Eau Claire SDA Church News

Pictorial Directory - Church Officers
Sermon Podcast - Long-Term Church Calendar - Updated 11/20

Upcoming Events

Sabbath
Dec 6

Download the Bulletin

Sabbath School:
Joann Davidson

"Worshiping in Spirit and truth"

Church Service:
Pastor Ted Toms "Has Heaven Hacked Your Wallet?"

Our church family will be collecting nonperishable food items for food boxes for local families that are in need this holiday season. We will be collecting food items
during the children's story each week at church. If you would like to make donations please leave them in the orange bins in the foyer of the church.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 7</td>
<td>Elder's Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 am</td>
<td>Pathfinders</td>
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<td>Please note: Adventurers and Little Lambs are cancelled.</td>
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<td>Dec 9</td>
<td>School Board</td>
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<td><strong>Prayer Meeting</strong></td>
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<td>Dec 10</td>
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<td>Our Prayer Meeting small group is meeting Wednesday evenings from 7-8 p.m. <strong>at Rick and Cindy's house.</strong> We are studying how to pray for our children from the &quot;My Child, My Child&quot; book by Mr. Ferris. We are praying through any prayer requests members have, and encourage you to add a prayer request in the tithe and offering plate if you want the group to intercede through prayer.</td>
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<td>Rick and Cindy's address: 3017 N. US 31, Niles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sabbath</td>
<td>Amy Moreno &quot;Alive Bible&quot;</td>
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<td>Dec 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 13</td>
<td><strong>Sabbath Evening Bible Study</strong></td>
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| 5:00 pm-6:30 pm | **When**: Dec. 13 at 5:00 pm  
|       | **Where**: Eau Claire SDA Church  
|       | **Topic**: Genesis 3 & 4  
|       | Please join us for an in-depth study of the Holy Scriptures. This next study will focus on Genesis chapters 3 & 4. Make sure to bring your Bibles and come prepared to discuss God's Word! If you are interested, a Facebook Group has been created to serve as a discussion board and announcement page. Please note the link: |
May God be with you as you study.

thanks...
charles

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec 14</td>
<td>Pathfinders, Adventurers, Eager Beavers, Little Lambs</td>
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<td>Dec 16</td>
<td>Church Board</td>
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<td>Dec 20</td>
<td>Pastor Ted Toms &quot;Rich Man, Poor Man, Beggar Man, Thief&quot;</td>
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<td><strong>Church Christmas Breakfast</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 27</td>
<td>Speaker: To be determined</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 3</td>
<td>Pastor Ted Toms</td>
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**Alan Lincoln**

Please put this on the church email announcements for those that may remember Alan Lincoln and his family. They were members at Eau Claire Church for many years.

Two days ago Alan Lincoln unexpectedly passed away, for unknown reasons. Services will be held at the Wright SDA Church in Coopersville MI Sabbath, December 6, 2014

Visitation will be at 3:00 pm Memorial Service will start at 4:00pm In lieu of flowers, the family is requesting donations to be given to Wright SDA Church Building Fund, or ADRA.

Wright Seventh-day Adventist Church
16429 40th Ave
Coopersville, MI 49404

Can't wait till Jesus comes!
Mary Peters

**Gifts for Foster Care Children**

Just a reminder for those who committed to get gifts for Foster children. Please bring a wrapped package that has been labeled with who it is from, the name of the child and the caseworker. Please bring the package to church on Sabbath this week for each of your sponsored Foster Kids.

Thanks to each of you for making Christmas special for these foster children.

**Are you interested in the mission work of John and Belinda Kent?**

John and Belinda Kent are former members of Eau Claire. They published a small email newsletter about the things that they experience as missionaries in the inner-city of Pittsburgh.

If you would like to sign up for their newsletter, just send belinda an email and ask to be on the list. I come out maybe once a month. Belinda's email is belindaekent@gmail.com

CAUTION: I dare you to read one without weeping for lost souls. I can't - Brandon

**Do you have a school key?**

Anyone with a school key please turn them in to Betsy Schooler or Jerry Edwards, as they no longer work. If you need a new key please submit your request to the school board.

**Church Announcements and Prayer Requests via TEXT**
Would you like church information and prayer requests via text? Sign up by texting @eauc to 269-326-4730.

This is a way to get immediate notice of prayer requests and other VERY important church announcements.

I would guess it might be once or twice per week.

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**Burundi Mission Adventures**

Here is your opportunity to:

**Download the Burundi Mission Adventures**

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**School Calendar**

**November 2014**

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<td>1st Spelling Test w/Wk 4c</td>
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<td>3rd Wk Wk 4a</td>
<td>4th Wk Wk 5b</td>
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**Church Calendar**
Have you ever wondered what is going on in our church? What is happening next month or next year? Checkout the Long-Term Church Calendar that is updated weekly.

Click the link at the top of this e-mail newsletter entitled "Long-Term Church Calendar".

Sermon Podcast

Susan Payne "Let All Things Now Living"

Jason Johnson "Let Us Watch and Be Ready"

Pastor Ted Toms "Django, Dead Again"

Dr. Paul Peterson "The Love of God - The Short Form"

Pastor Ted Toms "In Jericho's Shadow"

Listen to Past Sermons

Treasurer's Report

<table>
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<th>Treasurer's Report October, 31, 2014</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Church Budget</strong></td>
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<td>Oct 31, 2014</td>
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**Worthy Student Needs 2014-15**

- Elementary Students: $4290 - $226
- Academy Students: $750 - $345

**Lawn Mower** - Children's Offering
Donations and Children's Story: $9975 - $9660

**August Africa Evangelist Project**
Motor Scooter: $1700 - $3306

Community Happening and Other Announcements

Dec 1

Citrus Fruit Fundraiser: Contact Gina Meekma (secretary@nilesadventistschool.org or 269-845-8870) or go online at www.goldenharvestsales.com. Account #7018, by December 1 to order Ruby Red grapefruit, Florida navels, tangerines, mandarins, or a variety
pack. We are also taking preorders of Minneola "Honeybells" for January delivery. See [www.NilesAdventistSchool.org](http://www.NilesAdventistSchool.org) or call for prices.

Pick up dates at Niles Adventist School (110 N Fairview, Niles) are usually 10-14 days after the order due date. Thank you for your support of NAS!

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<tr>
<td>Dec 7 7 pm</td>
<td>You are invited to a special Nathan Greene Art Studio Christmas Open House. Enjoy seeing new works of art, paintings in process, and his classics. Prints and puzzles will be available for purchase and personalized signing by Nathan. Will be held Sunday, December 7 and 14, from noon to 6 pm. Studio located at 8458 Painter School Road, Berrien Center, MI. Questions call 269-461-6347.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 12 7 pm</td>
<td>Andrews Academy will be presenting the 42nd Annual Feast of Lights Christmas program at Pioneer Memorial Church on Friday, December 12, 2014 at 7:00pm. The community is invited to attend this spectacular night of music, Scripture and drama honoring the King of Kings. If you cannot attend in person, there will also be a livestream of Feast of Lights available at <a href="http://www.andrews.edu/aa">www.andrews.edu/aa</a>. For more information, please contact Andrews Academy at (269) 471-3138.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 13 7 pm</td>
<td>Andrews Academy Christmas Pops music program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 30</td>
<td>January 30- February 1: Father/Son, Big Brother/Buddy winter retreat at Camp AuSable. Dr. Earnie Stevens will be the speaker for the retreat entitled &quot;Called to Influence: Lessons from the Carpenter&quot;. You may register online at <a href="http://www.campausable.com">www.campausable.com</a> and click on 'registration' before January 22. For more information you may call 517-316-1570.</td>
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For more community events see the Andrews Agenda.
Notes From Mission 2014 Burundi

Aug 18 - God is good. I have obtained a projector as a gift in exchange for a receipt of a charitable donation in the amount of $500.00. I also purchased a 4 mike sound system for $460.00 to give to the new church in Mauramvya. I picked up from Wilson Nthitinyka an Android tablet to give to a relative along with an old and heavy laptop. It may or may not work.

August 19 - Looks like no sleep tonight. I finished month worker’s report and some emails. I successfully backed up my computer and got a memory flash drive back up for the meetings. We leave the house at 4:15 AM and I drive. Picked up an early breakfast at Jackson at the Panera Bread restaurant. Arrive in just about 2 hours drive time and park in short term parking.

Judy had registered my bags for me, and printed out my itinerary and my e-tickets. When we arrived at the Air Canada desk, we found how much they want to take an extra bag – $224.00 one way! It took almost 1/2 hour to get the proper print out that showed I paid for the extra bag. As is, the clerk had to do the form by hand. From there is was a matter of getting through customs. Removing shoes, and belt due to the buckle, letting the TSA nosey look at what was in my body wallet, as it caused my shirt to wrinkle funny, so he wanted to see just what I had there. I purchased one 24 ounce bottle of H2O and should have purchased 2.

But after the water overload on the sea cruise, I opted for a minimalist approach. It almost worked.

Seat mate on Air Canada was an interesting grandpa that had retired from FORD and was travelling to Vancouver to see his 5 year old grandson. We spoke of my church affiliation briefly, but he passed it off as him having respect for the good work that the SDA church does in developing areas. An entertaining chat, but never could get too much of a spiritual opening going. My first Mission opportunity, and I feel I need to pray more.

Toronto I made the switch to Ethiopian Airlines. Toronto is hooked up, wired. The waiting area has maybe 40 tablet kiosks so anyone can access local travel info. I feel short of time, so I proceed without buying another bottle of water, wondering if I will regret that decision.

Once on the big liner called colorfully “The Blue Nile” I thanked my travel agent for getting me an aisle seat. Flight was about 90% full. But there was an open seat between myself and the college student “Alice” going to Kenya on a two week eco-system class. She spoke French fluently as well as English. Was quite content to be self contained, but was amiable and let me lead in the conversations, off and on for the next 15000 km. We averaged close to 600 mph, so we shared proximity for about half a week or 15 hours. During that span of time, I slept maybe 90 minutes. She was interested in the secret to having a spiritual life. I shared from the Bible and she is aware of Christianity, but is not connected remotely to any church. She is a secular person, who was curious, but not highly motivated to search out in too focused a manner on this quest for information. But she appreciated that one can have the Holy Spirit as an agency in one’s life before joining a church.

I had reserved a vegetarian plate, but the server started on the other side of the plane, and by the time she got to me, all vegetarian options were gone. So I had baked fish with buttered linguine. Asparagus and baby carrots. Servers came around often and water or juice was plentiful. On this trans-oceanic flight, we had the upgraded personal console with games, music, interactive maps, movies and TV shows at the push of a button for free. My seat adjust button was very stiff and I needed an assist to get my seat back to recline a few inches to allow me to rest. I ended up getting up to walk about every 3 hours, got an extra water at the stewardess station for my efforts.

I shall take with me distinct memories from Addis Abbs, my Welcome to Africa. It is situated nearly 7,500 feet above sea level. We arrived a few minutes after 7:00 AM local time. The sky was dark gray and between rains. Also a cool 61 degrees Farenheit. The opulence of Toronto’s techno chic was replaced by early 60’s industrial squares. Everything clean and neat, but spartan in furnishings. The men’s room had a line that made we wait about 15 minutes to use the urinal, it would have been easily another 10 to access a booth. There was water on the floor in front of the solitary urinal. Several men from Chad were travelling together, they did not like the water, so they stepped out of their sandals and washed their feet in the hand basins. I could hardly blame them, but it was a cultural shock to observe.

My next shock came at the hands of a sweet petite 50ish Muslim woman wearing a head scarf, but no face cover. She informed me that the scanner showed I had scissors. I have owned a pair of...
Solingen professional barber scissors for 22 years. They were over $100 then. But there was nothing to do but hand them over or kiss plans for Burundi goodbye. They were over 2 inches long and hence were prohibited on the airplane. Addis Ababa’s announcement of boarding was done in heavily accented English, so many of the passengers got in one line, only to have to leave it after waiting perhaps 10-12 minutes, then wait another 15 minutes for the next flight to leave the area. They used diesel shuttle buses to ferry passengers out on the tarmac where old style stairs were used for loading and unloading. That meant my nifty harness coupling two bags had to be decoupled so I could carry a bag in each hand to better negotiate the steps. I am very thirsty by the time we get to board.

For brunch I get something pink next to something off-white with a pickle and a tomato wedge refereeing between the two. I leave the mystery meat alone and wonder how many cheese and white bread sandwiches it will take to stop me up in any serious way. TMI I know, but I make it a full day and a half between pit stops, and that’s just not right. I select tomato juice and ice to go with my mini sandwich, and discover that ether they have significantly sweeter tomatoes in the near east, OR they add a bit of sugar to nuance the tomato juice experience.

My next leg was to Kigali, Rwanda. Kigali seemed to have more money than Addis Ababa with newer everything that was visible. I stayed on the plaine at Kigali as it was only a 1 hour stop. I slept that hour through, and napped most of the next 45 minutes to Bujumbura. My seat mate was a breezy thin young woman who seemed to be infatuated with her cell phone. She took pictures out the window, and kept the phone’s music files serenading the two seats in front and back and on both sides of the plane. In America, we would expect a person to respect the other’s need for a bit of tranquility instead of noise, but then, she probably had not been sleep deprived for two and a half days, either.

I arrived on time at 1:50 PM local time. There was a big welcome sign to the Bujumbura airport. I set down my bags to take a snap shot of my arrival in Burundi. An airport policeman shouted at me to take no pictures and come over to get me to delate the file. Neither he, nor in my pressured condition could get the file deleted, so he waved me on. A criminal in 30 seconds! Once inside, I filled form after form to get a re-entry VISA for 90 US Dollars.

Once past the customs agency, i headed to the now still baggage claim area. Not one of my three bags was there. An official at Addis Ababa for Ethiopian Airline had already called to notify that none of the three bags made the transfer from one flight into Addid Ababa to the one out. Was this an oversight, or will I find my belongings pilfered and anything of value, missing? I have put this in God’s hands. Though, all of my medical preparations for health are in those bags. All of my preaching clothes are in those bags. And a valuable mic set is in those bags. Plus a backup hard drive for the donated computer.

It is strange now, but on so little sleep, when I was asked to state what was in those bags to give an insurance estimate, I simply could not remember about 25% or more of what I can now. This trip was entered into to grow my faith. So in some not too startling, but unplanned for ways, I am feeling my baptism.

How gald I was that Wilson called primarily to see if I made it alive. I gave him Judy’s work number so she would know I arrived OK. Wilson seemed to think that my bags would receive the wrong kind of attention by the baggage handlers.

Bujumbura is a third world city. Even its richer addresses have mainenance issues. Streetlights do not work, and no one seems to protest their absence. There are no lane markers, and the bold weave their way in and out to the rythm of their horn parting slower traffic ahead.

Rwanda’s apparent prosperity was replaced by an African resourcefulness of archetecture when funds are likmited. Burundi is visibly poor. Grindingly so. The poorer classes walk or ride bikes to market up to 80 km away and may spend the night along side the road on the way home. On the flip side of this, I have yet to see a truely obese person in this land. They build little 7 by 14 brick or block shelters usually with a wooden door, and maybe wooden shutters. after dark, they may use parafin or oil lamps, or possibly the new LED lights – the kind that signal all they have is a penlight LED flashlight to illunine the inside. Throngs of people walk along the roads, cross the darkened streets, and on up into the mountain without reflectors or a flashlight. I witnessed one young man coasting down the mountain road without slowing himself by brakes, Temporarily blinded by our? headlights, his front wheel dropped off the edge of the pavement, and as we passed him, I could hear the sickening thud of a body hitting the pavement. My driver never slowed as there was a lot of traffic, and he didn’t want to make things worse. Earlier this year spring rains carried flashfloods down into the poor sections of Bujumbura where many were caught in their sleep and drowned.
A man’s gifts makes room for him. My fellow Adventist workers are warm and spontaneous in their welcome. A computer for Andre’ the Pastor in charge of Eveangelism in the West Burundi Union Mission. The executive secretary, Jean Claude, will be my driver for the duration, and his wife brightened up at the sound of a gift of a Dove dark chocolate bar. I put him in charge of the projector gift. My interpreter will be Steven. He is apparently the most computer savvy of the three men. I have more to say, but will save it for tomorrow. My legs and rear are pretty much recovered, but my back is not happy with me sitting on the end of the bed without any lumbar support. I go to my rest believing I have done all I could do to be careful with assets and means.

DAY 2 - Thursday Aug 21

Since I was falling asleep at the keyboard last night about 11:30 PM local, I decided the better plan was to wait until brain cells reacheived strategic mobility. it is 6:30 AM local time.

Every thing is moving in a seemingly preordained direction. I told the brethren as plainly as I could that I could eat anything cooked, but preferred a vegetarian diet. I said I stay away from milk but hard boiled eggs would be fine. So the gift of food was a half liter of pro-biotics called whimsically by Andre, African Tea. It was given after dusk and I could not read the label, but my tongue told the tale, it was a thin, drinkable yogurt much like kefir flavored with an artificial essence of strawberry. So much for no milk products.

What led up to that surprize moment was that the seasoned RAV4 belonging to Bro Jean Claude needed a repair to the left front wheel. Still not sure what, but when they took it to the repair shop, it took more time and involved more parts than originally projected.

While Andre and Jean Claude took care of the car issue, Steven and I were deposited safely inside the West Burundi SDA mission compound. The Union office was closed for the day as it was a a few minutes after 4PM. Next door to the office stood a modest, but representative building that I was told was an Adventist church serving that part of Bujumbura, the Kiriri congregation.

Steve and I sat side by side in resin chairs a few feet inside a double doorway, that had one door locked shut, the other standing open to allow a fresh breeze to flow through the building. Don’t know the exact temperature, but it was altogether pleasant, if just a bit more warm than cool. We spent time going over slides and how to read the notes. Eventually, we tried out the two different adapter kits for the electrical face plate. It takes two round pins and there is a male grounding prong sticking out. It seems that may be how the 220 is acheived, and by circumventing that grounding prong, one is left with a clipped wave that is a bit different in shape, but identical to our standard 110 volt electrical supply. Imagine our surprize to see that the universal adapter did not fit the wall outlet! the prongs matched, but the outlet is molded into a recessed circle. The squared shape of our universal adapter would not allow the pins to go in far enough, due to the fact that the whole package was too large to fit within that recessed area on the wallplate. So we broke open the Apple Kit, and found that since it’s plug was round, it fit perfectly. So we thought to have resolved getting the computer recharged as needed, but no juice flowed through the wire. Our rising concern was remedied after talking to a deaconess who was coming to lock up for the day. She explained that all electricity is shut off during the week. We soon were left in a dark hallway, and were packing up at about 6:50 PM to wait outside for our ride. Just as we were assembling our stuff in the darkness, I recognized the two driving lights of our RAV4 pull in to the compound parking lot. In about 3 minutes I am drinking that milk product.

We took about an hour and a half driving the paved, but winding road up to Muramvya township, then another 8 to 10 miles past it to somewhere on the outskirts of the built up area. I say built up as the road in the city is flanked by rows of shanty one room stalls of about 3 by 3 meters with an open door a light source, and a modest stock of goods of all sorts for sale. No street lights, but small crowds of people mill around peacebly in the darkness. I am sure there is crime, but a calm prevailed within my earshot driving past at about 30 KPH with the windows down. Somewhere along the way to bed, as the brethren gave me my Francs for the US dollars I gave them, I discovered that the proper price for a liter bottle of water is a 1000 franc note. At the exchange rate, that liter of water is a little less than one dollar.

TRUST, what a socially significant word. It is easy to trust when you know a person and can resolve any understanding gaps with a bit of talk. When you know things are getting lost in translation, you wonder how much you can trust.

I had been deposited at my home away from home, a modest middle class hotel to the left of the stark street through an archway as we lurched over the rain rutted rock and gravel approach that served
as its driveway. I noted the flap over the toilet roll, then realized it was necessary due to the proximity to the shower that had no curtain. I have yet to use a sink that works as expected here in Burundi. I guess it best to simply alter my expectations. There is the faucet atop the sink that never works. But down below there is always a shut off valve. I find that the natives here depend upon that shut off valve to open and shut the water flow. There is an optimistic overturned beer shaped clear glass tumbler on a little shelf to the right of the small lavatory sink. I will not be using it - ever.

With smiling faces, Andre and Claude assured me they would be back with food. It was already past 9 PM, and all I could think about was my tendency to acid reflux if I ate late at night. About 10:30 they returned all smiles and apologetic for taking so long. they had driven to Jean Claude’s home, as well as dropping off Andre at his, MRS Jean Claude had sliced a large tomato and shaved pretty green sweet pepper strips and that color sat atop a serving bin of stainless steel, a three in one affair. Beneath the tomato slices was a large pile of carrot shavings, perhaps made up of 4 or 5 good sized carrots. The bin on the right contained 13 bananas each about as long as my index finger, but about as fat as two fingers - essentially 3 to 4 bites worth of an incredibly complex bland sweet banana bouquet with undertones of a drop or two of lime juice that could not be lime since they were all offered in their full jackets. To the left of the slad was a bin with about 12 onces of small redsking type peanuts roasted and salted and all topped with perhaps 60 or so fried cassava chips. There was enough food for two or three, but they signalled it was all for me. I ended up eating about a third of the peanuts, most of the salad, and 4 bananas. I had a few interesting dreams, but no acid reflux and no cough. Waiting at Addis Ababa at departure Gate 1F, my cough became aggrevated when the noxious fumes of those deisel buses flowed through the open doors. I noticed Africans eyeing me with a cold eye. An Asian woman never glanced, she took care of her social anxiety by wearing a bright pink face mask. I saw others wearing face masks too, all of them Asian.

