

APRIL 2024 – FROM JOHN IN EAST AFRICA

Dear praying friends,

Greetings from Morogoro, in Tanzania,

Before coming here, I had a marvellous month in Burundi. The first two weeks my programme was good and full, organized for me by **Didi and his crew**—some of them students and former students of Ian McIver, from Brisbane, who teaches at the Africa Reformed Theological Seminary in Kampala, Uganda. Didi (on the right) is picture here with Leger.



It was wonderful to see them again; they are so enthusiastic for Christ and the gospel. They organized a lecture room and gathered what started off as 100 **church leaders**, but by the fourth day (we met for two hours in the late afternoons) it had grown to 165! They were very open and teachable. It is good to know that Didi and team (some with their masters degrees) will be taking the

teaching into many different churches. Please pray that they **do this faithfully** and get more and **more invitations**.

The **second seminar** was for **pastors only**, but that brought 80 (then 90) together for two full days. Bujumbura is on Lake Tanganyika, so we were very hot and very sweaty! For both seminars, the topic was Justification by Faith Alone, and **thankfully**, we were able to get deep into many of the key passages.

In between those two, on a Friday night, I was asked to teach a big group—about 70% Anglicans—who were having an **all-nighter**. They were very surprised by the gospel and wanted more and more. The questions were spot on. And then when they sang, it was, unbelievable. I excused myself

after five hours of teaching, at 2:30am. In all these meetings, someone from Didi's team interpreted—i.e. into the Kirundi language.

A highlight of this time was a visit to a Christian TV station, where they recorded three sessions in English and three in Swahili. Pray for those who watch this.

For the second two weeks I was with the Anglicans, in a programme organized by their Provincial Secretary, Fabien. The first two times I met with late afternoon groups at two different parishes, Musaga and Kanyosha – in Bujumbura city - it was quite a flop in both places. Most were not at all convinced, including the senior pastor of one of the churches. But the next week, in Musaga, we still went ahead with two teaching days for leaders of some of the different church groups, and during that day, many turned right around. In the end most were on board – and joyfully so. Pray especially for Kanyosha, though. They really need help. One day, we had a good, fruitful time, way up in the mountains looking down on Bujumbura. Back in the city, both Sunday morning services were absolutely packed full, and the second one involved the “Fathers’ Union” members from a few different churches, but they seemed unmoved by the gospel. However, it was at a special meeting for them only, on the Monday afternoon, that the penny seemed to drop for many of them.

My last meetings were with a tall, imposing, Tutsi man, Bishop Seth, of the Anglican diocese of Matana, about three hours south of Bujumbura. He had lost family members during the genocide, and had himself rescued the Hutu principal of the theological college there. He became well-known when the government hosted a group of community leaders at the newly discovered site of a mass burial of Tutsis. When they were asked what should be done about this, the bishop strongly urged them, “Nothing”, and explained that the cycle of violence had to stop somewhere. All this was on television!

He drove me there and back from Bujumbura, and we had a pastors' meeting Saturday. That seemed to be going well, but then we seemed to hit a wall of suspicion, especially when the bishop left us. He was very much onside, open and teachable, while he was with us—but I'm not so sure about his rather vocal wife! Palm Sunday, he had me preaching in their cathedral, and with him interpreting, it was much easier to teach people. One of those who warmly responded to the teaching was Seth (Junior) the

bishop's 24-year-old son. There is no shortage of palm trees in Matana, and definitely no shortage of **children – hundreds** of them – it was quite a spectacle.

Monday morning until two-ish we had the final Burundi **seminar, with the Mothers' Union** (led by **Yvette**, Seth's dear wife). That time ended with many of them on side, and a few with their doubts, still. But Mrs Seth was starting to warm!



I got to Tanzania shortly before Easter. If Burundi was hot and humid, Dar es Salaam was more so. The **Easter conference of UKWATA**, which is Christian secondary students, was on. Although I did not get to preach there, I was able to talk to some of the **teachers and students**. Some were not

impressed, but others were—decidedly. After some of my hopes for Dar were dashed, I decided to hit the road for Morogoro and arrived yesterday late afternoon. With all the heavy traffic—and a sweltering hot day—it was a relief to get here. Already, this morning, I have had great conversations with the **Lutheran Assistant to the bishop**, whose evangelists I taught last year, and the **Anglican bishop, Godfrey**. Both have opened the door wide to me, the Lutherans when I am next back in Africa, and Godfrey for **next week**—hopefully a **three-day seminar**, with others to follow in other regions when I'm next in the country.

After Morogoro, I head west to **Dodoma**, to be with the Lutheran man who heads up Theological Education by Extension in that Diocese—they are using the new course I prepared last year—and that you good folk paid for. He is going to set up a **seminar for evangelists**. After Dodoma, I travel back this way a little and then north to Kibaya, in the Anglican Diocese of **Kiteto**, in the Maasai Plains area south of the Moshi-Arusha road. I haven't visited this remote area for 40 years. Please pray for the **Landrover**, which Shabani kindly brought up to Dar for me. It had had a safari check before he brought it up, but in Dar, they found a key bolt had gone missing, holding the front

left brake disk pad onto the wheel assembly—and that could have been dangerous. Now, it is fine, but I have some interesting roads ahead of me, especially in the Kiteto area, and it is still the rainy season. So please be praying—for the car, but also for the teaching coming up.

Finally, I have just been talking to the Assistant to the Bishop of the **Lutheran Diocese of Mbulu**, and subject to their approval, I should have work to do there, too, after Kiteto. Please be praying for them.

I have just been talking to our son, Philip, who is in **Taiwan**, where that enormous **earthquake** hit this morning. **Thankfully** he and Jill, his wife, are on the other side of the island to Taipei, where the damage is highest—and death-toll. Please be praying for everyone there. On June 11, on my way home from here, thanks to Philip, Kay and I will meet up in Hong Kong and join them for a while in Taiwan. **Kay** is doing well. Please pray for her.

Please be praying, too, for **Asha**. She is working so hard on her psychology degree, but her health is not the best. **Beck** just had a great holiday with her kids. She has suffered a lot, but she's a fighter.

Thankyou to all of you for your kind support.

John\_\_with love from Kay.