

1. Dateline Bujumbura, Burundi: After two all-night flights and dozens of hours in airport terminals we arrived last Friday afternoon in Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi. It is located at the northern end of 850 km (500 miles) long Lake Tanganyika, near the place where Sir Henry Stanley found the Scottish missionary-explorer, David Livingstone. From 1970 to 1987 this beautiful, mountainous country of about 7 million suffered under a communist regime. During several years all religions were outlawed and, as a result, the Seventh-day Adventist Church lost its primary and secondary schools, mission office, and many churches. Further, many pastors and members were imprisoned for their faith.

In the five years since a democratic government took over, our church has prospered. Membership has more than doubled to 36,000. During 1992 both membership and tithes increased in excess of 10%. Our believers worship in over 200 congregations cared for by 42 district pastors. However, they still face some difficult challenges.

Some members still live far away from their church families; in fact, many members walk from 8 to 9 hours to attend church services. In one area, some members walk for 14 hours to attend church!

Mission leaders told me of 20 congregations who have secured the land, made the bricks, and built the walls for their church buildings, but they lack the US\$2,000 necessary to buy the corrugated zinc for roofing. I pray someone will take up this challenge.

The first of three sermons I preached last Sabbath was about 15 km from Bujumbura, at Kivoga Secondary School. Built by the church in 1964, Kivoga was one of the institutions appropriated by the former government. Seven months ago the new government returned it to us complete with 634 boarding students! These students sleep, literally, **two to a bed** (or on the floor) in the two dormitories designed originally to house a maximum of 200! The average 4 x 4 meter (12' x 12') dormitory room holds 5 or 6 bunk beds, each 4-beds deep, making 20 to 24 students in **a single** room!

In spite of these challenges mission leaders have a vision for Global Mission. They have identified the 41 "communes" in which there are no Seventh-day Adventists and they are developing plans to establish

a congregation in each by 1995. This is a significant challenge for the law requires that religious meetings must be conducted only in churches. Therefore, lay members from nearby churches must go to a targeted community, secure land, make the bricks, build the walls, and pray that the Lord will provide hard currency for roofing, then complete the church, before they can begin any public evangelistic activities!

After speaking to about 4,000 believers Sabbath morning in Bujumbura, and about 7,000 more in Buganda on Sabbath afternoon, we went to the airport to take a Sabbath night, 10:20, flight to Nairobi. Instead, the flight left after midnight, arriving in Nairobi at 3 am. Fortunately this still left us about 5 hours to rest before having to return to the airport for Sunday's flight to the Seychelles...but I'll reserve that for the next edition.

2. AUCA Reopens: In a previous edition I reported that the Adventist University of Central Africa, in consultation with the government of Rwanda, closed temporarily after three students were forcibly taken from the campus. There is reason to believe they lost their lives in the tribal strife between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes. Dr. Robert G Pierson, AUCA president, reported to me that, with written assurances from government authorities, the university board decided to reopen classes Monday, May 10, for junior and senior students. Pray that the Lord will bring peace to this strife-torn country.

3. Challenges in Rwanda: Though I did not visit Rwanda, I did meet with Paulo Leitao, Union president. He reported they now have 270,000 members (1 in every 27 is an Seventh-day Adventist), meeting in 1,106 congregations, cared for by 180 pastors. I was thrilled to hear that the laity, led by the department of Women's Ministry and the Youth, are planning to conduct 9,000 evangelistic crusades between September '92 and January '93! He further reported that at this time there are 70 congregations in Rwanda with property and walls built for their churches, but they also lack the US\$2,000 to purchase roofing materials.