Before 7 AM a man appeared in a tattered vest and older faded suit coat and motioned and with words I couldn’t decipher asking politely if he could take the meal utensils away. I asked if he was a friend of Jean Claude, he shook his head “NO”, then I asked if he worked here at the hotel and motioned with my arm to indicate “Here” he nodded, and so I trusted him as he took away some pretty nice serving ware for this land of surpizes. Afterward I wondered if I trusted too much? About 10 minutes passed, and a young man who knew more English expolained they had removed it up the hilll to be washed. The young man asked where i was from, what I was doing in his town and with such innocence and open curiosity I never felt snooped upon.

My room looks out at the lower end wall of this facility. Past that, the ravine drops in a green slope for several hundred meters to the valley below. The hillside is covered with various crops including banana plants. There are several large crow like black birds that started squaling about dawn. I sense I will not be sleeping in soon, either. My 6 hours or so of sleep is the most in recent days, but now, 90 minutes after waking, I am ready for a morning nap. I do not know when to expect my ride, but probably after 9 AM. They all were out late last night on my account.

Part of this journal is to capture events. And part of it is to try to distill and convey feelings of the moment that may pass and be forgotten. In this sea change, I am grateful for the flow of newness and novelty that entertains and stimulates the mind. But I am also aware that I am being asked to float upon this current, and not be taken under with reflexive negativity due to the pace of newness. I do not have to get everything right, God’s hand will preserve me in my ignorance, and I will feel rewarded at every step of advanced awareness and increased ability. My fatigue induced numbness is wearing off, and I desire to enter into this day with confidence of my purpose, and trust in the Divine power that pushed/pulled me into accepting this growth opportunity.

The land is alien, yet familiar, and the sun of the morning is as welcome as anywhere on earth. It is good to be alive and granted opportunity to serve the LORD.

10:00 AM Just finished a breakfast of onion, tomato egg omlet and a soup made of amaranth and spinach with something peppery for seasonig. The internet connection here keeps bouncing me off. It may be that I will only get to emaill at the Union office. The crow like birds are a big larger than crows. They have a white ring around the collar and a white vest. Locally they are known as ravens.

I notice the altitude here affecting my breathing under physical stress such as climbing up the six flights of stairs from my room up to street level. The stairs are all outdoors set in stone and cement.

It is mid-morning the sky is a lot like Western Mi ch with only a bit of blue and lots of clouds. Light breeze, if any, and temperature in the low 70s. Is this about the temperature of Eden in the morning? 1:30 sent this far to Judy
8:15 PM Have tried once more unsuccessfully to phone Judy. I had been shown an active call list that works for Pastor Andre to America. Everyone of them is prefixed +1 followed by 3 digit prefix for area code then 7 digits for private number. I did plus sign followed by a one, then the ten digits. It will not dial out of the country, as I can reach the local numbers well.

It was my privilege to meet Elizabeth Santa Cruz office secretary of ADRA Burundi. ADRA is about 1/4 km (just around a corner) from the Union office. Power is on only for about 6 hours a day in places other than the airport and business district. The offices are designed with wide windows and screens so cross ventilation is possible. There is still a purpose for paperweights in Burundi. Elizabeth is a very poised and gracious Bolivian native who has served for the past 14 years abroad with her husband. He was out of town today and will be back early next week. She was the person who lent me her flashdrive downlink so I could still get onto the internet, even when the power was off in her office. Fluent in Spanish, English, French, and Kirundi. She volunteered to drive us to the airport to see if retrieval of the missing 3 bags will be possible. Just before arriving at the Union office, I had gasped out loud, “I’m in trouble!” In my sleep deprived condition I managed to leave my paperwork inside the navy blazer which I hung on the wallplate of nine wooden pegs that served as the closet for guests. I take it that closets are not real big in some parts of Africa. In any regard, I had no alternative than to attempt to pick up the baggage. It takes about 75 minutes to come down the mountain just to get to the Union office. From there it’s another 20 minutes out to the airport. I do not know how many mpg the little RAV4 gets loaded with 5 passengers, but it can’t be good enough when gas is 2360 Burundi Francs per liter. That comes out to about 6 US dollars a gallon. I discovered that workers in Burundi do not get a monthly travel allowance. They may get something for Evangelism meetings expenses to put on an evangelism account. I gave John Claude about $80 dollars worth of Francs (120,000) in twelve 10000 notes to help defray his costs a bit for running me into town twice. I said twice, because when Elizabeth Santa Cruz took Steven and me to the airport we discovered several things.

1) Burundi TSA have submachine guns and stop you outside the airport to wave their wand over your clothing. Any beep and you better have an innocent reason such as car keys for the cause. The officers in the airport want to be caught by their superiors doing their job, so even knowing you have been stopped on the way in to the parking facility, they stop you again before you can enter the terminal, again, with that wand thing.

2) the people will help you if you are patient and reasonable. The official who processed my original claim remembered me, and did not register disgust that I failed to honor his stressed directive to make sure you bring the baggage claim sheet with you.

That the luggage we had thought to be missing at Addis Ababa, was in fact, missing since Toronto! It was sent a day late from there, and was promised to arrive on Firday, August 22. Talk about shaving things close!

This is not point five, but it was something finalized today. Every other correspondence from Africa said the meetings would be from August 23 thru Sept 6, but all along they had planned to start on Friday night the 22nd! So everyone of my presentations gets moved up, except my Sabbath sermons stay intact except the final one. The sermon on heaven gets preached Sabbath morning. Also the baptism will be Sabbath morning 15 km away! So, it looks like a late lunch day that last Sabbath.

Instead of my preaching from the slides, we will have a vesper devotional, on the text: Behold what manner of Love the Father has given to us that we should be called the sons (and daughters) of God. After I speak for a few minutes, it will be testimony time and then Holy Communion time.

Some points to make:

God’s love has created us in His image, Christ’s sacrifice provided hope we will be recreated in God’s image, forever saved from the damage of sin.

God’s love has given us the ten commandments, it has also spoken the promise that those commandments will one day live within our hearts so that we may keep them.

God’s love has gained us victory over death, through Christ we may share in that victory over all fear of death until death itself will be destroyed.
Through baptism, God’s love lets us start life anew as though we had never made a mistake, in the resurrection, the saints will receive a new body to live eternal life anew in a perfect home with Jesus.

Behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us that we should be called the sons and daughters of God.

For supper we had white rice, seasoned steamed cauliflower, and steamed bananas with a bit of tomato flavor added. For the desert, it was those charming baby sweet bananas. We ate about 9 PM after visiting the outdoor basketball court and open area that will be where our meetings begin. We will need about 450 feet of power cord to supply our equipment, that will also arrive tomorrow. Getting us to the dinner hour was another snack of strawberry yogurt with plain fresh gray bread. We would call it brown, but there is no salt in the recipe so it has a faintly sweet flavor eaten plain.

I showed the snaps on my phone to the team and their wives who were present. My interpreter Steven’s wife is suffering a bout of Malaria. We stopped at her home and I had prayer for her. Got to meet Steven’s children. Two boys and two two girls. The oldest I would guess to be about 11, with others cascading downword in age. Taught them to do a high five, and on the side, and the down low, too slow maneuver. They were completely charmed with that and laughed and laughed. Mom shoud be better soon, she started a three day regimen today of medicine for malaria from the US that takes three days to work. I miss the comfort and assurance provided by the oregano capsules, languishing in a bag that hasn’t gotten here yet. I take my handwashing very seriously here.

Steven is a good man, a capable minister over 6 churches currently, but lives very modestly in a crowded subdivision. The street leading to his small duplex structure is unpaved with rocks and dust for pavement and a crooked low line of gray water filling a smelly ditch with odor and vile mud. His home is crowd with oversized furniture and small spaces between. I am guessing that is quite standard for an African home. I look above the place where Steven’s wife sits on the sofa and sees a wedding memento for a Fantastique and Eric Steven moments before I am asked to pray for her without having been introduced by name, just by relationship. Everyone is surprized that I could prey for her by name. I think angels got an innocent laugh over that. I know I am grateful for that glance that made all the difference.

Day Three: Nets and Pills and Driving Thrills

I woke up with a start sometime well before rising time. In my shallow sleep I heard the drone of an enemy dive bomber. A mosquito was homing in on the heat of my body. I dove under the covers despite already sweating, and fell back to sleep in a fitful dream. Today, I would get a net to sleep under.

After a delicious home cooked breakfast of fried plantain, tomato, cabbage, and avacado salad, and a green soup that was better than the resturant version the day before, I was ready to face the trip back down to Bujumbura.

Unfortunately, Pastor Claude was not. He fully thought he was. And he drove amazingly accurately down the pot holed road scarcely hitting a one. I joked, “If this was an arcade game, you’d be winning.” Claude is a sober man, but that got a wide grin across his face. a few miles down hill, just outside Bujumbura, he lost that smile for the rest of the day. It started innocently enough. A routine traffic stop such as he and we had been waved through many times before. Only this time was different. He had to get out of the car and accompany the police away to where they talked in very serious tones. Seems his license was not a valid one, even though he thought it was. Such is the gray area of many government offices and their consumer products. One cuts through burocratic tape with connections or collections. Claude had obtained his through a mixture of both. But there was no doubt about it, his license was missing a vital holographic image affixed in un upper righthand corner box. After a fine/bribe of 40,000 Francs (about 26.50 US dollars) he was allowed to proceed. That lasted just 2 miles where another check point was operating. This time he had to render 50,000 francs, or just a bit over one weeks salary as a pastor. If he had not been holding the money I gave him the night before as gas money, he might well have ended up being thrown in jail. I gave him another 100,000 francs so he could buy food for the evangelistic team. They are probably going to be reimbursed, but this is a cash society, and he needed some cash.
Afraid to drive past another check point, he parked the car just a couple of miles into Bujumbura, and phoned for help. That killed almost an hour until someone was available to drive. An ADRA driver took Steven and me to the airport, but we had to wait another hour for the plane to land, and unload luggage. He could not wait for us, so we were left with a promise of a ride . . . from someone else.

During our wait, we listened to an eastern european tourist rebuff an offer to supply transportation other than the hotel bus that was running late for her. The words I caught were to the point, “I know, but it is my decision, and I expect you to respect it.” She was much more affable to us as she panhandled a light for her oh so thin cigarette. Alas, we were all out of fire.

But we did pick up 2 of the 3 bags. The other one mysteriously absent. Or should I say, ominously absent. Whatever. By now we were running late getting back to opening night meeting. So we did the only rational thing. Call the team to let them go on without us, and then stop two or three times for various urgencies such as a big stalk of bananas, and a battery charger for a cell phone. Food is significantly cheaper up at 6,000 feet than down in Bujumbura.

Initially we were hurying to say hello at opening night, but got word that people were already leaving for home. So we waited and chatted about tommorow’s plans. The evening closed with the arrival of the mission President Lamech Barishinga, the Treasurer Jean Nigaba and the local pastor Manassah Haragakiza and his wife. Together with Mr and Mrs Claude, Steven, Andre and myself we all ate a meal of chewy ndagala (fried 2.5” minnows), pastey cassava root slices, limp french fries, pesto spaghetti, and steamed peas and carrots. For dessert we had fat bananas, boxed milk for those who wanted, and a choice of sweet white bread or Maria coconut biscuits. We swapped faith stories and then bid each other good night. That was 3 hours ago. Tomorow will come quickly. Oh, about the pills? Good to have them, and I took ’em.

Day Four: One Hail of a Church Service

High atop at the end of one leg of the mountain road to Muramvya, we come to a three way intersection. I’ve nick-named this spot “Hustle Corners.”It’s real name is Bugarama. At the slowing of any vehicle, vendors from age 10 or so on up rush toward the slowing vehicle offering whatever they have to sell; a cluster of bananas, a plastic bag of onions, a freshly dug bunch of beets or perhaps a just cooked skewer of some red meat chunks. I did not detect much huckstering, that art of making something from nothing, but there sure is a lot of in-your-face, decide-on-this-now hustling attitude.

Steven is soft spoken conversationally, but his public voice is of the cry aloud, spare not variety. I like him, and feel a connnection I do not with the other eagles from the office. And yet, they all seemed strangely more approachable after I shared the tie box with them. It was almost comical to see the Mission President wearing an olive and blue jaquard tie over a pale orange shirt with embroidered patterns red triangles on the leading edge of the collar, matched with a khaki suit. Andre has that alpha male presence about him. He also chose a khaki suit, but his tie choice was the Endangered species tie featuring a full tropical moon in a maroon sky with a leopard prowling in the blue green undergrowth. It seemed so very fitting. Claude is as much a non-dresser as his wife is one. He had a chocolate brown three button suit fully buttoned with a turquoise dress shirt and a brown and blue patterned tie full of chiseled triangles. But he smiled broadly when Steven showed up in his second pick overall - the lavender edged silver and lavender tie perfectly matching a lavender shirt and a medium gray suit. Ted Struntz said in parting with it that Africans like the bright colors.

I am sitting here typing with about an hour to go before I hop into the RAV4 and scoot the kilometer or so to the recreation field set up for a meeting. I am listening to the recurring rumble of thunder overhead. The sky on the western side of the valley is tinged with a creme gold harking of a sunset to soon occur. As I listen to the thunder, I cannot help but wonder what is in store for the evening meeting.

My first glimpse of the outdoor effort’s furnishings was a bit dim in appreciation, but I soon discovered that the green uniformed pathfinders must have contributed a fair share of design as well as labor. Remembering all of those lashing contests at camporees, I began to sense that in countries such as Burundi, that rustic look that happens to be functional, has a certain low budget appeal.
The dias is of rough sawn wood covered with plastic bunting of red, white, blue, and pink. It is about 8 feet square and set up about a meter from the ground. Perhaps, a bit overdone, but strangely somehow perfectly at home. The audience ranks of resin chairs are covered with plastic tarps to shield from sun or as today's case necessitated, rain.

I am attentive to all who loiter and all approach, as this is a public area they are used to using. Only a few small boys shoot hoops. A shepherd brings his cow and two sheep into the grassy area, the sheep baaing a protest over something, and the cow answering with a gentle moo. But they were on the periphery, in contrast to four seemingly unattended goats that decide to listen to the music for awhile right up close to the speakers. Along the street, a van load full mini-bus taxi takes in several minutes of our program stopped at roadside before slowly driving off.

At meeting time, the sky was clear, and we looked to be on our way to a very bright and warm day. But over to the north, clouds were already gathering over the peak. As the meetings progressed from the early 8:30 AM meeting through Sabbath School, I sensed we might not always have such a bright day as first anticipated. Before getting up to preach, I remarked to Steven that it looked like rain across the valley. He was very surprised that I could read the local weather more accurately than he could. I shrugged and said, I spend a lot of time reading the weather from a distance. (It is a skill that most sailors and motorcyclists master quite early, or they have disappointments to contend with.)

As church was starting, so was the rain. A sprinkle at first, barely dampening the choir as they sang. But by the time of the last special music before the sermon, it was raining significantly. Their song was one of the General Conference theme of a final harvest, and the need for revival and reformation. But it was set to such a catchy tune and swaying rhythm that one didn't feel preached to. Around the singers the thunder rumbled and on occasion, lightening flashed cloud to cloud nearby. I began praying for the safety of the worshippers.

At about this juncture, my cell phone goes off. It is the baggage claims official letting me know my bag is waiting at the airport. Could I come this afternoon or evening? I replied that unfortunately I could not get there until tomorrow morning. And that seemed acceptable to him. Good thing I was not preaching yet.

Soon the loose tarps needed emptying of the pools of rainwater loading them down. Our team of deacons carefully poked at the water pools with blunt sticks until the water ran off the sides of the tarps. This became a full time occupation as the rain poured down harder. One could see small hail dancing along the rivulets of water beginning to fill in the low areas with puddles. And then the power went down. And so we waited for about 10-12 minutes as the Pathfinder team worked to locate the problem. After a bit, a spontaneous song erupted from the congregation filling in the silence. I do not have any idea of how many non-members were present, but I do know the thirty some or so at the fringes along the road and property line, melted away as the storm came overhead.

I was blessed to pick up right where we left off without losing focus or energy as the generator brought for emergencies was fired up and the mics came live. I was a bit disappointed at the local pastor's apparent diffidence when given the stick of authority with which to dig. But the congregation gave a good throat to the chant, "Spring up O well!" The people bore up under the rain with elan, and took it all quite in stride.

For lunch we had left over non-meat balls made of legumes and vegetables from breakfast, some wheat bars that looked like a brown version of cassava cake, peanuts, more flavored yogurt (I think this is a treat for them). I've been warned about salads being a risk, but that would be at a potluck or something, this is one pastor's wife cooking, and she knows what she is doing. So I am eating with a prayer but also with gratitude a delicious fruit salad of diced apples, banana slices, watermelon, guava, papaya, and something called a Japanese apple that is purple like a blackberry, but the seeds are individual about the size of a tomato seed. I ate my unsalted boiled egg last.

It is raining now. Hope it quits before the meeting starts. Funny how I almost brought a rain coat, but didn't want to ruin the dry season by virtue of actually planning for rain. 10:35 PM The rain stopped about the time we were actually ready to start the evening meeting, which is to say, due to technical difficulties we were running late. The issue this time was the fact that no one had set up the projector due to the rain all afternoon. In so doing they found out some good news and some bad news. The good news was that the projector I brought is rated at 110, 120, 220, and 240 volts. So with power adapters it will work with about any power source. The bad news was that due to the load on the generator, insufficient voltage was coming to the projector and it would not function correctly. So we hooked up the old dim bulb 3 M model. But it had a short throw lens, not surprising given its marginal
lumin production. In any event, at the correct focal length from the screen, the VGA cord they had was about 30 feet too short to reach the dias. Which by the way, after reflecting that 5 resin chairs fit side to side with a margin of safety, this structure is more like a 12X12 than the 8’ square I originally estimated. (Hey it looks small out in the middle of a field).

So to remedy the short cord, they moved the projector away from the screen and only about 1/2 of the image area of a slide fell on the screen. The rest bled off into the darkness. Minutes turned into an hour late for starting time. But it was too dark to fret if anyone left. I couldn’t have spotted them unless they had been wearing a glow stick on a lanyard when they left. It was that dark. So we finally moved the podium down onto the wet ground, to make the VGA cord reach, and preached in the open, close to the screen. That worked OK until just as I was making the appeal, for the last 4 or 5 minutes a little drizzle made an appearance. I wondered how wet a mac can get without dying. As soon as I began my appeal prayer, Steven closed the lid over the keyboard. And it seems none the worse for its exposure to the elements. I felt bad for the audience. Some had winter jackets, but the pastors were in suits and they looked miserable by the time we were finished. My estimate was a damp 58-61 degeres. Very cold by tropical standards. These dear folk do not have any fat to ward off a chill. My joke about not seeing a walrus shiver was met with hearty laughter.

For supper about an hour after the meeting ended, we had seasoned rice, baked plantain in a tomato and onion broth, and hot gruel they called porridge. no salt, but a jar of serve yourself honey to add whatever sweetness you desired. We were just getting into the meal when the power to the hotel flickered off. there we were eating in the dark as first one, then two then three cell phones winked on their LED flashlight. I wen tof rmme but remembered that when i asked for one to be removed, somehow both of them became deleted apps. So I was eating in the dark. So I told the story of the man with the dates, eating them in the dark. Just after we cleaned up and the other pastors left to their hotel about 100 feet down the street, the lights came back on, and i didn’t have to navigate those 95 steps down to my room in the dark.

Sitting on the hotel resturant deck, overlooking the valley and the rain in the distance, we could see, from time to time, lightning flash to the ground some 15 miles away. The weird part was the lightning was a color between orange and pink, not a virtual white. Steven had never seen lightning that color either.

As I was typing this journal, suddenly a loud thrum caught my attention. I had company. The bathroom window has glass shutters, but no screen. A robust hummingbird moth was casing the room for food. But as I got up to provide escort service back to the outdoors, it doubled back into the bathroom and out that window. Perhaps the funniest sound I heard today came from a socialite raven. He or she, sat just out of reach and watched us talking together. Soon the bird began to give off a soft and regularly varying sound. The closest thing I can associate it with is the sound of a man snoring, with a soft vibrating uptake, and a louder exhale. It was the intake phase that was so riveting. It sounded just like a uvula slowly vibrating. I wondered if it was a mimic response to sitting just outside one too many open windows here at the hotel?

It is impossible to tell the progress of the meetings. But all of us agree this has been an uphill start. First, we were delayed and couldn’t offer a slide show on opening night. Next Sabbath AM was far too bright for slides, well, let me amend that, far too bright until the rain came. Then, tonight we almost didn’t get slides on the screen. Once started, I felt the Holy Spirit give both Steven and me freedom and smoothness of delivery. Only once I left out an optional verb (one that is understood even in its absence) but that threw Steven, and I had to repeat my statement so he could take it and run with it.

