

## Sowing seeds of revival in Africa

Short term missions make big impact

BY CLAUDE NIKONDEHA –

What comes to your mind when you hear the names of the African nations Burundi or Rwanda? Genocide? Mass slaughter? HIV/AIDS infected populations?

This past summer, Captains Fred and Chris Kim of the San Francisco Korean Corps led a mission team to Burundi to conduct a major seminar on leadership in this small yet very beautiful country in Central East Africa. At their (Captains Kim) invitation, as I am a native born Burundian, I accompanied the team as a translator and guide.

Traveling through Rwanda (where The Salvation Army has just completed a major project of building 700 houses for refugees) and the Congo, the Kims, along with two soldiers from their corps, managed to enter Burundi despite the warnings received while in the States, Rwanda and the Congo.

Rev. Edmond Kivuye, leader of the Jabe Church, welcomed them to Bujumbura and told them that half of the events planned were cancelled for security reasons. The captains, disappointed but not discouraged, were ready for the leadership seminar that was to take place shortly. They were told that about 200 pastors would be attending the leadership seminar to hear the message that God put on their hearts to bring to the people of Burundi.

### Challenge for reconciliation

Captain Fred Kim boldly challenged the Burundian Church leaders with a message prompted by God's Holy Spirit calling for reconciliation between people locked in hatred, for peace in a land of death.

It was during the second meeting that God sent a strong spirit of repentance. Virtually everybody—including the senior pastor of the church—started to weep tears of repentance. No one could anticipate what we observed in Burundi. Some of the pastors cried loudly, like little children and some started praying, interceding for Africa. Others started asking forgiveness of each other on behalf of their tribes



and on behalf of their own ethnocentrism. It continued for the remainder of our time there. Clearly Jesus started a major work in the hearts of many leaders in Burundi.

Before leaving for Africa, Kim focused his sermon plans on revival but little did he know that he was going to see the fruits of that in Africa. Repentance is the initial sign of a revival as we wait on God's cleansing and turning of our hearts to him.

The Spirit continued to work, using Captain Kim to deliver messages of hope, reconciliation and challenges to commitment. Everybody was filled with the Spirit and the atmosphere was like a festival, with dancing and celebrating with joy. God was really praised in Spirit and truth.

### **Early morning prayer**

As a result of this "revival" the church decided to start early morning prayer services; we were told that about 1,500 people attended the service and on Sunday morning, about 5,000 people showed up for worship service. Captain Fred Kim preached on faith. The congregation was listening carefully and Captain's thoughts were clearly conveyed to all.

For the last few years, Kim has had the opportunity to preach in many different churches in Africa but he said after this meeting: "The service was very special. I could feel the presence of the Lord as everyone praised God with one spirit; hearts were open sincerely to the Word."

The fact that Captains Fred and Chris were born and raised in Korea after the Korean War was a powerful testimony of how God can bless and use even those people from less fortunate situations. Captain told the Burundian population that Korea and Burundi have much in common—God has blessed Korea and God will also bless Burundi if they remain faithful. It was clear from our time there that God wants to heal the nation of Burundi, and his church in particular.

### **Other mission team experiences**

The mission consisted of visiting other sites like the Reconciliation Village in Mwaro where the team took funds to dig a well, a gift from the West's Golden State Division. We prayed over the property and the whole province of Mwaro to serve God's purpose of reconciliation instead of fighting. The governor of Mwaro promised that when we return there will be running water flowing in the village with children taking showers, playing, women washing their clothes and taking clean water home for cooking! Even water will bring a positive change in the province.

We also visited a refugee camp of 600 in Bujumbura. It is difficult to describe the difficult circumstances of these people. Captain Fred Kim had the privilege of preaching in the refugee camp, which reminded him of his childhood some 40 years ago. Captain shared his testimony and that brought the comfort of Jesus to the refugees. Indeed, God transformed Korea from a miserable situation after the Korean War to become a missionary-sending country. The same God was ready to do the same for Burundi. You could see mothers crying and men shaking their heads...it was clear that the spirit of the Lord was upon them.

Even though Burundi is the only eastern African country where The Salvation Army has not yet established a permanent mission, surely God started a work there and we pray that he will bring it to a perfect completion.

### About Burundi

Burundi is a small landlocked nation with a population of 6.6 million, located in east-central Africa. Rwanda is to the north, Tanzania is to the east and south, and Congo is to the west. It is very mountainous, with a western range of mountains running north and south and continuing into Rwanda. Burundi is known to many as the country of a thousands hills and to others it is the Switzerland of Africa because of its beauty, its green and wonderful lakes. Burundi is also one of the most densely populated nations in the world.

The October 1993 assassination of Burundi's first Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, by soldiers from the country's Tutsi minority provoked interethnic massacres that took approximately 150,000 Hutu and Tutsi lives and destabilized a fledgling democracy. The situation quickly inspired diplomatic and other initiatives to prevent further conflict.

But the greatest impetus for international peacemaking was the spring 1994 genocide of an estimated 800,000 Tutsi (and liberal Hutu) in neighboring Rwanda. It was widely recognized that the international community had failed to prevent or stop the Rwandan holocaust. The conviction grew that in Burundi, "The international community must not again be caught unprepared."

Burundi remains a dangerous place to visit. Fighting is at its worst in outlying areas but gunfire is not uncommon on the streets of the capital city, Bujumbura. Civilians, the Burundi military and government officials have been targeted, and the presence of a South African peace force has failed to curb hostilities.

After nine years of civil war and sporadic peace talks, Burundi entered into a power-sharing agreement in November 2001, brokered by former South African president Nelson Mandela. The agreement saw the then military ruler, Pierre Buyoya, a member of the Tutsi minority, become president of Burundi for a period of 18 months. At the end of this period the presidency is to be passed on to Buyoya's deputy, Hutu leader Domitien Ndayizeye. However, Hutu rebels committed to the overthrow of Buyoya have refused to take part in the agreement.

Clashes between the rebels and the Burundi army intensified in April 2002, and thousands of people fled the capital to escape the violence. Thousands more fled in June 2002, after unidentified bombs shelled the city. Meanwhile, refugees have been slowly returning from exile in Tanzania, although 24 were burned to death while trying to do so.