

Church of God Rebuilding in Rwanda

The Kicukiro Church of God headquarters located in Kigali, Rwanda, was recently dedicated to the glory of God in a beautiful service at the conclusion of the 1st National Conference of the **Church of God** in Rwanda. The theme for the conference was taken from Nehemiah 2:17, "Come, let us build the walls of Jerusalem."

The trauma suffered by the nation of Rwanda is well-known. Although the genocide of 1994 is slowly moving into history, the pain and suffering of the people of **Rwanda** lingers. The Church of God in Rwanda was dealt a double blow when almost immediately following the genocide, bad decisions by trusted leaders left the church with a bruised self-image and no place in **Kigali**, the capital city of Rwanda, to call its home.

In 2004, Charles Karangwa began working with the remnant to rebuild the Church of God in Rwanda. Later Laval Marivel served as leader for the struggling church. For several years, the congregation was nomadic, moving from one rented location to another. People became discouraged, believing they had been forgotten by their brothers and sisters outside Rwanda. Gradually, the number of people attending the services dwindled. When Bishop Joseph Ndashe was appointed overseer of Rwanda, he found a small disheartened group of believers. Ndashe began to preach **hope** and healing to his sheep. He adopted "Do Not Cry" as a theme for the worship services. The road to healing in Rwanda has not been easy. Members, when giving their testimonies, naturally mentioned their extensive losses. Many of them lost every member of their family and were left absolutely bereft as a result of the genocide. Others testified of losing mother, father and siblings. The grief has been palpable.

Ndashe continued preaching hope and healing. After some months, the group felt ready to purchase a property with existing buildings, which would become their permanent place of worship, with national offices and a functioning secondary school. Such a purchase would not be possible, though, because the amount needed was beyond their means.

The determined little group was growing, not only in numbers but more importantly, in hope and in **faith**. They continued in prayer and fasting, believing they would receive word that the purchase would take place. Following much agonizing prayer, many discussions, many negotiations and meetings, the Church of God in Rwanda, with help from World Missions, finalized the purchase of St. Patrick's Secondary School, with all its existing buildings (and a functioning high school), as its permanent home. The biggest financial support for this center came through the 2009 YWEA Project. Through this project, \$350,000 was raised for use in Rwanda. In addition, in 2007, World Missions purchased a large piece of property that has been subdivided and sold to cover the purchase of St. Patrick's Secondary School with all its finished and functioning buildings.

This story is a shortened account of months and years of hard work, commitment, perseverance and above all, HOPE. The dedication on Aug. 20, 2012, gave affirmation to the great faith of this group of believers. Surely, the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (NIV) are appropriate:

"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

In preparation for the conference and dedication services, the excited congregation planned for approximately 650 people to attend. Their expectations exceeded that number, but there was plenty of food for everyone.

Sermons and lessons by leadership, included Peter Thomas, Jurgen Rudolph and Joseph Kagarama who reached this group of hurting, hopeful people.

One of the Rwandan pastors only attended one service during the conference. His personal grief was heavy and he decided not to attend other meetings. On Sunday, he returned to hear the message delivered by Peter Thomas, field director of **Church of God World Missions** in Africa. After the service, the pastor told Overseer Ndashe that the words of the message brought healing to his soul.

May the Lord continue His healing in this community, which now has a permanent place of worship and renewed hope. One of Ndashe's themes he preached was, "Can anything good come out of Rwanda? Come, and see." Many people came; many people saw; many people were blessed. The future for the Church of God in Rwanda is bright, and those who have seen and been blessed are now sharing their own stories of healing and hope with others in their neighborhoods.

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