Arriving in the rain, we pulled next to the covered seating area and noticed a green station wagon sitting next to our car. Seems that the local Church of God Seventh-day was there with his legal representative (whatever that means). The evidence points (from knowledge gained elsewhere prior to this confrontation) that due to unresolved conflict, a split has occured with that church, and of the 150 members, only a small portion are still attending his church. Couple that with the confusion some of them felt when reading about my coming. Somehow word got through to a significant number of his group that this “campaign” was one of theirs. There was no infringement on our part. His members saw a Sabbath meeting and chose to attend. Shortly, he left, but a lay leader from his church stayed to observe the proceedings and perhaps spy on the responses of members from that church.

I sensed I gave a powerful appeal concerning coming to the cross and accepting Jesus as Savior and as Heaven’s appointed Door to our tomorrow. But it was very dark and could only infer from fellow
Day Five: Sunday - In Hot Water Again

Trees have a way of coloring and defining the landscape second only to the geology that formed the outline of the earth's crust. I have developed a deep appreciation for trees in life. And I think the reason the stark beauty of the desert rock seems such an alien landscape is that it is devoid of trees. I grew up with them. Trees were my friends. Even the bitter sticky, sappy pines. One of them ferried my brother and me on many a wild voyage at the pendulum end of a homemade swing Dad put up for us.

So when I arrived in Africa, I paid a lot of attention to the trees. Exiting the airport, a lone laggard of a flamboyant tree still held forth its bare-topped branches to the sun decorated with tips of flame red. Just one tree, blooming out of season. Driving up the boulevard from the airport down near Lake Tanganyika, (it is up, almost everything is up as Bujumbura hugs the foothills of the mountains to the east) one can see the deep green of spreading mango trees arched over the street with small immature mangos dropping like bunches of little green plums high above the traffic.

There are many new trees, and some admittedly forgettable, but driving through the country while the air is resinous with the smoke of eucalyptus being turned into charcoal is memorable. It is like the best part of a Listerine bottle suddenly dried and animated to crawl amiably up your nose like a two-month-old kitten seeking to snuggle. It smells, for lack of a better adjective, healthy. These that are burned are for the most part, small-stemmed silver blue leaved trees offered up for humanity's needs. But high on a ridge just outside the business area of the part of Muramvya stands a certified sentinel Eucalyptus. It has twin trunks that have levered apart like the arms of Dennis the Menace's slingshot. But despite that, they stretch upwards of 150 feet, towering over the terrain like a guardian of its secrets. Oh the sun it has rebuffed, the wind it has filtered, and the storms it has weathered!

There are a few upscale buildings in town that have imported the imperial palms seen around southern Florida, and they signal a regal beauty that is intoxicating. One imagines having a private lane of an eighth of a mile or so lined with them ending in a cement and glass palace with a private water access for recreation.

I was late for breakfast today. I found myself in hot water again, for the first time in almost a week. I turned the shower knob sleepily and reluctantly. I was not looking forward to the tepid affair that passes for a shower here at the Baze Lodge Hotel. But, wonder of wonders, water hot enough to make me jerk back poured forth. I hurriedly got naked and jumped into the shallow pan the serves as the shower floor. Splashes be damned, I was going to relish this moment. And I did. Moments and minutes ticked prodigially away, as I ignored the spreading wetness on the bathroom floor. Suddenly, I heard the phone ring that it was time for breakfast. "Be there in five." I answered. Sometimes it's worth it to be late.

But not too late. Today I had promises to keep, and miles to go before I could sleep. I had promised to pick up the last bag, and knew that the 160 km roundtrip would not be done for my benefit alone. It was somewhat of a miracle that we had any picture, and sound to go with it. The staff working with PA is solid, but they were working in the dark with new stuff, and missed the fine print that the transformer for the new mic set-up was 110V. They used an adapter that did not transform the voltage and power, and they blew out the power supply. The Sanyo projector offered a different bit of drama. It has the internal smart circuit to automatically use 110, 120, 220, or 240 volts, but last night it did not work. The light would come on, but then go back out. Burundians are battle seasoned, and they knew that what was needed was a dedicated power supply just for the projector. It wasn't getting sufficient, and stable voltage. When the voltage dropped, the lamp just shut off. So we were off in search of a power supply. How convenient that a faithful Adventist couple runs a consumer electronics store in downtown Bujumbura. This is the first city I visited where the downtown can have parallel boulevards latticed with connecting streets the equivalent of 3 to 4 city blocks long that are bare dirt broken up by cobble rocks of various sizes. A vestigial remain of pavement may stretch a third of the way, both laterally and longitudinally encouraging drivers intent on avoiding a broken axle to drive down the wrong side of the street in slo-mo chicken games until one driver honks his aggression (could be the one on the wrong side) and the other peels off into the road hazard zone. Amazing! It is along one such street in the upper class business section that this store is located. Lower class business streets have no pretense of pavement,
and rutted roads with gray slimy water attempting to find exit is even more memorable for all the wrong reasons.

The good news is that since they were closed Sabbath, they were open Sunday, a minority option, but some other shops joined in the commercial opportunity offered. We purchased the necessary regulated power supply there for the US equivalent of about $50.00 from the Eau Claire evangelistic project fund, then added in enough to get an additional 50 meters of high quality 220V rated industrial extension cord from the generator to the projector. That came to an additional 70 dollars or so, it really is hard to keep that monetary exchange rate in the head, but it is almost the same ratio as the golden mean times 1000. 100 US dollars is 166,000 Burundian Francs ($bf). In $bf the receipts were 75,000 and 110,000 respectively. Then there was that little patch cord that was an additional 6,000 $bf. That brings the total to 191,000 $bf or calculator assisted = $115.06 US dollars. With that step taken, we looked forward to crisp, bright, saturated color slides for the evening meeting. We were not disappointed.

Now all that spending amounting to 115 dollars doesn't sound much, but a Burundian pastor gets a salary of about 300,000 $bf a month. But on their salary, it is a very expensive expenditure. The blown transformer for the mic set posed a bit of a bigger problem. The Adventist store did not have a correct model, so we drove through the steamy upper eighties and sat in the hot sun with windows down as the designated shopper, Bazo, by name sought the right stuff.

Soon we found ourselves in hot water. Seems our driver, knowing that he was leaving the RAV4 in a no parking area, did so anyway. He left with Bazo and took the key. And just then, a private security officer, armed with only a whistle and a short nightstick, started blasting his frustration at us. After a dozen or so petulant shrill blasts, he vacated the area. He had done his job with the only tools at his disposal. Today, there would be no fine to pay.

We finally found the part needed at a market area bordering the most run down shanty town shopping lane I had yet seen. I wouldn't have taken odds of getting out of there unmolested, on my life. The gap between rich man, poor man was too evident. add in my white skin, and I would have been the perfect walking target for some shady crime. But we found the part at a reasonable price. Upon leaving that area, I asked if SDA's had any success in the poorest districts in the city. Steven started answering about another poor area to the south and east of downtown. "No," I refocused him," like that area we just left."

"Starting at that street you saw, that is all Muslim in there." Steven informed me.

"That explains a lot," I quipped back.

When I got to the airport and showed my claim slip, I was told in two different areas, that the third bag had not arrived. "Then why would the airport have called me to say that it had?" I asked. The clerk had no answer. But said he could take me to where they could give me one. Entering the room, I spied the lead clerk that had helped me fill out the claim form at the very beginning. When He saw me, His face brightened, and told the clerk he knew where my bag was. It had been shipped from some way point, on Rwandan Air, not Ethiopian Airlines. The bag looked strangely lopsided, as if the contents had shifted. . . . Later when I got to the hotel I found that indeed they had. they had shifted right out of the bag with human assistance! Altogether, the chief, or thieves lifted 5 collared sport shirts, only one of them costing over $10 new, and one of them had a hole in the back. Also, every pair of casual pants was removed. There was a pair of off white jeans I picked up in Puerto Rico that had sentimental value, but the others were Sam's slacks in khaki or navy, plus an older pair of cargo shorts in green. No emotional upheaval over this loss, other than a bit of pity and disgust for those who are that amoral. But I am going to miss not having casual slacks the entire month. I had wrapped for shock protection, the old used computer I was asked to convey for a friend to Bujumbura in several layers of black screen printed t-shirts. I should have used the extra large sized ones. No one is that big here, and when they took the computer, they took the wrapping tees. So I am out the ten or so tees that would have fit these slender people here. I have a dozen or so XLs however. I will seek a claim from someone over this loss by theft. then a six pack of Costco soft toilet rolls. and hidden in the cores a 5 inch ceramic knife. Oh, and I'll be sure to add to that list, the .98 cent bar of Fels-Naptha laundry soap they absconded with, too.

Driving up the mountain, the sky had brightened a bit, though still hazy, and the driver stopped a couple of times so I could get off a composed shot of the scenery. Steven held a Campaign at a cliff top SDA church about athird of the way up the mountain, located on a thin declining ridge offering a view of Bujumbura and on a good day, all the way out across Lake Tanganyika. We saw the mission President's car there, so we stopped. President Lamech's younger brother is the head elder of this church. But due to last spiring's floods, the gravel pit just down the road closed down throing several members out of work,
including Lamech’s brother. I took a few pics to show the need for additional space and the start made before money at church dried up. It was here Steven abandoned me with the remark, “I’m going to turn a short corner now.” It was a slang phrase he picked up from the Brits, and it had nothing precisely to do with any duration of time, but maybe one’s under shorts, if you catch the Brit’s penchant for puns.

On Sabbath, the brethren got into hot water with the hotel management. We had been using the overflow area of the hotel restaurant for homecooked meals brought in. Seems the hotel, passed over the first couple of infractions, but as this looked like a budding habit, they informed the brethren it could not continue. So tonight we had supper in a furnished house a block or so the other side of our meeting site.

If that wasn’t enough, Andre, the pastor organizing this meeting had to field a call from the Burundian Vice-president this AM And he was in hot water. Seems the Catholic presence here in Muramvya lobbied the VP’s ear with a ten year old faux pas by a few over zealous lay members who went door to door with a tract disparaging all other religions. So an attempt was made to keep all advertising, all invitations, all prosyletizing to the campus that had received formal permit, with no contact with anyone on the street or in any home. And only for the time specified. Someone took note of our trouble getting started due to rain delay, and the set up in the dark with too short cords etc. In any event the permit ends at 8:00 PM and we ran late until about 8:40 due to the late start. Tonight we were done by 8:00 PM, but Steven’s take on this was this was the roaring of a paper tiger, and that some other church(s) were simply running scared, and wanted to try to intimidate us with empty threats. We had approximately 200 in attendance this evening and that means most of them were non-SDA, as only about 25-30 can be accounted for as being members of the team, or members of the local church.

Finally, the rubric on has been crossed - Maa Claude cooked up a chicken along with green beans and potatoes, spinach, seasoned cauliflower, and msima. I passed over the chicken, but Mr Claude said, “Ted,” pointing with his fork for effect, “have a piece of chicken.” You could say this was one game of chicken, I lost. Best not to upset the cook.

It seems that the fall weather pattern has arrived early. The rain that isn’t expected for another 3 weeks has come early. Those of us with high tech electronics struggle to keep our machinery dry enough to keep running. Today it rained for the third straight day. Not the all-day showers of Seattle, but the run and gun tropic shower style. It has been gray and threatening even when not raining. This morning, without a temperature reference to say how wrong I am, was chilly to the point of being cold for my African friends. They layer up in their cold weather coats. Stuffed underneath their suit coats on top, they look a bit warmer, but Yves Saint Lurient would have something to say about the look. If there were money to be made, it would be in a Macy’s storefront come fall. I think it hovered in the mid-fifties and is in the low sixties here at 4:15 PM. Bujumbura is only 72. And we are about a mile higher in elevation.

Breakfast consisted of small white potatoes cooked with green beans, peas and carrots and beets, accompanied with bananas and hot water with dry milk powder and honey for those who chose. I took the water with honey. Lunch was fried sliced potatoes in little crisp rounds, with raw slivers of onion on top. Cauliflower with green beans and carrots and spirals of macaroni with green peas and tiny minced onions. For desert we had a choice between apples, oranges, bananas, and passion fruit. I opted for the passion fruit and found a new friend, a tangy mini bowl of sweetish slimy coated seeds to be scooped out with a spoon. I had to have two fruits to get satisfied.

Day Six: Let It Rain!

Doctor Alvin Rosero and his wife Leila, arrived today from Bujumburo and are just starting the NEWSTART program as I type this. They have been in Africa for the past 18 months as a Health Evangelism team.

They joined us for a lunch and inquired as to how I got the call to come from the states to Africa. Since there is an element of risk involved, the missions usually only offer an open call, meaning they do not specify any name for the short term missionary, but to minimize risk, the GC or NAD forwards this to someone who has been to Africa several times. Alvin was curious as to the connections that led me being called by name to come to Africa. And I am struck with how much confidence the Africans on both sides of the Atlantic had in me. Supposedly, the first contact was an African that traveled to America and
heard me preach there. But he also was a friend of Wilson. But it was this man’s recommendation that was made to the Burundi office. And after that was received with favor, then Andre called Wilson to connect with me and have me correspond to the Executive Secretary Jean Claude. Alvin said that it was a very unlikely chain of circumstances that had me, a new comer get the call to be the evangelist here. I have no reason to doubt his savvy in the area of denominational beaurocracy and the proceedings of protocol. But my call by-passed the NAD or GC because the call was not given as an open call, but a specified call. Highly irregular. As in less than 5 percent of all calls for foreign service. It seems it was not only an unknown to me African who knew me by name.

I am sleepy by 10 or so when we part for the night, but after a couple of hours typing this journal, I seem good to go for another hour. I get to sleep about 12:20 to 1 AM local time and awaken about 7:15 to 7:30. So I sleep well but not really long. So, I thought to start a bit earlier and type a bit shorter after the meeting.

Today I have spent a couple of hours editing my previous editions to share them at some time to a wider audience. Steven spent the morning translating the GC official Handbook for Ministers into the Kirundi language. It is perhaps his seventh translation effort. All of them are published here by the mission for official distribution. I do not think he gets remuneration. This is truly a labor of love for the gospel on his part.

The doctor is now announcing the SDA church is building a large 5 story hospital in Bujumbura for the people of Burundi. Even at an hour drive away, “This is to be YOUR hospital,” he says. (A tow truck is no closer.) I haven’t seen one yet, but lots of cars not running and men crawling underneath them to get them going again.

Today’s presentation will be on tips to better nutrition. There is a lot of diabetes here, but the people are not obese, but very thin. One reason is that they do not know they should limit carbs and eat too many bananas for having that disease. (Just noticed, that this is the first meeting using the new wireless mics. They are doing a fantastic job with far less feedback than the wired models in use previously. This is definitely an upgrade that the Eau Claire church’s gift of financial assistance to this campaign has made possible. The modest amount of $460 dollars would take an Adventist pastor 2 full month’s salary to purchase. That and another 2 weeks from the third. Plus, the clutter and hazard of all those mic wires has all been cleaned up.

I am praying here for the Doctor and his wife for the health message is the entering wedge for the gospel. And tonight I will be making the first altar call of the series. We have had two decision calls that allowed them to remain in place, but tonight I will call for the decision to become a son or a daughter of God, to surrender their life to Jesus so that they might one day receive a new name for God’s forever tomorrow.

I am praying for the early and latter rain of the Holy Spirit to be poured out through the meetings. As a drizzle begins to fall on the presenters, I am closing my computer to protect it from undo moisture. Leila is calling on all of us to eliminate all meat from the diet and replace with superior vegetable protein sources that do not have the accompanying risk of introducing serious diseases. Unfortunately, she throws in an Ellen White quote and she bluntly refers to her as “our prophet” as to why we trust the things she says. I winced, as this is early in a series to be that tactless about a point of difference.

The light drizzle that accompanied the Health Talk yields to the water cycle and begins to fall in earnest. I pity the choir who have three numbers in the down pour. Once again, lightning is flashing all around, and they are carrying wired mics. Just the stuff to feed a nightmare with.

We start almost an hour earlier than the previous night. Plans are afoot to follow the night’s message with a short video about Jesus and still be done by 8:00 PM. Steven and I start the evening message in a steady downpour, although there is indication that the rain is passing through and will stop soon. We are smiling in the cold. Because we are holding the new wireless handhelds and no wire mess in front to be a hazard. The sound is good for about 30 minutes at which time a pulsing feedback appears. We stop and they replace the new batteries with newer ones. Once again the sound is good. Unfortunately the cure did not take us to the end of the presentation. We had to stop again with just about 10 minutes to go. So maybe we got defective alkaline batteries. Don’t know, but I’ve never encountered this kind of pulsing noise before.

As the batteries were being exchanged a second time, my attention was drawn to people walking between the dias and the covered seats. Some of them were interlopers and a couple were the staff in charge of crowd control. A young man with some sort of journal stretched out in fornt of the dias and started doing military rigid push ups. A “deacon” tapped him and asked him to get up and move from the
I was reminded of HMS Richards story of the big black dog that came to the front of a tent meeting and at just the most inappropriate moment stood up from laying down on the platform and suddenly keeled over dead. Satan delights in distracting minds from the pointed power of truth. I wondered if the man wanted prayer, but Steven was dismissive, “The man is insane,” he said.

A few slides later, and it was time for the appeal. I had run the idea by Claude, that I was going to do an inverted call. That I would use the total of the Christian crowd to come to the alter first, thinking that the witness of Christians would aide the secular ones to come to a decision to give their lives to Jesus and accept the gospel message.

Both Steven and I stepped down from the dias and moved about 20 feet toward the audience, closing about a third of the distance. The choristers started singing the theme song, Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross.

At the first only two women and one man came forward. But I did not give up. I clarified what I wanted and repeated the urgency to come forward and give a testimony to one’s faith in Jesus. A few more came forward. I made it clear that this was not an appeal for one to change their faith, but to simply testify to their faith in Jesus. Many more came forward. But I knew there were still a number resistant to making a public declaration, so I moved toward the seats even further. And I said that I knew that if anyone was still listening it was because they had some desire for righteousness, but that I knew what it was like to be halfway there. Under certain circumstances to be a reluctant saint, and in others to be a reluctant sinner, but that tonight we wanted to declare ourselves to be all on Jesus’s side that we wanted to be sons and daughter so God in order to receive the promised new name. As I came very near I asked them to follow me back to the rest of the group and several more got up and followed me.

It began to rain. And then I asked for the singing to stop for a prayer in the silence. And in that silence I prayed that the Holy Spirit would fall on us as the rain. Then we resumed the song that allowed the crowd to go back to their seats. Following that, we had a short benediction. It was twenty minutes to eight, but due to technical difficulties no video would be shown. There were quite a few that did not come to the front, but of the 140 or so that were there, over half came forward. Some of them were in a class that comes later, after dark, as if to keep from being spotted on the way there. I am filled with a resurgent joy.

Day Seven: Chagrin With a Grin

I awoke a bit before seven AM to the sound of wind. Soon that wind was accompanied by rain. Hard rain. And I thought of the old saw: Rain comes before seven, gone by eleven. At nine thirty, that didn’t seem likely, but by a few minutes after ten, as we were finishing our breakfast of boiled potatoes with green beans, boiled bananas, and slices of egg between slices of tomato, and wedges of avocado any of which could be inserted into a half white bread sub roll, along with a larger passion fruit that has another name in Africa. I took a mug of boiled water and added a couple of teaspoons of honey for flavor, and enjoyed it improbably well. I never would do that at home without any tart from lemon or lime.

As we prepared to return from the rented house where we take our meals about 2km from our Baze Lodge, Samson, our driver informed us that the battery on the car was dead. The night before, the headlights had seemed a bit dim, but with what the rain, I didn’t think too much about it. But instead of waiting, we decided to walk back up the gentle hill to our Hotel. It had stopped raining, and the damp air carried with it all of the musky and dank odors that had lain dormant in the dry.

Before breakfast, a worker from the hotel rang the doorbell and brought a 5 gallon bucket of steaming water. We had talked about one of the laisies that work here doing my shirts, but never to the lodge management to my knowledge. But a lot of messages I give to Steven mysteriously find their way back to me with some concrete answer, so I thought maybe such was the case. But it wasn’t this time. With hand gestures I clarified the water was for me, and he used the French word that sounded like laundre. So I said, “Mercie beau coup,” and washed all my clothes including the dress shirts. I let them drip dry in
the shower area for an hour, then hung them on the door lintel in front of a glass window, just in case the sun would come out. They may need a press job, but we’ll see.

This morning as I was looking for some article, I opened the duffle, and discovered that although I had nearly emptied the top tier, the bag was remarkably heavy. Then I remembered the false bottom. Unzipping this, I discovered most of the stuff I had publically declared stolen, were safe with me after all. I felt immediate chagrin for making inaccurate statements that were not intentional deceptions, but were now, in the light of new evidence, essentially untrue. I am still short a six-pack of toilet tissue in which I hid the five inch ceramic knife. And I believe that shirt is gone, but I may not have brought it after all. Certainly, that bar of laundry soap is gone, so maybe it was a woman who pilfered the missing stuff. And just to add to the craziness, I had left two pair of socks that had been worn, to be cleaned, but before the evening meeting, I did something that Judy will cringe at me admitting in public, (there were mitigating circumstances such as shortness of time, and me not knowing exactly where my clean socks were) but the fact remains, I picked one of the two pair of preworn socks and wore that pair for a few more hours that evening. But this AM, I simply cannot find the other dirty pair I left behind. And I have looked for those socks for over 30 minutes. The only thing I have not done is peel off all the blankets down to the sheet on the bed to see if they somehow got caught between the bed clothes.

A word about that rental house we eat in. It has a small sink in the kitchen for hand washing, but there is a large sink out back, and underneath the widely overhanging eaves is the place for cooking. This all makes sense as it keeps the odors of food and the heat of preparation out of the living quarters. The food is then carried into a dining area that has a sideboard and a table to seat six. But on a day like yesterday and today, a little smelly heat would have kept those Africans from shivering underneath their coats just a little bit. Someone else got nosy and asked how much the rental was for two weeks, and the answer was 250,000 brf or 500,000 brf for a month. That comes out to roughly $150 for two weeks and $300 a month. But by renting, the mission saves hotel bills for one couple, and gets to provide home cooked meals instead of the high priced hotel meals, so it works out.

Anticipating a bit of warmer weather, I decided to keep the suit coats dry and braved the rain in just my shirt sleeves. I never shivered once.

2:00 PM Stop.

9:00 PM Resume- Had navy beans, with rice and left over potatoes mixed in, and the eggplant with gound peanut gravy to top the rice for lunch. Supper after tonight’s meeting consisted of amaranth soup (its like ground up spinach with added flavors), and spirilini with onion, carrot, and beet sauce mixed with chunks of seasoned extra firm fried tofu. Fresh sweet ripe chunks of pineapple rounded out the fare.

I heard the good news that of the large crowd that came forward for prayer, the night previously, ten had registered to be baptized. And after tonight’s call regarding committing to prepare for the soon return of Jesus, the count had risen to eleven. There are still maybe 50 who are not responding, maybe more than that in the dark. So I am working to keep that committed number growing. But the brethren are pleased with the responses. They realize this is a comparatively hard place to work due to it being a smaller community (I think that the 300,000 number I got off the web is for the entire Muramvya township, not the town by that name). At the beginning of the meeting there was only 18 members in this district church, so the work has been hard, and they thought by bringing in a speaker from America they could arouse curiosity and enlarge the harvest. I know my presence has encouraged them, and the fact that they could get a bit of an equipment upgrade also sealed the deal. But this is really all about results now. And I am pleading before God and the people so that we can still end up with closer to fifty decisions than fifteen. People make decisions differently, some will not commit until the next to the last meeting. And so we keep working and trusting God to move the soul.

And just as I had a moment during the altar call last night, tonight’s moment came shortly after it was over. I rubbed my chilled hands together for the first time, to warm them. That is as close to a shiver as I’ve come. Then, I looked up to see the march of the Milky Way across the sky’s meridian through a clear tropic sky, allowing a star show that I had not yet seen. All the clouds were gone. I could see clearly now from here in Muramvya to eternity and the road that travels there.

So, apparently, can Steven. He is already setting concrete preparations to extend an invitation through the mission for me to preach a campaign next July in Bujumbura. I told him, I will be praying over the details, but I am open to the idea. Warm tropic nights spent preaching have a certain cache to the very idea. And at the evening’s end, you get to say softly, almost reverently, “Bonswa, amahoro ya Kristo.”
Day Eight: In Africa’s Embrace

Last night, there came another moment of clarity long before the benediction, in fact, it came as we were setting up. I had been puzzled as to why the mics seemed to die after only 30 minutes with a new battery. That moment of clarity came when Steven opened one up to inspect the batteries. Ha also, had been perplexed. There is a swing gate of restraining plastic over the battery box. The PA crew had not inspected, and did not want ot break anything, so they assumed that the narrow slot was where the battery went. But a AA battery would not fit, so they slipped a AAA battery into that crevice. It is a wonder we had any sound. Once I jammed a AA battery in, they no longer were afraid of breaking the new tool. And we had much better success with the wireless mic system last evening. We also double folded the poly tarp so that we got an opaque screen to shoot the light at instead of one that allowed the sun to compete with the projector until it went down, only from the opposite side.

Let’s lay the sock mystery to rest, once and for all. When you lay black socks on top of a black suitcase, do not expect to see them soon. Only when you decide to move the suitcase does their presence get noticed. The lost is found. All of it... except that which was stolen.

This, the eighth day here, was the first day one could call sunny. The day began clear and warmer. I took my laundered shirts that had been drip drying for over 24 hours, but were damp, and hung them off the metal patio rail in the morning sun for just about 30 minutes. They felt dry at the end when I had to bring them in because I was leaving for Bujumbura- again.

At breakfast, I shared an idea that I believe came from the Holy Spirit. (Well, it was a flash of inspiration, and it was focused on building up the Lord’s work.) Due to any one of a number of factors, maybe the cold being the most significant one, attendance had been slipping over the previous two nights. So I proposed handing out a card, and marking it with a unique color pattern each night. After a set number of nights, the attendees would earn their own free Bible. This had previously been mentioned, but the brethren were really thinking of only giving a Bible to those getting baptized, and we had 400 of them. So why not see if people would respond with the idea of a Bible just for attending and have posters along the road where people walked past.

The brethren gave the idea an African tweek, but I let the adjustment pass, as who knows, maybe their option would work better in this setting than mine. But, in any event, everyone who heard “my” shared plan was in favor of it. So we were off to Bujumbura to get a new car battery, take the new computer for evangelism to Steven’s uncle Michael to load Office Suite in French, and purchase supplies to advertise the Free Bible Plan’s details.

We had a good breakfast of potatoes and onions, avocados, porridge, and hot milk. I had hot water with honey. Having a doctor in the house lends itself to areas of conversation that would not be entertained were it not for the mindset of doctors. So we talked about sex, vasectomies and STDs over the table. A few details got everyone laughing, perhaps a bit self-consciously, but not embarassingly so.

So all were in a jovial mood setting off for the ride down the mountain. The driver slowed whenever he saw me getting ready to take a photo. About halfway down the mountain, just past a village called Mubimbi, the police at a check station waved us to the side of the road. Seems this time, we had an outdated fire extinguisher on board, and only one of two required safety reflectors to set out in event of an accident or breakdown. This time the bribe required to get us back on the road was only 4,000 bfs, or about $ 2.65 US. Never the less, these additional items were unbudgeted expenses, and the brethren had no money to get these things. Presently, Steven tactfully told me the story of Mary the mother of Jesus asking for Jesus to supply the wine the wedding party needed. Then he asked if I could work a miracle and find wine, as they only had water left. Knowing I was being asked for financial assistance, I secretly was thankful I had been prudent and not turned over all the money I intended to give the brethren. I knew there would be unexpected expenses, so I had been silent about anything specifically other than funds to complete getting the computer for evangelism up and running. I asked, “So how many bfs would it take to find the necessary wine?” And was told 130,000 bfs, or about $ 78 dollars. Knowing that I needed about 90 dollars to finish getting the computer ready for operation, I told them it could be arranged, but we would need to visit the money store. The money store is one place they are always
willing to drive me to. There must be 20 in town, but I believe the one they frequent is managed by an SDA laymember.

About 2:15 PM, I successfully got a call through to Judy. She had been at work since 7 AM. I told her that I now know what a pretty woman feels like in America as she walks down a street full of men. Even in khakis and a dark blue silk shirt, I stand out here. I think of how easily it would be to live here, provided we chose to live simply, but in the end the cultural divide is one that would not fade even in a twenty year stay.

11:30 PM, am dozing off, so will finish this when I wake.

We arrive back in Muramvya uneventfully just as the 4:00 PM Health talk is due to start. Steven misses lunch as he interprets the program. By 5:00, I am back having done a body wash with the spigot of the shower about 42” tall. The water is cold, so I did not put the tall shower on, choosing to wet only small portions of my body at a time.

I pray that I will be able to prepare the slides in time as the venue. and although I get done editing just a couple of minutes before I am to preach, I do get done in time. God answers prayer.

The brethren desire that I advertise the attendance plan for the Bibles, but then decide to do it themselves. But I speak to it as well, bring out a different perspective. And I announce up coming topics for the first time.

The sermon is titled: “God’s Forever in One Day.” This is a divine paradox. A day is a segment of time, and forever is unlimited time. So how can one put unlimited time in one day of time? The answer is that God put the timeless essence of His own holiness into this segment of time. So the Sabbath is a day unlike any other. By communing with God on the Sabbath we get to soak in His holiness, and this is His plan to sanctify our whole lives through Sabbath keeping. We did another appeal for those who would commit to keeping a Bible Sabbath sometime in the future. I believe only our previous eleven came forward originally, but then I asked for those who already keep the Sabbath to come forward to testify, knowing that there are many Seventh-day Church of God attendees. And several more came to join me in front of the seating area, but closer to the audience than the dias. Pastor Steven spoke to me with a tone of awe in his voice. “You have preached that message with more power than I have ever seen. You even opened up the meaning of the Sabbath to me in a way I have never before appreciated it.”

But I couldn’t shake the fact that less than one fourth of the congregation came forward at the end. I wanted to connect with all of them in some way. So, after I quickly put the computer in my bag, I asked Steven to announce those who wanted to greet me to meet me in front of the seats. As I approached, I met a sea of dark faces lit up with wide white smiles. The first few put out their hands, but after the first of them insisted on an embrace, hugs became the only accepted greeting. It did not matter, man, woman, or little child. Everyone wanted a hug, and several delayed so that a friend could take a picture of them wrapped arm in arm with this pastor from America. I intended to greet everyone who wanted, but as I reviewed the press of some who came back for a second hug, and those on the fringe were no closer to their greeting, I closed it off with a promise we would do this again tomorrow night. Hopefully, the more timid will get their chance, then. As I was greeting these precious people, their hygiene habits and limited access to showers, soaps, and the like was all too apparent. But, the eagerness with which they offered themselves to me is something I will never forget. I thought of how the Bible speaks of the throngs that pressed in on Jesus, and how He always took time for the children. So when the little ones who were there looked hopefully up to me, I stooped down and hugged them close and told them Jesus loves them very much. Lost as I was in the arms of Africa, my lungs prayed for the clear air of the night, but through the musky closeness of the moment, somehow I sensed I breathed in the very breath of life.

Day Nine: I Buy a Motorcycle for Evangelism

Day nine dawned clear and mild. But I got a wake up call that carried distressing news. The rental house that serves our meals has no water supply. This was evident the preceding night as I washed my hands after the embrace of scores of Africans. I wished to thoroughly wash up after the contact with so many individuals of unknown health. So upon entering the house for dining, I went straight to the washroom to scrub my hands with well lathered soaping. I go the soap, but when I tried to get water to
make lather, there was none. I found a few drops to get a good lather, but then nothing more to rinse with. So in desperation, I opened the shower spigot and a few trickles of water came out of the shower head, enough to almost rinse with. I wiped my hands on my pants, and said a prayer. This would have to do.

So it was now morning, and still no fix to the water problem. Understandable. There is no 24 hour rotor rooter service here in Muramvya. We would eat in the hotel restaurant. I ordered fried potatoes and an onion omelet. Soon I was joined by Dr. Rosero and his wife, Leila. Leila ordered food, but sliced two oranges on a plate for all four of us, now that Steven arrived, to eat. Waiting for my meal to arrive, I surfed the web a bit, and checked e-mails. The I edited out typos from what I had keyed in the night before on the daily log.

Talk turned to piki pikis, the African term for small motorcycles. Steven has been praying for transportation so he can better serve his 12 churches. A few years ago, some Korean SDAs come to bring mission aid, and gave money for motorcycles. But in those days, the worker’s salaries were only equivalent to US 20 dollars a month. None could afford to run one. So they sold them and purchased bicycles. However, Steven had purchased a used bike a few years previously, so the brethren said he was too rich to get a new bike, and his old one is now worn out. Steven has been praying for a piki piki. He needs transportation to reach his mountain churches where public transport is very expensive or non-existent.

Dr. Rosero piped in that he had a piki piki he had purchased before moving to Bujumbura with the intent to ride it. But when he saw how they drove in the city, he decided a piki piki wasn’t for him after all. So after a total of 65 km, he parked it on his back patio under the porch overhang. He has been trying to sell it for 2 months to raise money to give to the new SDA hospital being constructed in Bujumbura. The bike when new, with accessories was about $ 1850 US dollars. He is asking $1100, but the buyer will need to pay $ 65 sales tax, and $ 400 in duty fees to register it. So, it will take about $ 1600 to put Steven on that piki piki. I told Dr. Rosero I would get him 1,600 dollars to be donated to the hospital, if he would see that Steven gets the virtually new piki piki for evangelism with the understanding that the extra money would be used to convert to bfs to pay tax and duty fees. The doctor gets his piki piki sold; the hospital gets 1100 dollars donation for the building fund, and Steven gets a piki piki for evangelism.

I ventured out in faith that others would want to assist the work in Burundi by giving to build an Adventist hospital there. It will be 5 stories and 132 beds when completed. Dr. Rosero will sacrifice the value of that item he owns, and Pastor Eric Steven Nsengiyumva gets to work far more effectively for his scattered flock of 600 members in 12 churches. So with a gentlemen’s agreement, I bought a motorcycle today.

This afternoon’s lunch and post-meeting supper were prepared with transported in water, and our late supper was eaten by LED penlight lumination due to a power outage in the neighborhood. Since we were running the generator for adequate power to the projector, the supplemental lighting went off, but not the picture on the screen. Steven was amazed at the “electricity” I delivered to present the topic of the change of the Sabbath. I gave credit to the Holy Spirit. And even quiet Andre had a kind word for the good work I was doing. We are now up to 13 registrations for baptism.

But a young man not yet included, is a gym coach for the primary and junior high school He has heard Pastor Steven on the radio, and wanted to meet him in person. Steven shared a couple fo books, one about the true Sabbath, the other, the Great Controversy with him. We shared a prayer together. His name is Leonar, French for Leonard. He is bright, crisply dressed and the father of one son. You would recognize and affirm his potential.

After the call tonight to walk in the Sabbath truth, a very tall young man, perhaps 6’4,” a smart professional in IT and computer support, said he was inside his house, and heard the preaching from there first and wanted a better vantage, so he joined the attendant crowd on Tuesday for his first meeting in the audience. He confessed to not being a Seventh-day Adventist. He wants the slides to review them to know better the truth, and has a computer. I told him that if he comes every night to the end of the meetings, I would not disappoint him. I asked if he believed Jesus is coming soon, and he said, “Yes.” So I gave him a quick grip to his arm and then said, “You know, you already are the Adventist part, you are just not a baptized member yet.” He promised to be at every evening remaining.

This is a different meeting, and even the brethren are noting it’s uniqueness. Firstly, almost no children are there to raise a hue and cry. Everyone is quietly attentive. The majority of the crowd consists of single, or at least young, men and a fair number of teen women. The number committed for baptism has risen to 13, and we see new faces each night, so we are hopeful to end with over double what we now have registered.
Tomorrow will be a big day. I will need to prepare four sermons: Friday evening, Sabbath early, Sabbath Divine Service, and Sabbath evening. Tomorrow's log may be measurably shorter. Pray for our team. And you can spread the word about the fundraising project. I knew I did not have the means to do this alone. But faith compelled me to risk this venture for the gospel's sake. I know that my fellow believers will not ignore this chance to be a part of the Great Commission.

Day Ten: Preparation Day

I wake up at 5:30 after six hours of sleep, and decide that isn't enough. So I snuggle into the covers and fall asleep albeit lightly in dream sleep for another two hours. This time I'm refreshed enough to brave the tepid water of the shower. Toward the end of it, I feel it grow warm, so I linger a minute or two.

I have laundry so I fill the 5-gallon plastic pail with almost hot water and add in some laundry powder. I wash whites first, followed by a crew shirt, then a blue shirt, last I put in dark socks and black shorts. The last bath comes out dark gray. I suspect a bleach additive in the laundry soap, but my dress white shirt has no ring around the collar. That may have been due to the 5 minutes of scrubbing with my toothbrush with a combo of hydrogen peroxide and whitening toothpaste before I soaked it in the laundry pail. In any event, the wrinkle free shirt dried to perfection. And so did most of the others.

Today's breakfast was fried white sweet potatoes, brown beans, avocado, bread, with a wedge of mango and a slice of pineapple. A cup of porridge sweetened with honey finished off the “big” meal of the day. (Actually, they are all about the same size, but the target is to eat the most at breakfast.) Lunch at two consisted of bananas and carrots, peas, and beet red wine rice with golden gooseberries and a green guava that also was not ripened. That guava was the first thing offered me in ten days that I could not eat. It had a thick tough green rind, and once beneath that a slightly orange middle that was dry and seedy in texture, but the prevailing taste sensation was the sour associated with green or unripened fruit. I have avoided milk but feel that should come under a different category as milk is available everywhere.

I began the day thinking I would have to do four sermon preps to cover the Sabbath hours, but Andre thought that three sermons on Sabbath would be too many so I will preach just twice on Saturday. I called Judy, but ran out of minutes about 1 minute into the call. So, Steven took my 5000 bf (about $3 dollars) and walked about 70 meters to a little kiosk right by the Hotel Sign. He was back with water and minutes for my phone in about 5 minutes flat. There is a scratch off code that one must put into the phone and then register the minutes and the screen tells you how much time you have paid for. The number of minutes depends whether it is local, or somewhere in Burundi, or somewhere seriously far, like Michigan, USA. But it is far cheaper to call from Burundi than for the US to call into Burundi. I think the US foreign rates come to about 55 cents a minute. But Burundi may be about a fifth that much.

We had a downpour again at meeting time, and ended up moving the podium to the lee side of the dias to keep the electrical equipment dry. It did not last long and the meeting went off without a technical glitch, once we paused to keep the computer and wiring safe. Five more came forward at the end to affirm their agreement with Bible teaching on what happens at death and their hope in the resurrection of the just.

The tall young man who expressed interest in the slides was there tonight. And I got to meet Daniel, the young man who will host me the week after the meetings are done. I am looking forward to that final week for the change of pace that will bring, even though there are no plans to travel beyond Burundi. I will get to see different parts of this charming, if poverty ridden, nation. And . . . it looks like I will preach that last Sabbath at Steven's evangelistic series in the city of Gihosha. Seems like he wants to hear me preach “Like Blood for Paint, Like Beer for Water,” one more time. Sabbath blessings to all.

Day Eleven: A Fine Day For A Miracle
I awoke by seven, and felt refreshed. I had turned in for sleep early, knowing that the Sabbath places extra physical demands on the body for a preacher. I was grateful Andre insisted on only two sermons from me this day. Not so much for the fact that he gave, that three was too many, but that should I be asked to preach three times, I would come up short of prepared sermons. That would necessitate me coming up with one or possibly two more before I left. I really did not relish that task. Even if I would not have to create slides for the sermon, it would simply be extra stress that I didn’t need.

Steven checks every so often to measure my progress in Kirundi. “Have you memorized the words of the theme song,” he queries. “Yes, I respond, “but all the words are in English.”

I know what he meant, but I can read Kirundi phonetically quite well, even if I do not know what I am reading. Although a few key words are close enough to English for me to infer the word Jesus, or God. But he loves to hear me sing in Kirundi the theme song, “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross.”

Conspiratorily, he whispered to me, “Is it OK for me to show Magifique (his wife) the picture of the piki piki I am getting?”

I asked, “Have you told her about it?”

“Yes,” he admitted.

“What would be the point in not showing her the picture?” I teased, “Just because we men know it is porn for gearheads. are you afraid she will lust for it, too?”

He laughed, “She already is very happy to anticipate riding on it with me.”

For you, dear reader, I want you to try to picture thin 6’ tall Steven in front, with his wife, Magnifique, about 5’6” and all of 130 Kg (286 lb) impossibly squeezed onto the rear seat in front of the short sissy bar backrest. and all of their combined 440 lbs or so putting along on a 125cc piki piki. But such lack of ergonomic proportions are the norm here where human powered bikes are the servant of humanity for everything from hauling up to 500 lbs or more of freight plus a rider, to conveying a dozen 12’ 2X10s over incredibly long distances.

I dressed quickly, so I would have time to fire off Friday’s log before Sabbath School and church.

It had rained during the night, so the air was crisply cool and damp, but the sky, though still cloudy overhead, was clear of the accumulated smoke of charcoal fires. I could see into the distance through the clarity all the way to the horizon. Now, as I am keyboarding with about an hour before I leave for the preaching site, I do so with the accompanied of the percussion of rain on the tin roof overhead. I pray that tonight’s meeting will not be threatened by rain. Could this be a day for yet another miracle?

While waiting for our turn to preach and interpret, Steven asked to see my computer as this day’s sermon is not one he remembered studying ahead of time. It is one I created from scratch, and I think in all of our busyness, it never got transferred to the stick drive with most of the others. So I lent it to him, and whispered the main points I intended to make as he scrolled through the slides with their commentary in English. We knew we were using battery life, but planned to plug in as usual to get a brighter picture and also, rest confident that battery life would not be a problem.

Listening to the choir sing, I dwelt upon the clarity and gravity of their message. The rhythm had a characteristic African bounce, and nearly all of the choir programs contained at least one song that offered dramatic opportunity for gestures and dance. And several of their songs, were songs right out of scripture, including one from Revelation 13! The “stands” were almost full of people, with only a few chairs vacant toward the back in a couple of sections. Over 250 people had assembled. And the energy was electric. Several 12” speakers placed in various directions, including three 16” horn type speakers mounted 15’ up a pole have that effect. The sound travels for about 1 km in every direction.

When my turn to speak arrived, I plugged in carefully, and thought I saw the connectivity LED glow, indicating the computer was being charged. I opened the computer display only as I started preaching, and entered in to the topic of the morning, “God’s Mystic Key to Life.” a sermon that I added, since discovering the series I was preaching had no sermon on sanctification, or how to remain in a Christian experience and grow in grace. There were 5 key points, but at the end of point 3, a warning display popped up saying I was running on reserve battery power. Steven and I did a quick check and determined that no power was coming from the 220 V plug beside the front of the dias.

I asked for the generator to be started so we could switch to auxiliary power, as it seemed that the utility power was off.

But I said, I would preach as long as I could before the screen went blank. It took another twenty minutes or so to complete the sermon. At no time did the power cord glow light come on, nor did at any time the screen go blank. Usually the screen will go blank about 8 minutes after the warning. I knew I was witnessing a small but profound miracle. God was taking a turn running my computer. (I plugged it in
about three hours ago, and it took a full 3 hours to fully charge the computer. So tonight should offer no problem.)

But during the twenty minutes that the computer did not shut down toward the end of the sermon, I made an appeal for those who had never given over their life fully to God to do so, and between 15 and 20 came forward. It was the largest answer to an altar call since a very general one at the very first. This one carried great weight, and I rejoiced to see men and women, and teens all come forward. But the first one of all, was a teen young man. Steven said, “I felt the electricity once again as you preached.”

I have learned afterward, that several of the attendees on Sabbath live too far away to attend week nights but they come Friday night and stay all night so they can attend Sabbath morning and most of the day. We have several who have committed for baptism that are in this category. I think it will be up to the district pastor to determine who is ready for baptism next Sabbath.

Our Sabbath meals have been very simple. Aside from hot water, or hot porridge, no cooking has been done. For lunch we shared herb flavored pita bread, a salad of shredded cabbage seasoned with lemon juice, and tomato, sweet onion, cucumber, avocado, and grated carrots. And a Sabbath treat, no doubt, was a plastic cup of strawberry yogurt. A small packet of roasted shelled peanuts capped off the menu. I know they are giving me an honor by letting (making) me go first, but I recognize that others follow, and the cooks prepare with a “just enough” mentality. So I try to guess how many will be following before I take my portion at the head of the line. Sometimes that portion is 1/8, but today on Sabbath it was 1/12. And I know I took less than many other men, and the women get what is left. But aside from my portion being somewhat smaller than theirs, everyone seems content with what they end up with. If they arrive late, and there is no more prepared food, the cook will open a fresh loaf of bread and hand out 5 slices of plain bread for that person’s share. Americans do not know just how rich others view them to be. Even over something as simple as what’s for supper.

9:45 PM Speaking of supper, now that the meeting is over, I can share what we had for supper. We had rice and a huge blob of wheat mixed with water. I do not know if it is bulghar wheat or not, but it has a raw taste to me. But they all love this stuff. I take a polite slice of say 2 oz. while they load up a chunk of perhaps 8 oz or more. But I focused on the tofu mock chicken in an onion and tomato broth, and the little white beans about as long as a navy bean, but only half as fat. These I ladle over my rice and have rice and beans for the first time since arriving. I have had green peas and rice, but not rice and beans. This was a really enjoyable meal.

I met Daniel, the ADRA worker who will be my guide and host following the campaign’s end. He has the cutest little daughter Danielle. I am looking forward to our time together.

After lunch, I worked on the daily log and then rested for about an hour. And then boarded our private taxi service promptly at 5:30 PM. I find that this whole team strives to be punctual. to begin and end each part of the day’s schedule on time. If we did not, we would wear out. So promptly at 6:06 PM we started setting up the projector and readying for the theme song at 6:10. By 6:15 I am preaching in the gathering dusk. The air is cool, but not cold as a few nights ago. Perhaps it is about 67 degrees, but little wind. The rain stopped shortly after 5 PM. and the skies are clearing. A thin slice of a moon appears shortly before setting over the western horizon. I preach on baptism, and make my call. And maybe one more new individual responds. I will know how many for sure we have committed for baptism in a day or two.

Today, at lunch, I sensed I was being tested by Andre, the evangelism director. He said that I should let them do all the baptisms. And I responded that I was here to be of help in any way, but I felt that they should be baptized by their local pastor so they could bond with him. As he was not present (I am aware that while on this trip I am privileged to sit in the company of eagles.) there was an immediate denial. No, he isn’t ordained yet. So I let that go. But Steven spoke up, as though he had not heard the original comment addressed to me. “Sir,” he said as he always does when addressing me, “I think you should be baptizing the converts.” Not wanting to be in the middle of a testosterone check, I simply said, “well, I was always open to saying yes, if someone asked to be baptized by me, but I was here to preach. And that while I was the “face” of the advertising, Steven was the true star, for he was the voice they all could understand.

After the appeal, at which maybe one new person got added to the baptismal registration list, I took time again to greet the audience. I think this is high entertainment for most of them. They get to practice their little bit of English, show themselves to be open to strangers, and at the same time, garner a few strokes of attention that are hungered for. More than one reached out to take my hand three or more times to receive a verbal greeting or blessing.
And this time two individuals separated themselves from the rest to ask for personal time with me. One was a concerned Adventist with a burden for unentered areas, or where there was just a few members, and wanted to find a way to get evangelism into these smaller areas. He was looking for money from wherever it could be found, but I shared with him that there are literally thousands of situations worldwide such as he described, and that was a symptom of a rapidly growing church. --That I would give an ear to his request, but to trust God for a way for the gospel to grow where he had a burden.

The second individual was a young woman in her twenties. She had been married a little over two years, and asked me to pray for her that she might conceive and bear a child. She had not yet seen a doctor, and maybe that would be a financial hardship. But I told her that doctors might be able to assist her in her quest, but I agreed to pray for her, and did so. I told her of the morning miracle, and said, “Who knows, maybe God has another miracle in store to share with us all today.”

Day Twelve: Consumer Reports

Now that I have worn all four of my dress shirts and cycled them through the laundry, I thought some might be interested in the professors versus the performers.

GRADE

**Poplin** 65% polyester, 35% cotton. no-name from Jos. A. Banks web
Remarks: I like the shade of light blue, a bit bluer than my others but when drip dried on a hanger, it looks like it needs pressing not the no wrinkle as it was advertised.

**Lorenzo Oumo** 98% cotton, 2% lycra
B+
Remarks: Not the “Perfect White Shirt” as advertised. I like the shade of blue but not the absence of a vest pocket. I also did not like the amount of wrinkles left after drip drying on a hanger

**Chaps** 100% cotton madras plaid
B+
Remarks, not a dress shirt, but a surprising performer when clipped to a grid to dry. Only mini wrinkles, entirely appropriate for a casual cotton shirt

**Crofts & Barrow** No-iron cotton
A-
Remarks: A fine lined vertical patterned weave that camouflages small wrinkles

**Jamaica Jaxx**, 100% Silk casual square bottom shirt
A-
Remarks: Could use a fabric softener with the hard water here. The shirt starts out stiff after drying, but will no doubt wear OK.

**Overton** 100% Wrinkle Free Cotton, bought at Macy’s dress white
Remarks: The most expensive of all of the shirts, but you do get what you pay for. Virtually wrinkle free after drip drying on a
It is amazing how well the Crofts and Barrow shirt stacks up to the much newer Overton. I believe I paid about half as much for it at either Costco or Sam’s Club. I rate it as a Best Buy. Judy had asked about irons. They have them, they use them, and they are 220 V models. And I do not have access to one here at the hotel.

Gasp! Underwear: Both silk boxers, and the new recommendation Exofficio brand (I got from world traveler Ted Struntz) in underwear have performed flawlessly. The man-made fabric is high tech and dries quickly, and either shorts or t-shirts wick odors and moisture away from the body. Whenever I got a whiff of BO, I sniffed myself and ALWAYS the source was somewhere else nearby. The stuff is not cheap, up to $30 an item for shirts or shorts, (I did not pay near that much) but it is worth it. I just didn’t have to bring 4 sets, 3 would have been more than sufficient. Likewise, my 5 pair of socks is two more than would have been necessary, except I wanted three different colors.

And that set of zippered clothes bags for suitcase organization have really performed flawlessly in keeping my seven ties from the wrong kind of folds and wrinkles.

On a more spiritual note, the latest count of those cleared to be baptized is 27. And we are working to have that number increase in the next 5 days. I believe Thursday will be the cut off day for baptism this coming Sabbath. Those not yet cleared by then, will be held and scheduled for a baptism on a date in the not too distant future. Andre left this morning to scout out supplies to build a baptistry. He has done this project before, so I am not worried he will succeed. As to filling it, I hope to be a witness, as I hear they do it with carried in Jerry cans of water.

Breakfast this morning consisted of carrots cooked with bananas, Whole wheat bread, and sliced avacados instead of butter, and semi- sweet doughy twists fried as a form of a doughnut. No complaints here about the menu. But, the water that was on briefly yesterday, was back off this AM. What gives with this problem?

I had a nice talk with Daniel my ADRA worker guide for the week after meetings’ end. He will be taking me across the border into Rwanda to Kigali. Then we will return for me to preach Sabbath AM at the Evangelistic Campaign opening for Steven at Gihousha. His cute little daughter is afraid of me. She cries when forced to be within ten feet. Now i know I’m not the best looking person, but for her it is the white skin that frightens her. Or maybe it is those scary pale blue eyes.

I spent most of the day with Steven. During that time, I downloaded quite a few files to his thumb drive that he seemed to find indispensable to his ministry. He particularly likes anything from the Wedgwood Trio, and the updated classical music by the Paul Muriat Orchestra. His wife, here for Sabbath, went back to Bujumbura and spent today getting church reports of stewardship for her husbands’s twelve churches.

When Steven was ill, the time I spoke of in a former log, a certain SDA member, a retired minister I believe, advanced him the money necessary for his hospital bill. But then he said that Steven was to translate several books such as SDA Elder’s Manual, and SDA Minister’s Manual that would get a commission from the GC for doing this for the world church. As that money would come in, Staven could repay this benefactor the amount advanced him. His translation of the Minister’s Manual is due by the end of this week. And Steven has just 8 chapters to go to finish, so he did two today, and is doing one tonight after the meeting before turning in. He expects to get four more done tomorrow, and finish the last three on Tuesday and be done three days early. I could tell Steven had not spent quite enough time with the outline for tonight, as he stumbled out of the gate for the first couple of slides, but picked up his rythm and finished strongly.

The plugin circuit for the computer at the campaign site has not been fixed, but since I had that orange 25’ power cord along, we could reach to where there was a 220V outlet near where the projector was mounted under a lean-to arrangement that kept the rain off the expensive gear. And rain it did. First,
it rained from about four to five PM; then again it started up as we were arriving at 5:40 at the campaign site 2 km away from the hotel.

Steven successfully got a video shot of me singing with the choir, only they were in the rain, and I had an assistant make sure I was under an umbrella the whole time. Oh, and the choir was doing an African sacred dance. It was telling the story of Jesus calling the disciples to be fishers of men. I did so well, I was invited to be in the center, but I didn’t want to stretch my luck. So I tactfully declined (chickened out). If I like you really well, I may let you see the video that was shot. After all, pastors aren’t supposed to know how to dance.

After the rain quit it was measurably colder. It was a damp chill bourne on the night winds that sucked all of the body heat off the core to be lost in the misty darkness. This was the first time I was truly cold. My nose started running, and my hands felt chilled holding the mic in one hand and the clicker for the slide advance in the other. I was doing a controlled shiver as the mic danced in front of my mouth as I finished the evening program on the 2300 Days. It was miserably cold and drizzling. So I went in front of the seating area and had them respond to the call by standing up and raising their hand to say to God, “I want Jesus to represent me when My name comes up in the Judgment, I had planned to renew the regular alter call tomorrow night when it hopefully will be a bit warmer and dryer. But after I got done, Pastor Claude made another appeal for those who desired to register for baptism. I did not look back to see if anyone moved in response. I was too cold, and was busy putting the computer in the bag for travel. There were no jokes about seeing a walrus shiver tonight.

I just remembered a song by the Wedgwood Trio, “Tonight My Soul Has Caught A New Fire.” Sounds like just the song to listen to as I snuggle beneath my blanket seeking warmth. See e-e ya-ya t-t-t-tomor- t-rr-r-row.

Day Thirteen: A Morning for the Birds

Only birders can identify with this. I confess to have become somewhat casual about my life list. I have visited too many zoos and aviaries. Is it valid to claim a scarlet macaw on one’s life list when it is in captivity? What about a secretary bird? Or a golden pheasant? Having seen so many species in captivity, it lends a bit of ennui to the scrupulous keeping a life list of every species seen and identified. But there is a thrill to see certain birds in the wild for the first time, even after seeing them in captivity.

Yesterday, I strolled around a bit and took pictures of birds without the benefit of a telephoto lens. They look about as big as an ant on the sidewalk. No amount of computer zoom effects will bring them into crisp focus at a viewable size. Nevertheless, I wanted to identify these specimens. They probably are common, but it took a lot of travel to put myself where I could see them go about their daily lives.

So I tried to do a computer search on east African birds. And after some browsing, I discovered a web site that offered hope. However, the birds are not arranged phylogenetically, but alphabetically. So there are hundreds of species I had to view to discover the few that I can be certain I observed. I spent about two hours on this project, and was happy to discover at the end of the list the African Pied Wagtail that saw flitting against my window and successfully catching a white moth for breakfast. And easier match was the Sooty Chat, a catbird sized fellow that has a black suit with white epulets on the shoulder of the wing. (Chat comes wa-a-ay before Wagtail. The most impressive little fellow is the Red-cheeked Cordon-Bleu. Some of them do not have a prominent red cheek, that may be a breeding lumage marker that doesn’t last. In any event, mine had a bright pale blue chest with a mouse brown back. And no red cheeks. There are plenty of pics that show this absence, so I am confident of a positive ID. The crow like birds have an official name: the White Collared Raven. And the kite is as I thought, a Black Kite. The doves I have spott4ed turn out to be Red Eyed Doves, and there is a grayish brown bird with no other
identifying features other than having a sparrow shaped beak. On the way from the airport, hundreds of Cattle Egrets could be seen in the fields. But they are common in many places.

I have been in Burundi for two weeks, have travelled back and forth to Bujumbura five times, and have seen exactly two dogs, and one cat. I think that speaks to the poverty of people that they cannot afford sentimental pets. Cows and goats, on the other hand, are seen grazing on public area grass. And chickens on the way to someone’s dinner hang passively in clumps from the dark fists of vendors.

This morning there was a symptom of the stress the cooks have been under preparing meals without electricity or running water. Breakfast was late. Not just ten minutes or so, but a full hour late. So after about fifteen minutes waiting for our ride, Steven and I walked the 2 km to the dining house. We simply strolled down main street avoiding loaded bicycles, ladies on their way to market with baskets on their head, and a lone crazy woman shouting at Steven accusations implying we owed a debt and thus needed to give her money.

As we reached the public athletic field where our campaign has permission to set up our facilities, there is a speed bump in disrepair necessitating an even slower negotiating than usual. Standing there is always one or more provincial policemen. This morning a pleasant tall young man dressed in characteristic blue approached us. After he greeted us cordially, he asked if it were possible that he get a Bible. He had been given a yellow book on the True Bible Sabbath, and had been reading it, he said. But, there were reference after reference to Bible verses, and He wished to confirm the texts, by actually reading the Bible verse for himself. I got his name, Lieven Nkumzimana, and promised to get him a Bible personally. Maybe when I deliver it, I can get a pic to share. What an earnest young man!

Today is also the day the baptistry is being built. As with many things African, an apt description of design would include the word: rustic. The carpenter used what I call the eye square, not a metal tool used in America to assure that joints are square, and saw cuts are perpendicular. The hollow form to be filled looks spacious for one pastor and one candidate, but I am informed that baptisms will be done in tandem, with a pastor facing outward at either side, and the lowered bodies falling in close quarters like scissor blades going in opposite directions. I commented that I had never done a baptism in a sardine can before. Or perhaps I viewed the set-up wrongly, the pastors standing essentially side to side in opposite directions with the candidates being lowered just off the outer walls. We’ll see. The latter makes more sense. This works, except for a big person, when it is advisable to step to the right as they fall for better leverage getting them back to the vertical.

It rained in the afternoon, and then stopped by 5:00 PM. There is an afternoon meeting, but the rain wasn’t hard enough to discourage attendance. We had a good crowd on hand by 5:30 when we arrived. By 6:09 we were singing the theme song, and off to an on time start. Somewhere in the middle of the slides, I needed to adjust the viewers’ presentation to allow us to see the final four lines of script. It adjusted and allowed us to see the bottom lines, but then froze the screen, and I could not unfreeze it. So I just started telling what was on the slides they would be missing, knowing I could not remember all of the slide. While I was preaching at the side of the lectern, Steven was fiddling with his keyboard and got it to unfreeze. It was a matter of seconds and we were back on track, almost as if it had not happened. I got to give the ramp up verses to the appeal just as planned, and we had another 5 or 6 new respondents to add to our baptismal list that is now over 30.

Time to sign off for another day. Praying for all of you, even as I am praying for the folks here.

Day Fourteen: The Lord’s Army

As this morning is cold and rainy, I am spending time indoors for awhile attempting to build up body core heat. I have switched from my optimistic Keen sandals worn barefoot with short sleeves into an extra undershirt and long sleeved shirt. Then I added socks and my waterproof oxford Keens for good measure. I have slipped on my navy wool blazer and already feel a bit warmer. Not warm, yet, but warmer.
For breakfast, I welcomed that thin hot gruel they call porridge with two teaspoons of sugar. Hey, I need the added calories to keep warm. That was matched with steamed finger-sized white sweet potatoes, slices of a huge avocado, and a half an ear of sweet corn. A word about their idea of sweet corn. It obviously is a real treat to living here. And Andre bragged that this little corn was sweeter than the big corn grown in America. Immediately, I flashed back to memories of working summers at Shenandoah Valley Academy. One day, the farm boys walked in with a bushel or so of field corn picked in the milk stage. We steamed it and added butter and salt. Though a bit starchy, it was semi-tender and eminently edible. They repeated their offering two days later, and in just those two days, the corn had turned tough and a lot of ears remained only partially eaten after the meal.

This corn reminded me of that earlier experience. It looked like sweet corn, but was almost as tough as if it had been parched. It’s primary texture was leathery, and chewy that eventually yielded to persistent mastication. I took a bite or two, then responded to Andre, “You are absolutely right, this is smaller and sweeter than our field corn, but we have developed a special kind of corn just for humans to eat fresh, and we call it sweet corn, because it is even sweeter than this.” (I did not speak disparagingly over this obvious luxury to them. They were so happy to get some.) I kept thinking of my personal favorite stand for sweet corn called Shultz’s Farm Market and the tender, crisp, sweet kernels and long full ears available from there. It would have been like describing heaven to earthlings. There are no words to aptly indicate the vast difference of experience. So I said nothing, and chewed slowly, with a faint smile, as if enjoying my corn more than I could ever describe.

After spending time here in the Lord’s Army, I thought you might enjoy some fallable perceptions. At meal time, the stratification of the church culture becomes apparent. I as guest have an exclusive, if temporary status. I must eat first. I must sit at the best spot. I must ride in the front seat. And it is a severe violation of protocol for me to be the first out the door to open the closed gate when three horn blasts fail to get a lacky to open the gate promptly. I’ve been told that such behavior is not right for me to do. And I respond with a laugh, “What about King David who said, ‘I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my Lord, than to dwell in tents of wickedness?’” And, I said, I came over here to be a helper in any way I can! But they do frown on me violating their unsoken protocol. So, I have “learned” to sit and wait for someone deemed worthy of such a task.

Steven has entrusted me with some of his personal insights. That the eagles, or the generals, or the Mission Office administrators, are adept at pursuing power of office, and engage in great expenditures of energy to stay in office. Steven is apolitical by nature, but greatly gifted. And he told me that the fifty something year old mission President is an Alpha male. He is connected, but also accomplished to the point that he was voted into an administrative post without ever serving as a district pastor. This at time reveals itself to be his Achilles heel. Some of the pastors do not trust him, because they sense he really cannot identify with what they go through as a pastor. And in that they have a point. This man is a gracious man, a godly man, and had the good taste to literally fall in love with one of the ties I had shared. So he is a man of eminently good taste. But he may miss this Sabbath’s baptism for a surprising, if forgiveable reason. His wife is pregnant and is due to deliver their seventh child.

Pastor Jean Claude is the perfectly adaptive number two at the office. One gets the impression that while Lamec is the leader, Claude is the day to day administrator who sees that all the details of the vision get carried out. He carreis a big load of meeting expectations from his superior and seeing that the team under him sense that they are being cared for. And his wife is publically silent for the most part, but I catch her quietly talking to him, and realize that she too is a force to be reckoned with. She is a very good cook, and I am trusting in her habits of sanitation and proper food prep techniques for my health. For the first 14 days she has performed superbly, coping with lack of running water, and lack of electricity with aplomb. All of the food has been prepared over a pot filled with charcoal beneath the pot filled with food. Most of it is steamed or boiled, but a few items have been fried.

Pastor Andre, has a large sturdy body type. He is used to having his say largely unchallenged. His wife is quiet and petite, his exact opposite. But she has a sweet voice that carries when she sings in the choir. And if his hystrionic temperament is a bit too grand, on occasion, hers is one of constant, quiet, modest, charm. There is no question of their devotion to the Lord and to each other.
On the Sabbath, Pathfinder clubs come and provide color in their dress uniforms and their quasi military demonstrations of marching stiffly and standing at attention on either side of the dias until the sermon is finished.

