

Congo and Rwanda, March 2008

Carelinks seek to genuinely spread the true Gospel into all the world; and whilst we don't like numbering Israel, we've decided to review the work so far. The results are at <http://www.carelinks.net/countrieslist.pdf> ; and the summary is that out of the 225 countries in the world [according to Wikipedia], Carelinks and Christadelphian Advancement Trust workers have sent Bible Basics literature to every one of them except North Koea. That literature has usually been in a language understood by the local inhabitants of the country. Of the world's 225 countries, Carelinks workers have personally visited and preached in 105 countries. Baptisms were performed in 92 countries; and in 56 of those countries, the very first Christadelphian baptisms were performed. That leaves a lot of work yet to be done, but we thank God for His grace in enabling so much to have been achieved.

We've been writing to contacts in Rwanda for over 5 years, and one of them has kindly translated The Real Devil and Introducing Bible Basics to French. It was with great pleasure therefore that we were able to visit this troubled central African country and baptize RICHARD and OMAR into the Lord's saving Name and receive them into our world-wide fellowship. We performed the baptisms in the hotel made famous by the movie / documentary 'Hotel Rwanda'. The genocide described in that movie, and which the Hotel saved many from, claimed nearly 1 million lives, many literally hacked to death. About everyone suffered personal losses; Richard lost his entire family, and Omar lost his father and his three brothers. We can only give thanks that God has guided these survivors to His Truth and the ultimate purpose of life. We asked how they found the power to forgive, to even live on day by day... and Richard explained, in a fascinating conversation over dinner, that it was our teaching on Satan, that the real enemy is internal not external, that we are therefore not to demonize others, which had helped him very much in this. It was a wonderful example of the power of true doctrine in the transformation of human life in practice, and a marvellous inspiration to continue spreading the Truth.



Photo: Richard and Omar after baptism in 'Hotel Rwanda'

In the previous carelink, <http://www.carelinks.net/care/heat1803>, we asked for your prayers for the visit made to neighbouring Congo, where ""Conflict and humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo have taken the lives of an estimated 5.4 million people since 1998 and continue to leave as many as 45,000 dead every month, according to a major mortality survey released today by the International Rescue Committee". We explained at length in that carelink the awful situation around Bukavu, where there is an ecclesia of 26 members. Their secretary, Brother Theophile, had been expressing that they feel abandoned by the brotherhood, and that there were people there desiring baptism and many brothers and sisters in need. We therefore made the long journey to them. We sincerely wish to thank you for your prayers, without which we may not have gotten to writing this report.

After 6 hours driving through treacherous mountain roads, some blocked by mudslides from the recent earthquake and heavy rains, we descended to the river which divides Rwanda from Congo, and under United Nations supervision joined the long line waiting for immigration processing.



Even Cindy's smiling face became rather nervous by now.

We crossed over the rickety bridge- which has some big gaps in it down to the roaring waters below- and entered Bukavu, Congo. The preservations of God, as David often mused in the Psalms, are too many to recall. Just two to give you a feel of how this place really does deserve the description of "the most miserable place on earth". With lack of clean water everywhere, open sewers, scarcely a road with tarmac on it, Cindy was arrested for not having a Yellow fever certificate, and we were dragged off to be given it... in this land of HIV babies, Ebola and about everything else, it was a ruse of course to extract money. Once free from the supposed medical centre, we flagged down the only spare vehicle we saw to take us over the muddy 'roads' [none had tarmac on by this stage]. The driver was a 17 year old former child soldier, rather proud of his Toyota, and the bullet hole in the windscreen. He was a smart, dangerous kid but he drove us quite fine [for a price].

Photo: Our driver; awful roads; people collecting clean water from a charitable organization.



In the midst of all this, Bro Theophile keeps the ecclesia going. They have a room they use, and proudly have a sign outside stating they are a Christadelphian ecclesia:



Fighting is raging around Bukavu, whenever it eases the brothers and sisters return to their fields outside the city to harvest what they can. We gave medicines, welfare funds, and French Bible Basics. We also received the translation of What Is The Gospel? in their local Lingala language- the first Gospel literature in that language. We've got it online at <http://www.carelinks.net/gospel/lingala.htm> . We also visited a sister in the Panzi hospital, which specializes in female rape victims but also does its best to cope with a steady stream of landmine victims.

It was pathetic to see the line of legless , shot and machette hacked people outside



Of course, these are the more fortunate ones. We visited our sister, who was quite overcome to be visited. Her young son was with her and sleeps in her bed with her, and tries to prepare food for her.

There's a yard in the hospital where relatives must prepare food for the patients:



It's hard to take pictures of a rape victim, but she and Theophile urged us to do so in order that the brotherhood might know what's going on here. After being raped she was hacked by a machette [like a small sword / large knife] and her upper arm was almost severed, although still intact.



She's had three operations so far on it

We were impressed with the Panzi Hospital, it's a Christian run hospital where the staff must do Bible reading before going on shift each day. Their supporters have opened a website for them at <http://www.panzihospitalbukavu.org/violence.php?weblang=1>

Bro. Theophile had prepared four people for baptism. There was really no place to perform the baptisms safely in Bukavu, so we had to get them over the border into Rwanda to baptize them- two brothers, BISIMWA KAZEREBERE and KAPALATA NDAGARARA, and two sisters, ESPERANCE FAIDA and BERNADETTE KASHINDI. We learnt that Bernadette, as yet another rape victim, had been abandoned by her husband and is left to care for the two children.



Here she is, arising from the water:



We truly rejoiced at her baptism.



Photo: New brothers and sisters from Bukavu, Congo

So, what can be done? The internet reports about the desperation of Bukavu aren't exaggerated. It really is awful. We tried to explain to them that whilst we appreciated them feeling abandoned by the brotherhood, it really is so difficult and dangerous to get to them. Apart from material aid, especially for the sisters, we need to ensure that each of the members of the ecclesia has at least a Swahili Bible- several members were lacking their own Bible.

Photo: One Bible between 5 believers isn't good enough, especially as they're all literate and



can read

Bro. Theophile took us to see a plot of land with 2 buildings on it which is for sale. His dream is to start a carpentry training centre there [he's a carpenter by trade]. He says that he's already asked Meal-a-Day funds and the CBM for help for two years but not had any response. We'll encourage them to respond.



Photo: Here's our brother showing us the desired property:

Limitations of various sorts preclude us making regular visits to these dear brothers and sisters, but with your help we'll do all we can to continue supporting them from afar, and especially fulfilling our sober promise to be praying for them each day.

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks