

BURUNDI TRIP REPORT – BY NEDD C. LOZANI – MALAWI

PURPOSE

When the Cor Executive members of World Federation met in the USA, in July 2009, they resolved that I visit Burundi, Kenya and Zambia Conferences, to officially welcome them into the World Federation, and convey greetings from the executive members to them.

DURATION

I left Malawi on Monday, August 2nd, arrived in Burundi on Tuesday morning, August 3rd, and returned on Monday morning, August 9th, 2010.

OVERVIEW

The country has a population of about 8,000,000. Burundi is one of the poorest countries in Africa, which has been compounded by civil wars for over 15 years.

The country borders with Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Tanzania.

Church membership is currently at about 3,000. The conference has 38 churches with 13 pastors.

There were two pastors and one lady from Democratic Republic of Congo, who were invited by Burundi the conference, with the intention of meeting me and hear for themselves about Malawi.

The area of operation in Burundi Seventh Day Baptist Conference covers Chibitoki, Bubanza, Bujumbura Mayor, Bujumbura Rural, Kayanza, and Makamba districts.

The roads to some of the places are dirt roads, which require 4 x 4 vehicles. Worse still, some churches are on very high mountains, making it difficult to reach them during the rainy season.

The Burundi SDB Conference was registered with the Burundi Government in 2003.

ACTIVITIES

During my visit in Burundi, I was made to visit 8 churches, namely: Gatakura, Gihanga, Khabuye, Buganda, Bubanza, Mutambo, Gitaza, and Kinamu. I was made to preach at all the churches we visited, including the Sabbath morning services.

In addition to the above, I had a meeting with most of the pastors and Board members of the conference. They were interested to know how the World Federation works with its member conferences.

Although I was ready to teach, their interest was for me to visit as many churches as possible, for me to have an overview of the condition of their churches and preach at their churches. I therefore did what they wanted most.

On Sunday, before I left, I met their Board of Trustees, and some pastors. During our meeting, I gave them an overview of the World Federation, and I emphasized the importance of communication with other conferences, the Missionary Society, and the World Federation Secretariat.



On the left General Secretary, Gilbert Nduwayo, his wife, and myself.



Herewith a photo of some of the pastors and Board Members I met in Burundi.

During the Sabbath, the Bible Study.

They spend most of their time at church singing praise songs, and they do not have time for Sabbath School lessons. When I asked them why they do not have Sabbath School lessons, they told me that they once received the books from USA, but since they were in English, they were unable to translate them into their local language thereby making it even difficult for them to value them. Instead, they have Bible Study, which when I was there, was conducted by the General Secretary himself. To me, the Bible Study turned out to be more of a sermon, than teaching.

I am of the opinion that Sabbath School lessons are very important, because that is where people are able to study the Bible more and understand it more through class discussions and class participation. In so doing, people can understand the Bible better, and get rooted in our faith and beliefs in God.

I thought we should look for ways and means for a break-through on the subject

CHALLENGES

1. The General Secretary has no office to operate from. He is currently operating from a rented house, where he is residing. The conference does not even rent the house for him. He pays rent for the house from his wife's business of buying and selling rice.
2. The computer which was bought by Missionary Society for the General Secretary is not working. He has to use the café to send and receive e-mails.
3. The conference does not have land where they can build their headquarters, yet the government is pushing them to acquire land and build their headquarters with a church, offices, the General Secretary's house, and a school.
4. There are a number of believers who are illiterate. That poses a challenge for them to have a school of their own, to see if they can teach their members to read and write.
5. The General Secretary is not fluent in English. During my visit, they had to hire an outsider to translate when I was preaching. In addition, it was difficult for him to communicate with me fluently. Most of the time he relied on an interpreter. This can pose problems for him if he is to represent their conference in an English speaking country. He therefore needs to improve in his English language.
6. Out of the eight churches I visited, two are renting classrooms from a school, and one church is well built, with iron sheets. The rest are either built of poles, or dried bricks, with insufficient iron sheets. There is therefore a big need for iron sheets for them to roof their churches. Donations for purchase of iron sheets will be highly appreciated.
7. Considering the location of some of their churches, there is a need for them to have a 4 x 4 vehicle, if they are to sustain the churches in those areas.
8. Most of the Pastors require intensive training in leadership, stewardship, and accountability. Another visit to the country in the near future, to cover such areas, including SDB Beliefs would be beneficial to them.
9. The pastors from the Northern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo have a problem communicating with their General Secretary in Lubumbashi (Southern part of DRC). They asked him to send them a copy of their Registration Certificate for their Conference, but he never responded. If the Missionary Society can send me his e-mail address, I may try to push that from here.

Finally, I thank the Lord for looking after me on the trip, and I also thank all of you who made my trip possible financially and your ceaseless prayers.

Thank you for all the effort you put into my trip to Burundi, and all your prayers which made my safe trip possible.

I returned safely on Monday, August 9th, 2010 and I will be compiling a report on the trip shortly, for your attention.

Best regards and God bless.

NEDD



Please find attached herewith two of the photos I took during baptism which took place when I was there.