This effort has had numerous foot soldiers sharing advertising one page announcements, and giving away little yellow books about the Bible Sabbath. It seems that the event was well organized and has quite a high visibility due to the preparaion and the location. out of doors in the public recreation area for this part of town.

But I am really impressed with the multi-church effort to see this campaign be successful. At least six different choirs from as many different churches have been bussed in to bring music features. The longer “concerts” are scheduled for Sabbaths, but there is a choir event of usually three numbers every night. It doesn’t matter that they sing the same numbers for two nights in succesion. Even the toddlers present begin swaying and dancing to the music well before the words are sung. But the words are stunningly powerful testimonies to the struggle between good and evil and the necessity to choose to be on the Lord’s side. They sing of God to remove all fear so that they can be a witness to His truth in this age. They sing of the call of Ezekiel to be a prophet, and then say that we are the ones to declare God to our age just as Ezekiel was called to witness to his people. And they sing of the General Conference intitiative for a global harvest, and the need to be a participant in that harvest.

And then there is the room behind the dias. An unimposing silver tarp-covered lean-to with a flap serving as the door. One could say this is the command post for the entire meetings, on site. True, we meet in there every Sabbath to organize and communicate the order of service. But while we are singing and preaching, there is always a team of at least three, usually five, prayer warriors who kneel on a bamboo matt with their shoes off beseeching the Lord for victory. A lay member Deborah, known for her power in prayer, has been invited to assist the whole meeting long. Formerly, she had been a polygamist’s wife, but when she heard the gospel, she wanted nothing more to do with a false form of marriage. She even changed her name from Alice to her new identity. Another prayer warrior is a retired minister who donates his time through the entire meeting series.

This army really works, and it really prays. and while there are occasional points to be made to improve a detail, there is a noticable absence of anything that smacks of being critical, or negative of one another’s efforts.

I am getting used to my own high level of visibility. However, sitting on the patio underneath a Heiniken beer green umbrella shielded table to keep out of the rain, I was just a bit startled to be addressed by a respectful slim young African man. “Good morning, man of God,” he addressed me in impeccable English. This is probably an African form of respect given to any clergy, but it being the first time I have ever been so addressed, it was a moment that honored me and humbled me simultaneously. It is a title to be lived up to.

A high ranking female officer in the National Police Force (the office for the district is directly opposite the recreational field where our meetings are held) has heard one or more meetings and has been very favorably impressed with the messages she has heard. Tomorrow morning at 10 AM the school coach Leonard, we’ve had contact with, is having a private appointment with Pastor Steven to review what he has learned and have questions answered.

We traveled east about 2 km to a street just opposite the local hospital and turned down the red gravel lane. after making a sharp left, and running along a street for about one block parallel to the side of the steep hill, we stopped and got out. From there we walked down a rather steep incline that was eroded with a runoff ditch snaking down the middle for another block. Here on the right, is a three year old structure that is the newly built Adventist church in Muramvya. Money is still coming in for the building, and a wet cement dressing to finish the foundation greeted us, along with the men doing the work. They do not keep benches in the building, as they only have wooden doors at present, and need to add metal doors that will be tamper proof to keep people from stealing their benches.
The building looks comfortable for about 120-160 people, but Burundians are smaller and are used to crowding a bit. The Mission Secretary informed me the church was designed to seat 300. We are hoping that the 18 members that rattle around in this empty area will be joined by up to triple their number.

Around 5:30 PM, just as we were set to travel to the campaign area, a thunder storm broke overhead and it rained hard for an hour. About 15 minutes before the rain let up, the brethren called the meeting a rain out. The dias was slick with wet floor, and all of the area for running electrical cords for power and for the video feed was red mud and pools of the same color water. The hundred or so sturdy souls who were waiting hopefully for a program were all standing on the seats of the resin chairs because the entire seating area was a watershed and filled with cold water. Steven and I were driven back to Baze Lodge where we passed the next 90 minutes talking and reading. We were a bit let down we could not get in a sermon. But conjectured we could work a double feature in for Wednesday evening.

As we gathered for supper at 8:00 PM, we were of muted optimism. We are praying that this rainout will be the only one, as we are almost out of nights for presentations. But we received good news! That even on a day with no altar call, people came by earlier for the Family Life presentation that ended as the storm arrived. Several of them registered for baptism. So as it stands tonight, 29 have already been cleared for baptism, and a total of 45 have registered to be baptized. We were praising the Lord and have two more nights to add to this number. We are praying and hoping for over 60 to register. Some of them will have to be baptized the following Sabbath, as the late registrants will not be ready for this Sabbath's baptism. End for the day.

Day Fifteen: And To Them in Prison

We had to accept the fact of the rain out, but that lent extra pressure on today's full agenda, especially as the afternoon came, and it rained again. but the skies lifted and we started out meeting at 4:00 PM on time.

But the mood at breakfast was lifted somewhat by late arriving news. Pastor Daniel had gone to the local prison the day before yesterday, and the news got relayed that through his visit there, twenty-three prisoners signed a commitment to be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist church. People can end up in prison for any number of difficulties with the law, and there were already fifteen Adventist members in prison. But it was an encouraging sign that although we hadn't added any to our list the evening before, that a member of our team had experienced dramatic success.

Steven and I waited this AM to no avail for Leonard, but he showed up this afternoon with an explanation that his wife was sick and he was tending the baby on her behalf. He and Steven talked for about a half an hour and Steven explained that having just gotten his Bible, he still wanted to clarify a few things, as he still had questions. Steven and I prayed with him and he left just before we went to lunch. At lunch we had more news: Daniel had gone back in yesterday to complete his round of the prison. This time twenty-seven more inmates signed to register their desire to be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist church. That makes 50 prisoners waiting for baptism.

Of our forty-five who registered, sixteen desire more time to study through the doctrines. And twenty-nine are ready for baptism. But among those twenty-nine, twelve of them insist on being baptized in a stream. Since this is rainy season, the banks are muddy, and the streams are laden with silt and flow brown. We ended up discussing this “problem” for about twenty minutes. We do not have transportation for everyone to attend a remote spot for baptism. so we hope most will allow the baptism we have constructed to do the job.
I preached back to back on the identity of Babylon, and then the Mark of the Beast. I had two calls, the first one was short, because I knew I would make a longer one after the second meeting. After the first meeting, we had the Bible give-away event. The person receiving the Bible was to present their attendance card showing several nights attendance with their name on it. Most complied with the plan, but a dozen or so tried to get a Bible without having the required card. We may help them on Friday night, but for tonight, only those who had a card could get a Bible, unless you showed up in a police uniform, than you got a Bible without the card. The National Police office is directly across the street from our speakers, so several officers have been listening regularly, including one high ranking one who went to his pastor to get answers about the Bible Sabbath. He got lied to, and so he said he intended to keep the Bible Sabbath and has joined a baptismal class.

The distribution of the Bibles was not without a hitch or two. It seems that the brethren failed to count how many cards had been given out. So the appropriate number of Bibles was not set out, ready for distribution. I was elected to be the hand of distribution, but I had two helpers collecting the card in exchange for a Bible. What started orderly enough with six lines forming, evolved into a press to jump line, and get a Bible before they ran out. Three times we had to stop distribution and get the crowd to back up so we could have space to move around, and have them wait for us to come to them. Stevn said, regarding the Bible distribution, that he had never seen anything like it before. But it was rewarding to see such evident hunger for God’s word. These people had sat through several cold evening meetings to be eligible for a copy. And the night they were delivered, they were overcome with desire for their copy. Without a car, they had little hope of getting a Bible unless someone like us brought copies of the Bible to them.

I got in late from the meetings due to the Bible give away. It was almost 10:00 PM, at about 10:15 it started raining lightly. Twenty minutes later, it has turned into a serious downpour. What with all the water from the rain, it is ironic, that today for most of the day, my room had no water at the tap. I told hotel management before noon, and they were aware of the problem, but it was mid-afternoon before the issue was solved. Anxious that it would not come back on on time, I walked up to the level where Steven has his room, and he let me use his sink to get a shave.

Both of my calls were well peopled, but only the pastor in charge of followup knows which of the respondents are new, and which are already committed for baptism. I’ll find out soon enough. But Steven thinks he sees new faces. But you know what they say about Anglos trying to remember the unique features of a dark face! At least I can plead that the calls were in the dark and I am doing well to detect a man from a woman coming in answer to the call.

When I got to my room, I was very cool. But am warming up to the heat off my laptop. And that heat is just enough comfort to have me growing very sleepy. I am fully adapted to this new time zone. It is 10:45 PM and that is just 4:45 PM EDT, but I am ready to end this very busy day that saw me preach from 4:00 PM to 5:45 PM and again at 6:45 to 8:45 PM.

My heart is praising God for those who have made decisions for baptism, but I am haunted by those who have not responded. Is there something I could say, or could have said to alter the present outcomes? So I pray that God will make His grace strong through my weakness. For me, at least, this is living life on the edge. And there is nothing boring about it.

Day Sixteen: A Sermon in a Thunderstorm

Thursday morning dawned cool and gray. It had rained all night, and the clouds were not in a hurry to lift and separate. I pondered doing laundry and decided to wait until after breakfast. Meanwhile, I opened my Bible and re-read how the Holy Spirit gets received. Jesus first breathed on His disciples, but there is no mention of the disciples repeating the process. What we do find is that they preached repentance and baptism as the prerequisites to receiving the Holy Spirit. Then when that had been done,
they engaged the fellowship of the mystery of the Gospel by the power of touch— they laid hands on the recipients in a structured, ceremonially way so that the transmission is from one who has the Holy Spirit to another who has yet to benefit from the Holy Spirit’s indwelling power. A final method of reception of the Holy Spirit is through the touch of anointing oil and intercessory prayer. This latter method is preferred when the divine agency is required for healing.

I wanted to have my theology correct when I preach on the Holy Spirit Friday night. I want to offer the genuine Pentecostal doctrine to combat the counterfeit.

While here I have eaten some form of bananas on average twice a day. There are at least four different types of bananas. Green ones that are boiled and served with carrots and beets, or with carrots and peas; there are the plantain banana that are served baked or fried; then there are big fat semi-dry—semi-sweet bananas similar to our dwarf cavendish; and lastly there are the petite finger length stubby sweet bananas that win the fresh eating flavor contest. I know I have eaten more bananas in the past two weeks than in the past two years at home. I can take about three whole cooked bananas of about four to five inches long, but that is about half what the men pile on their plate.

Their pinaapples and avacados more than rival anyting we get at the supermarket, but their lemons, mangos, watermelons, and peanuts are no competition to the offerings we are used to. I don’t share this with them, because what they have is all they have and they really enjoy their fruits.

I fired off a few e-mails this morning, and then took a break to do laundry. I waited several minutes, something over five, for the water to warm up. It finally did, and I was able to do a warm water wash with a tepid water rinse. The weather looked gloomy and I knew it was not a good drying day. But if tomorrow is the same, then at least after Sabbath, when I pack to leave Sunday AM, I will be packing dry things by then.

Seems long stay guests such as myself, seem to get weekly sheets replaced and the floor wet mopped. As there is no carpet except a small foot rug by the bed side, this keep everything sanitary.

I was scheduled to sign Bibles for the recipients of last night starting at 4 PM. the sky looked progressively threatening, so about 3:30 PM I took all the clothes strung out in their search of a solar dryer, back inside for safe keeping. The driver almost made it before the rain hit. We drove in the rain to the campaign grounds. I walked thorugh a light drizzle around to the back while someone was preaching at the dias. About 4:10, the heavens opened and it poured in earnest. I sat in the back under the double shelter of a leaky tarp and a shaky umbrella. As the rain poured down, run off spouts dropping gallons of water showed up in a dozen or more places. One enterprising young man tried with marginal success at catching the run off in a jerry can to fill the baptistry with the rain water. Soon the seating area was puddling up with water. In one corner where two dozen people sat in chairs getting ready for baptism on Sabbath the water flow puddled underfoot about two inches deep were they seemingly ignored their soaked shoes. This was not a warm rain, it was a chilling event.

Sitting at a table beneath my doubtful shelter, I began to sign Bibles with the Kirundi phrase: Soma Imigani 3:5,6. that translates to: Read Proverbs 3:5,6. Then I signed my name. I was very grateful for my waterproof Keen oxfords. Not dressy, but comfy dry, and in that rain, dressy was out of place anyway.

The speaker finished at 5 PM, but there was still a heavy downpour raging. We lost a few minutes deciding what to do. But eventually, we decided that the people were still arriving in the rain, so we began preaching without the pictures due to the amount of ground water built up and the risk of water damage to the projector. We began by 5:30 PM and finished in a raging thunderstorm that had nearby purple lightning flashes lighting up the otherwise dark night every few seconds. No other light illuminated us. We saw the script on the computer screen that performed flawlessly. And we speed preached the hour and a half sermon in seventy-minutes, complete with a remote decison appeal. Since it was pouring so heavily, I asked to participant SDA ministers to stand. Then I asked those who wished to join the true remnant
church (many were already standing due to the wet weather) to stand and raise their hands and keep them up until a pastor could get their name and register them.

There were just three little fluorescent tubes lighting the entire seating area. So all I could see through the pouring rain were dim silhouettes. I found out later that two National Police Officers made their decision to become Adventists in that darkness. I think there were others, but we have about 6 or 7 officers that have been very interested in the meetings. So this was the buzz around the evening meal. We will know more tomorrow about the number of decisions made during that thunderstorm, “remote” call that kept all of us out of the rain. But the latest numbers, as they do keep growing, show 53 inmates requesting baptism, and almost that number from our “tent” effort. It is not far fetched to pray that over one hundred souls will be baptized on Sabbath immediately after the Divine service. What makes this all the more impressive, is that this field was considered a very difficult area to work. Some predicted less than ten baptisms for all of the effort. But that was not looking at what the Holy Spirit can do. However, a recent effort by another evangelist just a few km away up here in the mountains netted only five baptisms, and the evangelist was heart broken. So we are praising God. However- the brethren are expecting a big finale tomorrow night . . . including a long altar call of fifteen to thirty minutes. . . . pray for ME!

Day Seventeen: Islam and a Viral Attack

I spent a noisy night struggling to sleep midst the roar of the rain on the metal roof above my bed. It began in earnest about 4:30 PM yesterday afternoon and continued non-stop through about 4:00 PM today, virtually 24 hours of rain. After 4 PM, the weather has been a light mist to a drizzle until just about 8:00 PM when it ebbed to a stop.

I spent the day fasting in preparation for the final appeal tonight, on Friday evening. But holding a hot mug of steaming water with a bit of honey, as I slowly sipped it, was priceless. The clothes that I wore last night to preach in are still wet. I am resigned to leave this place soggy.

At breakfast the good news came that in prison, a young Muslim has been respectfully attentive during Bible studies and has accepted the truth of the Bible Sabbath. It remains to be seen if he has advanced to be ready for tomorrow’s baptism. They had to dig a hole in the ground, line it with plastic, and fill it with a hose, but I believe that as of tonight, there is a temporary baptistry in the prison yard. I will not be an invitee into that area, and will have to rely on reports of those who are. But it seems that the number of 53 inmates planning for baptism is quite solid. But we will wait for the final tally afterward.

On the flip side of the news, the Audio engineer at our meetings knew that his digital file for sermons was about full, so he went to Bujumbura to download eleven days of health talks and family life talks, and eleven sermons from my own “God’s Door to Your Tomorrow” series at the Mission owned and operated FM station. Seems the staff there are not really computer literate. In any event their computer was stricken with a virus. No sooner had the digital files been transferred, than the virus corrupted them and they were unusable.

This was a stunning blow to the engineer, but he had to relate the sad news. Steven was unconsolable, and he prattled on to the engineer his distres at him not taking the step to back up all his files before dumping them to leave his recorder memory clean for more files. I could not make out the words in Kirundi, but by the gestures, he was drilling the man for such a lapse of common sense. Finally, I spoke up and said, “Steven, let the brother up!” And everyone laughed except Steven. He said he was going to turn the page on the conversation, but he was still exhaling imprecations. So after about thirty seconds, I repeated, “Pastor Steven, let the brother up!” and the laugher was louder this time. Another 30 seconds, and the routine was repeated. Finally Steven wound down and changed the subject.
I told him, “Steven, you are a good melancholic. You have a hard time letting go of things.” And he laughed, “You’re right I am melancholic.” But I said, “that’s why you are so good at getting everything as close to perfect as possible!” So everyone left the moment just a bit happier.

I went, in my private moments to the Gospel of Luke to distill the passage where Jesus called his disciples as a master motivator. Luke 9:23 and onward covers several key motivators for people: romance/adventure, profit, protection, prestige/belonging, and permanence. I wove those keys for decision into a narrative of four people I know whose lives were changed by the decision to follow Jesus all the way. That became my outline for the appeal the brethren wanted to last 30 minutes.

But the secret I had planned with the approval of the brethren here was to offer a mass anointing for the reception and ministry of the Holy Spirit in their life. It was an interesting moment when I explained that anointing was done at the request of someone, and that the first person who had requested it was my friend and interpreter, Steven. I annointed him, and then... nothing. It seemed that the Adventists were in a state of shock. I had been careful to establish this was a true pursuit of pentacostal power rather than a counterfeit. But then, as Doctor Alvin and his wife came up to be annointed, it was like a slow log jam release, as a tide of humanity approached me, offering their foreheads for anointing. all of the conference officers participated. Women joined it, and I believe every child there insisted on being annointed. I annointed then all, explaining this was for naught, if they had not surrendered their lives to Jesus, and forsaken all sin. But the big idea is that through the Holy Spirit we have supernatural power to advance in victory over besetting sin, that we may find healing of damaged emotions, and we can expect to see miracles happen in answer to prayer.

It was only after the anointing, that I began my thirty minute altar call. It may have only been twenty five minutes, but it was not just a one and done appeal. On about my third appeal, a group sitting together, maybe a family, all got up and came to the front. I think this was their first response to an altar call all series. So that was significant. If I am right, then the numbers registered for baptism should be right at, or near 55, with about 34 or so ready for tomorrow’s baptism. If so, then the fruit of this series should surpass 100 new additions to the church. Thankfully, I will not be doing the baptisms. It should prove to be a bone chilling hour and half or so in the water for those so appointed. The weather will again be cloudy, drizzly, and cool with a high near 58 (five-eight) degrees farenheit.. The water, somewhat cooler than that.

This is starting out to be a fine, if busy final Sabbath in Muramvya.

Day Eighteen: A New Church

Fatigue set in last night. Maybe it was the emotional release of successfully making a final appeal that took its toll on my constitution. I fell asleep at 11:30 PM and awoke a bit groggy at 6:15 AM. But I got up, because I knew I needed to trim the slide show down. It had over 150 slides. I needed to get that in the zone of 130. In the end, I started about halfway through, because we decided not to try to teach the dietary laws, and just focus on the grand Door to Tomorrow that God has planned for our future in Heaven and the New Earth. As it was, the public events started at 9 AM and we quit the field at 4:30 PM. In between were an early sermon, followed by the Sabbath School lesson; then the Divine Service when I preached. Immediately after I preached, I was whisked to the prison to try to capture the baptism on film. It was already completed, but they were waiting for me to hand out the Bibles and the hymnals. I just had time to hand out about one third of the total, and then scurried back to try to cover the public baptism event. I had snapped off a few shots of the 31 candidates before heading to the prison. but by the time we got back, all of the men had beeen baptized, but I got nice film for the majority of the women.

This was a high day for all. Within the prison, the 63 who were baptized became the tenth church for the local pastor who had nine previously. We also added 24 to his congregation out of the 31 baptismal participants, and there will be another 15 additional baptisms of folks who needed a bit more
study time. That will take place sometime in September. So the effort's immediate results will be 109 baptized, and a new church planted.

There is nothing that puts a person in demand like success. I have three requests to schedule a return trip to Burundi as an Evangelist. Steven wants me to do a campaign with him next summer. Andre wants me for a bigger venue next time. and Paul wants me to come to the East Burundi field and do a campaign there. Paul is a personal friend of Wilson Nhitinyuka, the leader of the Grand Rapids company that I am assisting. It turns out that Andre is the father of one of the members in Grand Rapids, so I am his daughter’s pastor.

Past the novelty of standing for pics with so many new members who connect with me as their evangelist, I am thankful for the smiles everywhere that I see. I sense that these dear folk have an earnest desire to see Jesus return. They expend both their energies and their scant funds to witness. Every one of the choir members who came in from other cities slept at least one night on the floor of one of the rooms at the local high school in order to bring their testimony in song. Truly the Holy Spirit animates the lives of these people living in a nation of both progress and continual disadvantage. Their little territory has over 69,000 members. Compared to them, Michigan, the cradle of Adventism, has become the mission field!

I could not help but grow emotional at the farewell moments of speechmaking. Ever since I said “Yes” to a call to do service in Africa, I have felt myself riding a current that God was controlling. Tonight I am basking in an emotional eddy. I dislike the parting of the ways, but the pull of home is strong. I have promises yet to keep here in Africa, as I head next to Kigali, Rwanda in part, to deliver some things from America to a family there. Along the way there promises to be adventure of the good kind. And another book of memories to record. Then, back in time to tour parts of Burundi, and then to preach next Sabbath at Eric Steven’s campaign just starting in Gihousa. After that, a slower day in Bujumbura, and arrival at the airport around 12:30 in time for a 3:00 PM flight headed back to the USA on Monday.

