KATC has finished the new dormitory block, built a second classroom block and staff houses, rebuilt the kitchen and dining room and has virtually finished the Chapel. Ikitangaza! (It's a Miracle!), Praise the Lord. We spent a wonderful time meeting with the new Vice Chancellor Revd Prof Viateur Ndikumana, very much God's choice for this vital work. He explained that they are seeking College status to become the East African Christian College and (when we were there) the papers were on the Prime Minister's desk for Cabinet approval. However, Covid 19 has stopped this. The aim is to have three faculties, the existing Theology Faculty and new ones for Health and Education following the three pillars of mission that the early missionaries used to establish the Church in Rwanda. Please pray for this.





KATC Dormitory – finished!



New Chapel



New Dining Room & Kitchen

Susie Barstow's First impressions, First Time in Africa



- Unconditional love shown to me
- A visit that gave meaning to the word dignity
- The church in 3D

These first impressions are taken from my daily diary of happenings, feelings and thoughts. This is Rwanda, Rwanda is life!

Where shall I begin? *"Muraho, nitwa Susieeee!"* (Hello, my name is Susie) I am a recently retired health professional seeking God's guidance for the next stage of my life. Last summer God drew my eyes to a notice in my local church in Cumbria about the trip with Rwanda Direct. Now, after a most wonderful visit of discovery I am home, thinking through my experience, and seeking to draw out what God wants me to do with the experience.

God invites us not just to contemplate him, but to experience him. The Bible reading on my first morning, set me thinking; *what it*

would be like to live as a citizen of heaven right here in Rwanda? As I met God's people in Rwanda, I met God. They welcomed the team, some of whom were already their friends, they honoured us, and showed us Godly love; graciously receiving us into their homes and churches offering hospitality and fellowship wherever we went. Nothing was too much trouble. If our driver could bring us to the door of church he did, despite there being a steep rutted incline to negotiate, not to mention bicycles laden with possibly up to 30 plastic chairs or iron front doors, multiple sticks of bananas or several milk churns.

Travelling within Rwanda visiting Dioceses and sharing fellowship with local Christians, gave me the unique opportunity of experiencing so much more than a regular tourist. I met ever so many people! Church members, youth groups, bishops, pastors, teachers and college principals. In everyone I found a deep and reverent love of God. For many, there is no choice but to rely entirely on God and his provision. Compared with the plenty I have available to me in UK, many of my new friends seem to have very little. Some might even say they have nothing. Yet I saw in them great riches of faith and trust that left me speechless.

Bishop Emmanuel took us on a late afternoon walk to visit a child headed family (supported by Hannah Ministries Ed). The house of 2 rooms and an entranceway, is home to Ishimwe (17), 5 younger siblings and an alcoholic mother. A goat and rabbit are brought inside after dark and cooking is by open fire outside. Meeting Ishimwe gave meaning to the word dignity. Climbing up the steep hillside away from Ishimwe's home in complete darkness, guided only by the phone lights of our new Rwandan friends left me humbled and challenged.

Jesus says; *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full"* (John 10 v10).

Covid 19 - PRAY

As we have been swamped by the threat and reality of Covid 19, so Rwanda is battling to prevent it from decimating the population. Many people have HIV/Aids (thankfully controlled by anti-retroviral drugs), malaria, chronic malnutrition and other debilitating disease, so they are vulnerable to Covid 19. The government has imposed a lockdown to try and stop the spread of the virus which has been coming in from outside the country. As this is being written there appears to be no large-scale spread in those affected - **PRAY** that C19 is stopped

The Hannah Ministries in Byumba, providing nutrition for over 100 vulnerable children and also some of their parents, has had to stop. 75% of them have HIV so without the extra nutrition that Hannah gives they may not be able to take their medicines. No drugs = AIDS = death. **PRAY**

Scripture Union is shut down, and Jean Baptiste is at home using his time to write next year's Bible Notes. However, there is no income, so at the end of April he may have to lay off staff, and there is concern over the means to pay the bank loans for the construction of the wonderful Prayer and Retreat House that Rwanda Direct helped fund. **PRAY** – they need the finance

KATC is also shut and with no income, and no training going on, how do they achieve all the graduate pastors they need by 2023? How can they keep their staff? – **PRAY**

In many towns people are employed on a day by day basis, and their daily wage pays for their food in the evening. No wages = no food. The government, churches and communities are trying to help – **PRAY**

And GIVE

Yes, now is the time when we need to help the Church in Rwanda. Can we help Hannah Ministries get going quickly when food prices will be high? Can we help SU survive and their staff get going once the lockdown is over? Can we help KATC grow quickly to provide the new leadership the Church needs to transform local communities?

Please contact us either through the website, email, phone, Paypal donations on Facebook if you feel God is calling you to help. 100% of donations go direct to the Church in Rwanda. All admin costs are voluntarily covered by a specific donation.



Hannah Ministries – now shut due to Covid 19

We will share more about our visit in the next Newsletter!

Newsletter Circulation

If you know of others who may be interested in helping the Church in Rwanda, do share this Newsletter with them and suggest they get in contact with us as below.

All data is stored with due regard to GDPR legislation, so we will not share contact details with anyone without permission.

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