What I am thankful for is my American friends who gave so that I could place nearly 280 Bibles in the hands of those who had no Bible. And to also equip a new church with hymnals to sing songs of hope in prison. Eau Claire has made a difference already, and Dowagiac is on board now to also contribute to tangibly make a difference in the ability of the workers here to do evangelism. Before I leave, I will be solidifying a contact who should be able to pave the way for a free dental clinic to take place as an adjunct to the evangelistic campaign.

The lone downer memory I shall take with me, is the sincere young man who wanted after one night, access to my set of slides to discover this truth at a self taught pace. I told him if he would come every night, I would have a set of the pictures and the scripts for him at the end. I last saw him on Wednesday night, the night we handed out Bibles. Thursday night was a miserable night to keep track of anyone, so I looked for him Friday night, but did not see him. Today, I announced I had his materials for him from the front, but no one came to claim the files I had put on a thumb drive I carried as an extra.

It had been so very chilly, not even close to 60 degrees Farenheit, and no heat in any room save the RAV4 we travel back and forth, in, that I decided to double layer. I put on the tighter pants first, then added the roomier pants next. So at least for Friday night and today, I was significantly warmer. Also, just about the time of the baptisms, the clouds parted and we had the hard shadows that a full sun creates for about a half an hour. At nine, we started in a blowing mist that threatened to change to rain, but never did. I know there were very many prayers ascending that today would not be negatively affected by the weather, and thankfully, it was not.

Tomorrow, we shall pack up the big stuff, the huge speakers, and the pulpit, and the like, into a lorry, and hope to be on the road by 10 AM. Due to not knowing where I am staying, the posting of a daily log will still be an objective, but may not be met every day. It has been a blessed Sabbath for me. I trust God has blessed your’s, too. I want to call home, but my pre-paid cell phone is out of minutes. I’ll add more tomorrow.
Day Nineteen: Bujumbura Lights

I got up to the brisk mountain air of Muramvya at about 6:30. Stayed up long enough to take care of all urgencies, then slid back into the fetal envelope of a warm blanket for another thirty minutes.

I knew I had to pack, so I resigned myself to a few minutes of coolness until my body caught up with my mind. I had nearly everything packed before breakfast call. and after breakfast, I had another 20 minutes to complete the task. The large suitcase weighed in at 64 pounds. But I stored 14 pounds of water in it. By next Monday, it will be under fifty pounds with a small tweak here or there.

At breakfast, I said farewell to Pastor Lamec, but we shared most of the day traveling in a caravan to Ndora, the mission’s historic second headquarters, and now a secondary level boarding school for 175 students.

This mountain district of the country is between 40 and 45% of the total population members of the SDA church. I was pointed to churches too numerous to accurately remember, but well over a dozen structures. The largest seats between 4,000 and 5,000 people, and is full on a weekly basis.

This region is home to a National Forest Preserve with virgin timber and expensive, rare hardwoods. It also has the nation’s hydro-electric project with a dam and the ability to generate a large portion of the nation’s electricity. The promise that it would do more is a sore spot of political contention. Bujumbura regularly has only 6-8- hours of electricity daily. I should consider myself lucky as I am keyboarding under a fluorescent light instead of a pitch dark room. I also got to recharge my cell phones battery so I can shoot more pics tomorrow.

We wound around over a thousand curves during our six hours from Muramvya to Cibitoki where the Mission headquarters is located just south of town in the country on a large parcel of land. the headquarters is whistle clean, but spartan furnished. The lobby area has a wooden desk, six resin chairs, and no A/C or even fans. People here get used to the hot and moist air.

The last two hours are almost impossible to describe. The road dissolved into a pock marked series of craters and pools of mud interspersed with just enough macadam to have bicyclists, caars and trucks play chicken with the least damaged lane of travel.

As dusk faded into nightfall, I truly worried for the bicyclists loaded as they were with freight and navigating by braille. As we bounced and jarred along, snaking our way so that at least one side fared better than the other, Steven joked that soon I would see the Bujumbura airport. After twenty minutes, I declared that he was mistaken about the airport's location. And he asked me, “How do you know I’m mistaken?” So I replied, “Well, for one thing, soon was quite awhile ago.” He laughed and said that he was intending to give me hope, like Jesus is coming soon. Then he said, “We should be able to see the lights of Bujumbura by now, unless the power is out. “

In less than two minutes we did see the lights of Bujumbura. Nevertheless as we took short cuts to get to our rendezvous point with Daniel, we travelled down streets lined with lights that were not lit. Others, had no lights except small lights inside their kiosk business stalls.

Safe inside with Daniel, I am greeted with the luxury of leather seats, and a flat screen TV playing prerecorded Rwandan choir music. It also is apparent that air-conditioning is not considered in this part of town, nor, for that matter, even a fan. I brace myself for a hot sticky night, noting the conspicuous absence of a net to sleep under. Daniel reassures me that he has set off a mosquito bomb. But there is a small little refugee that has escaped his calculated wrath. I swat at him until I succeed. This does not bode well . . . . but I shall have to cope.
Today, Monday, I awoke to the sound of mosquitoes zeroing in on my body. So I pulled my head in under the protection of a long sleeved shirt, serving as a shield.

And I awoke to the sound of a man robbed of his senses by liquor, as he shouted into the night at his wife or girlfriend.

And I awoke once again to the sound of mosquitoes humming, so I got up and turned on the light. I saw four of the buggars, and at that hour, I simply fled the room, looking for a room with fewer threats to my health. In the stark light of the florescent bulb, I noticed a small blood trail on my arm. So I had been bitten once. The idea was so unsettling that I thought I would not sleep again. The room I chose was the parlor and all of its lights were on all night. So much for melatonin's healing effects in the darkness.

Besides, it was four AM and a Muslim was crying his passion for Allah and all things noisy through a horn speaker all over the neighborhood, and I happened to be in his neighborhood.

Even that unknown chant, had an effect, and although I could not say I liked it, it eventually had a lullaby effect, if only to escape it. I drifted off, only to hear in the silence, the hum of a mosquito. This would go down as the night of a hundred awakenings. Will the day to come match its drama?

I trusted in Neem oil, supposed to offer mosquito proofing, and it proved fallible. Hopefully, the wild oregano will be more than a match for whatever microbial foes lurk in the dark, or the day. But before I spend another night in this room, I shall insist on a net to sleep under. But in the meanwhile, I will slather on Neem oil and take my Neem capsules and watch my arm for any swelling. It is still possible, that I wasn't bitten after all and just scratched myself in the hystrionics of self-defense in the darkness. My fingernails are not yet fully due to trim, but could use a clipping.

Daniel appears a few minutes before eight AM and tells me to leave large bags and travel light. He neglects to mention we will be on a bus all the way to Kigali. I pack light in two bags for three days. And Daniel travels with just a small brief bag. We leave by taxi at about 9:00 AM and arrive at the bus station by 9:30. Already the bus is 80% full, but Andre has saved us seats mid-bus for the smoothest ride. We wedge in 26 plus passengers plus the driver. “Not far,” Daniel says optimistically. I think he is a sanguine, that or he cannot count. We leave promptly at 10 AM, and arrive downtown Kigali at 5:30 PM.

After just 30 km, at an uphill stop for road repairs, necessitating one lane alternate flow, the bus mysteriously stops. Not a good sign. But the driver hops out, and heads for the exit door directly in front of Andre. He reaches under Andre’s feet and seems to re-attach a separated electrical cable. He goes back and tries to start the engine. A small mechanical grunt, and then nothing. So he returns and directs a bit more energy into his effort, and goes back to try again. This time the diesel fires and we’re off. “It’s your fault!” I kidded Ander, when in fact, it could have been the lady behind him, or the stuff under his seat shifting. In any event, the driver seems to be resigned that this kind of thing happens on this Toyota bus, and said not a word to the passengers. Two and a half hours later, we reach the frontier, or border, if you prefer.

By now, breakfast is beginning to work its methane cooker action in my alimentary canal. And I am seeking a comfort station. We get Rwandan francs, and Daniel pays so I can use the toilet. It turns out to be an open 8” pipe flush to the floor, with two gallon water jugs in lieu of toilet paper. I never was toilet trained for this! So I gulped and thought of the two and a half hours yet to go. I was off by 30 minutes, it was three hours, and that next stop was still ninety minutes from Kigali, and who knows how long after that to a usable restroom? But there was a toilet for free. And an attendant. So I opened the first door, and no toilet paper. I had some with me, but didn’t have the foresight to put it in my day pack. It was
wedged under the last seat locked behind the luggage door. So I asked the attendant. He cheerfully
brought me a roll. No seat, but at least elevated off the ground. I thought to be finished, and looked for a
pull chain inside the rear water storage. No water, no chain, no flush.... no longer my problem!

I was really suffering up until then. But, I resolved to travel hungry on the way home. I discovered
there are worse things than being hungry for a day. It would be another five hours before I had
opportunity to use a real, and sanitary, facility in the SDA Literature Evangelism Seminary in Kigali.

Other than scarce public restrooms kept hygenically, the thing I noted about Rwanda compared
to Burundi, is that the hills are not has high and are more rounded. that lets the Rwandans terrace their
agriculture areas. Also, the red clay of Burundi fades to a yellow clay in Rwanda, and then it turns to
brown sandy soil well before reaching the area of Kigali. But the feature that hit home the hardest, was
the white walled memorials erected in several spots along the the road in memory of the 1994 Genocide
victims. They always came unannounced, and with only a side view, I never got a photo shot off. But the
memorials are etched in my memory forever.

Another memory that I shall remember awhile is an attractive twenty year old female student
taking what appeared to be her first trip out of Burundi by bus to Kigali. She was squeezed into a jum
seat next to mine, and did not have a pen, so lent her mine. She smiled her gratitude. I watched as she
tried to obtain water for her trip, but refused to pay the price asked. I had an extra 1/2 liter bottle and I
offered her that, and she accepted, again with a smile. Andre, and a late boarder, from another town an
hour or so into our journey, were in animated conversation most of the way. He wore a dark brown suit
with a dress shirt with dirty white cuffs. He wore oversize Rayban sunglasses and looked about five years
older than my row mate, named Audry. I watched the man in front of her, surruptitiously hand her his
name and cell phone number on a well folded slip of paper. She smiled back, and then laughed at
relevent moments in the conversation between him and Andre. She knew that Andre was a pastor, and I
think she also knew I was one, too. In any event, she grew very confortable and relaxed and started
humming in a soft soprano what I took to be an African praise ballad tune. She did that over and over for
maybe two hours. When she got to Kigali, she spoke with the young man who showed personal interest
in her. But I had people to meet, too. and quite suddenly she was lost in the sea of humanity at a moving
crossroads. I learned from Andre later that he was married. So much for any happily ever after chance
meeting . . .

Pastor Andrew, the former Rwandan Field President, now serving as a multi-department leader
was our host. He met us at the terminal, paid a 4 franc fine for parking too long waiting for us, and was
excited to see me again after a period of a year when he preached at the African Church in Watervliet
while on a trip to the states.

Kigali is a bit more like San Juan, Puerto Rico than like Bujumbura. There are traffic lights that
work! Even new fangled ones that countdown the seconds for the turn arrow or the straight ahead lane.
While at the stop signal, it too, counts down until green. Nifty! The main boulevards have street lights that
work, too. Downtown where the offices are located was deserted as we got there well after 5:30 PM. But
Andrew wanted to show us the new eight story cream and orange high rise for the Rwandan Conference
Office. Since they serve a field of over 600,000 members, they can justify their downtown Kigali
presence. It is the government that mandated a high rise erected on previously owned church land. Either
build or sell, as the area is zoned for high rise only development. The unfinished office complex is due for
usage by January 2015.

I soon found out where all the pedestrian traffic was. About a mile from downtown, a street
terminal where buses lined up to remote street locations was a crowd of humanity. Several long lines of
tired looking workers were waiting for their next bus, hoping to get on it, rather than the one that would
come next in the cycle. Or, judging from the length of the lines, the third one, rather than the fourth one.

In typical African understatement, he invited us in for a few minutes to meet the family. Then his
gracious wife served us cool passion fruit juice. and as conversation seemed to continue on purpose, we
watched as a full dinner appeared complete with a cassava cake. During and after dinner there were
photo ops and group shots and good spirits all the way around. We are invited back for dinner tomorrow night.

Tomorrow, we are to ride a bus to Gitwe, where the first Rwandan SDA mission is located. It will be lunch time before we return. Then, tomorrow afternoon offers a visit to the local Adventist church before dinner hour.

Seated here in this clean comfortable room, I almost forget what it took to get here. Almost, but not quite, and I am not relishing the return investment to get to Bujumbura. However, sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof. and I haven’t been so much as cool for forty-eight hours. This is the tropics I had anticipated.

The pleasant drone of a 20” floor fan is working its hypnotic magic as the clock marches toward 10:30 PM. I am tired, content, and just a bit wistful for home. There if folks don’t understand me, it will probably be mostly my fault for what gets lost in translation.

PS: When I get home, please don’t buy bananas for me.

Day Twenty-one: Gitwe

Gitwe is the site of the first Adventist work in Rwanda. Beginning in 1919 or 1921, depending on who your source is, the Adventist mission work in Rwanda preceded the work in Burundi by either 5 or 3 years. But in that ninety some years, the work has grown until roughly ten percent of Rwanda’s 12 million citizens are Seventh-day Adventists.

Since 1981, the Adventists have been granted liberty to administer “charter” schools for the public. They get to send their children to these schools, and the public gets great education. The Adventist benefit has been twofold: firstly, the Adventist children are not kept from academic advancement as they were when the Catholics scheduled all of the requisite tests on Saturday, no exceptions; and secondly, the public has really liked Adventist run anything, and that has aided evangelism immensely.

Back when the Adventists first approached the King of Rwanda for a parcel of land, he was opposed to granting them anything, but that would look peevish and prejudiced. So, he ascertained that the hill called Gitwe was a dumping ground for dead bodies wrapped in a cheap woven mat, and left for scavengers. Most of the bones were eaten by wild animals, but the skulls usually showed up on top of the ground. Gitwe means “head,” as in skull bone. The king thought that “gift” would be unappreciated and the Adventists would get insulted and leave, but they neverminded their way into nearly a century of success.

So this site was slated on the agenda as a must visit. I was informed this would be a short trip of only two hours. We left the Guest quarters at 7:30 AM, traveled to the bus depot, and eventually left close to 9 AM. We took a bit over 2 hours getting there, but were due to be picked up at 2 PM. So we were given a tour of the Adventist run Science and Technology Institute adjacent to Gitwe College. This school serves 1300 students, and only about 25 are SDA members. This school teaches medicine, nursing, lab technology, and computer science. They are in the boonies, some ten kilometers off the paved road and nearest large town, but have a fiber optic hook-up for high speed internet access for their professional curricula, and research. Gitwe College itself now serves a high school equivalent school with students aging from 15 to 19 years old. While there, I took a picture of the foundation of that seminal first Adventist church erected in Rowanda. It has since weathered past safe usage, so was torn down a few years ago. Presently, there are three large Adventist congregations in the village of Gitwe.
An added surprise was meeting Doctor Olivier at Gitwe. His mother Charlotte attended Paw Paw Church when I was a pastor there. Olivier was completing his pre-med degree at WMU in Kalamazoo, and also attended a few times. But then he was off to Loma Linda University to study medicine and I lost track of him. He is now a board certified General Surgeon and teaches at the Institute of Science and Technology. Best of all for him, he can live in the house where he grew up. He is home, and has about a 5 minute walk to his office. He and his Aunt insisted on feeding us three guests a lunch, and it was delicious Rwandan cuisine. When our bus delayed returning for us for over an hour past the scheduled pick-up time, Olivier waited and chatted with us the whole time at the bus depot on the corner opposite Gitwe College entrance arch.

Getting that late start back delayed us one hour at the start end, but because it ran into post school traffic, we spent an extra hour getting home. This was due in a large part to the heavy traffic of slow geared lorries that hogged the road and made it impossible to pass them at the same time.

At the bus terminal, Marie, Wilson Nhitinyuka’s sister was waiting for us, as was Pastor Andrew. While Daniel lined up our travel tickets back to Bujumbura, we chatted and took pics. We will have a full road day tomorrow, so I’ll get this day’s log wrapped up.

Again, Pastor Andrew took us home and fed us supper. But even in the city, Pastor Andrew’s home has trouble with water shut offs. They cope, because they have to, but water supply is a huge concern all over Rwanda. and it is a huge adaptation to make for an American. Running water is right up there with the right to vote for us in the USA. Thankfully, our guest quarters have both electricity and running water.

Before I left Gitwe, I showed Doctor Olivier some of my 34 red welts. When I asked of it I looked more like the work of bed bugs or mosquitos, he took the scientific agnostic approach: “Hard to say,” he quipped. But then, he added, “even if it is mosquitos, and even if it leads to malaria, it is a very simple disease to treat. The only ones at risk are the very young, the very poor, and those with compromised immune systems.” When he saw the number of spots, he offered that maybe African mosquitos really liked Neem oil.

As to why I broke into the bottle of charcoal caps? “It’s alimentary, my dear Watson.” Trapped on a bus, I simply cannot afford not to be at peace with my gut instincts.

Day Twenty-two: Doctor Alvin Rosero

I waken at 6 AM; the sun is just slipping above the eastern horizon. And the roar of a gas trimmer greets me as the first sound of the day. Better than a mosquito, but not by too much.

Luke 10:19 keeps running through my mind. And the thought gives some comfort. But as I think of all of the collateral damage inflicted upon Christians throughout the centuries since the cross, I know that the only understanding of that verse that counts is in the soteriological sense of one’s destiny, not one’s earthly life expectancy. But I have done what I came to do. I chose my faith lab and this is it.

And now, with just a few more days of grace, I shall be home. I am an alien and a stranger. I have been treated far above what I deserve. And yet, this morning what I most longed for at the moment, was a draught of cool, clean water, not some tepid stuff the product of reverse osmosis. Plastic clad safe, but still vaguely revolting to drink.

However, as I sit by an opened screened window opposite the sunrise, the cool of the dawn reminds me of the Creator’s original appointment with His creation in Eden. Outside, I see and hear,
even in this city of Kigali, the sights and sounds that remind me of His care and concern for even the smallest detail. A decorative banana that produces no edible fruit is planted in the lawn. It has perhaps, thirty or more majestic leaves of spring green averaging six to seven feet long. The plant stretches nearly twenty feet tall. Birds sing somewhere nearby, and the mood is one of hope in the new day. And I shall hold to that thought as a prayer of thankfulness for forms on my lips.

Once Pastor Andrew arrives, the day takes on his own unique gift of energy, excitement, and a definite plan of action. We first go to an office that appears to me to have been leased, but just yesterday, while we were at Gitwe, the Conference voted to buy this spacious modern building on a scenic boulevard not far from the Union’s high rise office. Next, we journeyed to where a new Science and Technology Campus was under construction in Kigali. Following that, we went to the East African Adventist University and toured the Assembly Hall, and the Central Administration Building. I was impressed with the fine gardening work making this a beauty spot as well as a learning center. Our last visit to church property was to one of seven large churches that seat over two thousand every Sabbath. Jolie met us at the bus station to see us off, send a packet to Wilson through me, and once again express her appreciation for the gifts I relayed to her from family in Michigan.

We took a different route, and a different bus line back to Bujumbura. A bright young Rwandan by the name of Gady, whose father is a Presbyterian minister about an hour out of Kigali, is headed to try to apply to a Burundian school of Medicine, as the Rwandan schools seem too pricy for him to afford. He tells me how his Youth ministry project is seeking to make a difference in the lives of the generation who lost their parents to the genocide of 1994. And he tells me of a two and a half year effort to reach an unentered spot with Presbyterian faith. They finally baptized seventeen, and rejoiced. I told him of our 15 day campaign where we orgaonized and utilized a team of approximately 100 individuals including guest choirs who slept on high school room floors, and baptized 94 with 15 more expected this Sabbath. I hastened to add that we felt the power of the Holy Spirit to give us such success. The Adventist Burundian buzz is that these were miracle meetings, for the astonishing success our team achieved. I longed to explain to him the source of the power of Adventist preaching, but left that for another conversation.

We arrived in Bujumbura at about 5 PM, and cleared customs and then went to Ethiopian Airlines office to get my boarding passes, but it was closed for the day. So we will go again tomorrow.

Doctor Rosero met us at a junction near his home, and we paid the cab driver, and all left for the Rosero’s for dinner. I had told Daniel at least twice earlier, and even asked him if he had called them today. I think it was Andre who spoke with the Doctor, and I fielded a call from his wife. In any event, Daniel seemed not to know of these plans we had since last Sabbath. But we arrived on time at the Roseros for a delicious dinner, American style. She served us scalloped potatoes with just the right amount of thick light brown gravy serving as mortar between the layers of potatoes done to perfection. She also made a veggie roast similar to Judy’s recipe. She left the catsup off, and brought the bottle for an optional topping. She also made a crushed avocado and tomato mild guacamole salad and mixed steamed veggies. For desert, we had sweet, sweet Burundian mangoes and watermelon cubes. But I must say, as dear as all of that food was, the one thing she served that I shall remember with the greatest clarity of all, was the tall pitcher of clear chilled water. I downed a pint before even starting to eat. It was the first chilled drink I have been served since I got off the plane some three weeks ago!

Doctor Alvin insisted on driving us to our home, even though the thought of the dark streets we were navigating gave him the heebeejeebees. So after he surperintended the hanging of my net to sleep under, and lend his personal hammer to get the job done, he asked for the house boy to accompany him the mile or so to the nearest paved street, and he would pay the bike taxi for him to get home.

The day wound down with me regaling my Burundian friends with the pics from my camera since Sabbath. But Andre was equally impressed with the cinematography of my video from my i-phone, and Daniel was deeply interested in the fact that I paid less that $100 for it. But I hastened to add, that came with a two year service contract that exceeded $50 per month. But they were impressed with how slickly they downloaded from my phone into my computer. The lights have clicked off, presumably for the night,
so I am now draining battery instead of charging it. Time to bring this missive to a close. Looks to be Friday before I can send a Sabbath email package. Thinking of all of you who are praying for me.

Yes, I have about 35 bites that are probably mosquito bites. But dear Doctor Alvin laid my anxieties to rest. He said that even if all of them were malaria carrying mosquitoes that bit me, it would take many more than that to have me contract malaria. I could have just hugged him when he told me that. But I didn’t. I just said, “Thanks, that’s a relief to know.”

Day Twenty-three: Makamba

There are many impressions I have of Africa, by now. Even though Burundi is a small country, the people have a big heart. Add in Rwanda, and one gets the sense you can get into the heart of Africa, but parts of you will never leave it. Nevertheless, Africa is a land of coping. One copes with mosquitos, one copes with a corrupt beaurocracy, one copes with part time utilities. When you have water, the lights will be out; when you have lights, the water will be off. One copes with tepid water to drink and unheated water to bathe in. One copes with crowded streets, crowded buses, even crowded churches.

On the way to Makamba, we passed through breathtaking scenery, skirting the edge of high mountain weather makers whose tops are enshrouded by clouds, while all else is under a merciless tropical sun. We passed through vast oil palm plantations, and past a cluster of beets planted five feet from the road in a small rectangular patch in front of an adobe one room house. We drove south along the eastern shore of Lake Tangyanika for nearly an hour watching the fishermen rowing out on the clear blue waters, and others heading in under a small white triangular sail. We passed a pick-up truck load of coffee beans purposely spilled into a pile curbside, and a man pushing a bicycle loaded with seven stems of bananas up a long grade.

After so long by the shore, the road suddenly turned left and we just as suddenly, made another left into an Adventist Clinic parking area. We were the only auto. All patients arrived on foot. This has been subsidized by ADRA by providing the electricity for it for the past three years. I took photos of the hospital area, and the now empty cholera quarentine tents. And I refrained from taking pictures of the nursing mothers who live in a culture where bare breasts in the service of feeding one’s child is accepted.

In fact, as a photojournalist, I have tried to document a representative picture of Burundi, but I have refrained from taking pictures of the beggers, the severely deformed, and the worst of the squalor that comes with poverty. So today I gave myself the assignment of capturing squalor. I forced myself to look at and document the difference between their world and mine. And I realized that our mission at Muramvya, as miraculous in outcome as it was, never touched any of these who are grindingly poor. Except for one or two of the prisoners, who seemed to have but one change of raiment, we were most effective reaching working and middle class Africans. And I was thankful to have witnessed the Adventist clinic in action. But even there, the dress of the women was not the dress of the very poorest I observed.

Before we left Bujumbura, we ate a hot breakfast of rice, beans, greens, avacado, and bananas cooked on charcoal, the lights that went off last night before bedtime still were not on at 8:30 AM. My iPhone is charged due to the USB access to my computer battery, but my computer was nearly out of battery by the time we arrived at Makomba. I was assured there would be electric here, but after about 30 minutes, it, too went off. That thirty minute partial charge would be sufficient for my afternoon sermon, but I left it off until meeting time, and did not get to scan my notes ahead of time. My Burundi phone is dead, but is now recharging. And after meeting’s close, and all the handshaking, I went to wash up, but no water! So I used the bottle of hand sanitizer. That stuff has come in handy more than once! So, for that matter has been the bottle of charcoal caps Judy insisted I bring. As I said, “One copes here.”
About halfway along our journey we stopped at a luxury hotel complex built along the shore of Lake Tanganyika. There are huts built out over the water’s edge so you can hear the waves crash beneath your bed. Or you can rent a room set back just off the water line if you prefer. Cost? About $80 US dollars. In other words, about 10 days pay for an average Burundian. That’s why Daniel said, “This was built for Rwandans!” We drove past the church bordering the lake where Pastor Andre, a few years ago was baptizing several people. Only after the last person was baptized, did a huge hippo appear and as the people exited the area, the beast lay claim to that stretch of beach.

We drove in a rented Toyota Carina, a model a bit sportier than the Corolla, but otherwise quite similar. Windows down, we blasted South over roads that offered remote high speed travel, only to suddenly crumble into a series of potholes that let you play, “Take your pick.” As I was given the preferred seat in front, I got to bake under the sun the whole trip. My freshly cleaned white cotton safari shirt was so soaked through. So upon arrival, I pealed myself out of it, noticing that my sweat picked up wrinkle lines of dirt that had been long embedded in the front car seat.

But arriving shortly after mid-day, as we did, afforded about 45 minutes of power napping in the cool of the breeze through an open window. And then the call for lunch. This time there was ample salad for all who wanted it. For that matter, there was ample everything for all. Shortly after lunch, I put on a dress white shirt and tie to wear under the trusty blue blazer. Yes, slacks were also included.

I started preaching a few minutes after 4 PM to about twenty five people, but by the time I finished there were just about forty five listening in. Some were not SDA members, but my sermon was on the God’s Mystic Secret of Life, a sermon on the Biblical call to a sanctified life. So it was entirely appropriate, even if it was the first Adventist sermon they had heard.

When my eighty minutes were up, Andre stood up and preached his own sermon for close to an hour. Then Daniel made general summary remarks for another twenty minutes, after which the local pastor here stood up and spoke for about ten minutes. When everybody who had a licence to speak had said their peace, I went out on the porch to greet people. Somebody’s brother in Grand Rapids is here, Eric and his wife. I was commissioned to take their pic. As I maneuvered them for the shot, they originally stood reservedly far apart. So I joked, and said, “She IS your wife?” And they giggled. So I told everyone with Daniel’s interpretation, the story of the older married couple coming up behind two young lovers at a stop sign. The girl was scooched all the way next to her boyfriend doing the driving.

“That’s what’s wrong with us,” complained the wife.
“What?” asked the befuddled husband, as this negative observation came out of nowhere.
“Look at the two of them, we used to be close like that!” sniffed the wife.
The longsuffering husband, with both hands on the steering wheel, simply replied, “Dear, I haven’t moved.”

Well, at story’s end, it was silence, except for a teen girl who may have known a little English, and didn’t have to wait for Daniel to interpret. She let out a wild squeal of understanding and raucous laughter. And I capitalized on her response. “She got the joke!” I exclaimed, and suddenly everyone was laughing, if not for my story, her response to it.

It seems that there are certain tensions within the church here at Makomba. Part of our mission here is to seek a path of reconciliation between the parties involved. That meeting is in process right now. My presence will not augment the resolution process in the least, as I am inept at Kirundi, and and someone would have to be distracted to translate, and others might be distracted by the cross talk, so I am absent, and am hearing the ebb and flow of conversation from down a short hall in my person room for th night. Pastor Andre as a Mission Field Departmental Officer will be taking the lead on this one. Will I get to witness another miracle of grace while on this trip?

Day Twenty-four: The Good Road
I woke up greatly refreshed. The air coming in the window all night was in the upper sixties. and sleeping under the mosquito net, I heard nary a warning hum. It was just dawn. And I heard the day sounds around me begin. Someone was using a cell phone in the room next to mine. I struggled to separate myself from the comfort of my blanket and took on the day.

My local cell had shut itself off, and I tried the buttons, but didn't hold the right one down long enough. I thought that my OBAMA phone just figured out I hadn't voted for that president, wasn't his color, and wasn't pro Islam, so it quit on me. My African friends used to these little devices, had it back on in no time. But I was running low on minutes, so I decided to wait to call until I got to add more minutes.

We were invited to a wonderful Christian lady's home nearby for breakfast. She is not yet an SDA, but worships with them in her home town of Bukomba. The familiar hot thermos stood waiting for someone to pour, and Daniel volunteered my to be the first. I think he was surprised that Chai came out instead of milk or water. In any event, he keep filling my glass. But then neither he nor andre took any chai, but asked for hot water. I was the one at a handicap to do any asking, and I was left with the “forbidden” cup. I took a few sips, and then left the majority of it undrunk. We had a wonderful moment of prayer with her before we left. She had asked me to pray God's blessing on her current pregnancy which will bring her nestlings to the count of four.

I had envisioned the source of the Nile in my mind as a natural spring flowing down a hill side. I thought to select a water washed stone to take home from the “Nile”. Turns out it wasn't like that at all. The place we visited was a pyramid erected atop a hogback ridge. The explorer who erected the monument as the source of the Nile had determined that a Continental Divide of sorts was formed on that ridge. Water run off on the south side flowed in a generally easterly direction until it reached the Atlantic Ocean. And water that flowed off that ridge to the north, found its way through one of the tributaries into the Nile, which empties into the Mediterranean. Just down from the summit about two hundred feet was a natural spring that had been augmented by the addition of a flow pipe and the built up channel of a tile lined waterway. Not a single stone insight! But wonderfully clear refreshing water to coolour wrists with. None of us offered to drink the stuff.

The province where this site is located is the province that has been the home province of three consecutive presidents of Burundi in the 1970's and the 1980's. So this area has some of the best roads in the country. Upon entering the province and coming to a crossroad community, one can read its name: Good Road.

Just before arriving at this spot, a hornbill flew up and paced our car for a couple of seconds before it veered off. I need to identify which species this one was. But it has yellow on its beak, and though almost all black, as it flew, red pinion shafts flashed from beneath its wings. Altogether quite a striking bird.

Some of the prettiest country-side lay just west of our visit to the Nile source. We wound through verdent green tea plantations flanked by traditional circular walls of native material. Inside those circles were circular houses, or large windowless huts with tapered grass thatched roofs. This is the traditional Burundian house design. The rectangular adobe block homes and the similar shaped brick homes are of newer design. The older ones have tile roofs, and the newer ones have switched to sheet metal. As small as they are, it seems these homes are primarily for sleeping. Everything else takes place outdoors.

We were unsuccessful in our shopping for a walking stick like the one we purchased previously. So tomorrow's sermon will make use of all of our sanctified imaginations. They saw a white man coming and the prices doubled. A very nice carved walking stick was offered for only 300,000 bf, or about $190! I thought that a bit much for a sermon illustration device. And all of the rest were no taller than a walking cane. I needed something of Moses' rod proportions. However, it did find a Burundi road map. It was a bit pricy, but I was concerned that since Burundi isn't a tourist mecca by any stretch, I may have difficulty getting a map later. So I paid the equivalent of $20 dollars for this rare piece of reference material.
I have just finished supper with Daniel, and have finally caught up with Judy after being out of contact while in Rwanda. Blew through 45 minutes of pre-paid cell contact in no time flat! The lights are on, and the water supply is working, too. Except for the heat, humidity, and hostile mosquitoes, it’s all good! Happy Sabbath everyone!

Day Twenty-five; The Morning Till Evening Sacrifice

I took a cold water shower for the first time here in Burundi yesterday just a few minutes before sundown. I wanted to rinse off diesel vapors and road dust as well as accumulated body toxins pouring out my pores along with body salts and water. For about ten minutes, I was comfortable, but then I had to get dressed.

I looked to today, Sabbath, as the final test. I was to preach again, and this time, not in the cool climate of a mountain city, but in the truly tropocal heat. I was ever so thankful for the covered dias that kept me out of the mid-day sun. I arrived at the campaign site, a bare spot of ground that the little company of SDAs hopes to afford eventually. The cost for the land? $ 21,084 US dollars. They raised about 1% of that in offerings and pledges today. Since they had no budget for evangelism, and they feared that the rains would start, they only scheduled for a one week effort. Steven was up to the task. He had 42 committed for baptism, and today 15 were ready to be baptized. My call netted another 14, but there is a strict limit on youth baptisms to those over 12 years old. So five of my group that responded fit that category. All five were young men, two young women, also came forward, but they had been baptized earlier in the day, and wanted to receive the baptism of the early rain of the Holy Spirit. I was unmindful of the drama that accompanied the fourth young man to come forward. His mother burst into tears, happy ones, that her eldest son decided to become a Christian. Everyone else in her family is Moslem except her, so it was a huge answer to prayer that he stepped forward to declare his life for Christ, to be baptized, and to receive the Holy Spirit of God. It was nice to add to Steven’s good work before the close today.

Everything went off smoohtly, except my designated photographer forgot how to activate the movie button, so the altar call that I had requested be filmed, came in still frame form. But Daniel’s little girl Daniella, who was so afraid of me just two weeks ago, stretched out her arms when I offered to hold her. And she was happy in my arms for over half an hour.

Following meetings’ close, Steven and his wife Magnifique came over with the two drivers, to our rented house for a bit of lunch. White bread, chunks of watermelon and pineapple, and roasted salted peanuts was the fare. I spoke with Steven about the unmentionable topic of the tribal conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi that led to the 1980’s genocide in Burundi, and the 1994 chapter in Rwanda. Part of the SDA success in Rwanda has to do with SDA leadership being the same as the political leadership’s tribal connections. And everything is very political, meaning SDA’s have gotten government breaks that would never happen in the USA for equity reasons. So while we may be thankful for the church’s progress in Rwanda, it has a certain slant to it that has nothing to do with the working of the Holy Spirit. But human nature will color things as God’s blessings, when in fact, an outworking of genetics and of physiogamy lets favors be shown. Before our guests left, we shared a sundown prayer for the Sabbath blessings God gave us all today. And I included the blessed hope of a brighter tomorrow when we shall share Sabbaths together without end.

I have been hydrating with as much warm water as I can stand. But I am feeling better than when I first got home. Still too hot, but at least I can sweat now. Daniel has been entertaining himself accessing facebook and requesting to be friended by myself and mother Judy. I warned him that may take awhile, as Judy is a sometime facebook visitor only.

I’ll put the wraps on this chapter. Burundi will look good in the rear view mirror, but already the bittersweet of parting company with these new friends is playing on my mind as the cost of being reunited with old ones. Part of this is the knowledge that this country, afraid of brain drain, refuses travel visas to
nayone who has less than about $10,000 in a bank account. That narrows the list to a relative few businessmen., even though billboards brag about how free travel is out of Burundi. The public is not pursuaed. When even the Mission President’s ability to attend GC is in jeopardy without some shuffling of funds, you know this is a very restrictive country over its citizens. By contrast Rwanda is an easy country to leave and return. Some of you may actually read this before the close of Sabbath. For you, a Blessed Sabbath and a promise of better ones to come. Ones without a day-long sacrifice . . .

Day Twenty-six: Leviathan

I have given a bit of thought concerning what I would say on my final day’s entry. Obviously, I am living with one eye in a rear view mirror. The other one is focused on what lies ahead.

So to recap the past few weeks, it has been an adventure in faith. It has also been a bit more mundane, too. We humans have trememdous power to adapt to our surroundings. Once adapted, we shrug at others efforts to find a comfort zone similar to our own.

My time in Africa certainly was well spent. And it is easy to say, with the evidence of interpersonal success still playing a swan song, that it all was worth it. One of the rewards of travel is the crucible of change set into each new day, even each hour. What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. And Africa is still isolated by time and distance, and the economics of such a venture, so that they have not tired ot seeing a new face. I have found them to be very hospitable, and willing to share so that you as a guest will be confortable and desire to return.

In a land where luxuries of sense and financial opportunity are scarce, the natural order of things leads to a perpetual reminder of life’s unwritten pecking order. The streets of Bujumbura play out that drama as traffic jostles to the noise of horns sounding warning that “I am coming through.” As guest, my egalitarian idealism at times frustrated my hosts. They took enjoyment in granting me privilege, if only for the few days I was here. And they did not like it that I would so readily stoop to being a gatekeeper, if by that I could keep a horn from honking five or six long blasts waiting for the houseboy, or worker’s wife from having to run to the entry to let a carload of people into the compound.

Several times my hosts have gotten details lost in translation. And good will and common courtesy have dictated that I simply roll with it. When queried about my diet, I could have been a rigid vegetarian. But I had heard that some cultures bring out flesh food as a delicacy for the guest. So, I allowed that I am vegetarian, but if I should be served fish, I would not be offended. and though it has been years since I ate chicken, that I could be served chicken and not be offended. Somehow, that hope to clarify my willingness to fit in was interpreted that I preferred meat in my diet. So I have had to take small portions of fish and chicken this past week as though they were my preferences. Next time, here, should that occur, I shall say, “Just feed me vegetables.” While the mukeke fish has been tasty, the Burundian roosters must have been real mountain bir ds. I can remember chewing on softer, more pliable rubber bands.

My host Daniel, took me to the local zoo. A rather depressing place with one leopard, one monkey, one chimpanzee, one antelope, a house holding about a dozen snake cages, the majority of which were housing poisonous species. THe aquarium was a dimly lit room with just one fish tank of mbuna, or African cichlids. I knew the latin names of almost all of them. and the managerie was completed with six crocodiles of varying sizes. Turns out it was feeding time for leviathan, as a group of US troops off duty were having a tour. To spice it up for them, a keeper had selected a luckless rabbit and gave it to one of the servemices to drop into the largest crocodile’s pit. After a racuous build-up that American zoos suck, and that this is messed-up (language filtered here), and” this is the best 5000 bfs I’ve spent”. they dropped the bunny into the danger zone. Immediately the crocodile became very animated, and made a lunge for his lunch. But bunny woke up to the danger and managed to escape via
a small opening into another pen. I filmed that escape. and heard a softer hearted one of them say, “He’s earned his reprieve.” But stouter hearts prevailed, and after the keeper recaptured the rabbit, another threw the victim into the shallow end of the pool of water. Shocked by the blow of a hard landing, bunny froze and this time was caught in short order. I chose not to film the pre-determined end. The food chain is harsh on those at the bottom. Even Burundian roosters.

And that brings me to a bit of closure. Burundi is a land that is rich enough to keep the poorest alive. But it is a harsh life. and even in Africa, the people here are well down on life’s pecking order. They sense it. And bear with the fact with dignity and grace, rather than bitterness. But I sense a wistfulness creep into their conversations that betray hopes that some benefactor would entrust them with some venture captital to make something of thier lives and allow them to administer a project that would make a difference in their community.

This will be my final day post. I will be at the Bujumbura airport by noon tomorrow. I came because of our war with a red leviathan, the great dragon. While here, I was used as an agent to bring the deliverance of the everlasting gospel to a few dozen. And several hundred fellow SDA Christians joined in celebrating the Blessed Hope of Christ’s soon return. Also, while here, I received a fb message from a relative of mine that I have been praying for. She saw my notice of preaching a sermon entitled, “Who Shakes Their Fist At God?” And she wants to read or hear it, because she feels that is what she had been doing. I am now praying for one one more miracle out of this trip of miracles. I am asking each of you to join me on this one. That out of Africa, can come a salvation opportunity to one of my own “tribe.
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<td>1Peter 5:5</td>
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# Long-Term Church Event Calendar

(This is meant to have all church, school and other events on this calendar. Please email blubbert@sbcglobal.net to put events on this long term calendar.)

## 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 27</td>
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<td>Fellowship Hall Reserved by Darlene Walden</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 7</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Adventurers - Pathfinders – Contact Mary Peters or Rahel Schafer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 9</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
<td>School Board – Contact Betsy Schooler</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 14</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Adventurers - Pathfinders – Contact Mary Peters or Rahel Schafer</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 16</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
<td>Church Board – Dr. Tom Shepherd</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 20</td>
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<td>Christmas Sabbath and Breakfast</td>
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### 2015

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 11</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Adventurers - Pathfinders – Contact Mary Peters or Rahel Schafer</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 16-18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teen Snow Outing</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 25</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Adventurers - Pathfinders – Contact Mary Peters or Rahel Schafer</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 7</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Area Pathfinder Bible Experience</td>
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<td>February 8</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Adventurers - Pathfinders – Contact Mary Peters or Rahel Schafer</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 13-15</td>
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<td>Ice Skating – Contact Rahel Schafer</td>
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<td>February 15</td>
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<td>?? Community Water Safety with Area clubs—Pool rental ?</td>
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<td>February 22</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
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<td>March 7</td>
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<td>Conference Pathfinder Bible Experience – Contact Rahel Schafer</td>
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<td>March 8</td>
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<td>Adventurers - Pathfinders – Contact Mary Peters or Rahel Schafer</td>
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<td>Adventurer Sabbath</td>
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<td>Lake Union Pathfinder Bible Experience – Contact Rahel Schafer</td>
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<td>Pathfinder Adopt-A-Road</td>
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<td>April 17-18</td>
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<td>Adventurers - Pathfinders – Contact Mary Peters or Rahel Schafer</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 15-17</td>
<td>10:00 AM</td>
<td>Pathfinder Meeting – Contact Rahel Schafer</td>
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</tbody>
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### Contacts

Call Rahel Schafer - 269-921-0606 or rschafer@andrews.edu
Call Mary Peters - 269-357-5155 or jojoe29@yahoo.com
Call Pastor Ted Toms - 269-317-2296 or tedtoms@comcast.net
Call Dr. Tom Shepherd - 269-471-3889 or toshephe@gmail.com