

## Update from Rwanda, Christmas 2021

Christmas is **coming**. Presents and Parties, Carols and Cards, but whose birthday are we celebrating? It really is coming, on December 25<sup>th</sup> we celebrate the birth of the King of Kings. Happy Birthday Lord Jesus. Born in Bethlehem to live and die for us. A HAPPY CHRISTMAS wish to you at the end of an extraordinary year of the pandemic. HAPPY because Jesus loves you and loves me and wants the very best for us. 'God is working His purpose out as year succeeds to year'. The Church is growing, in spite of persecution in Nigeria and other Muslim countries. Growing in Rwanda, where there is no persecution, and in China where the government does its best to stop it.

In Rwanda they will certainly celebrate Christmas, mostly without presents or parties, but always a church service. Some will walk many miles to get there. Coronavirus has spread through the land, mostly brought in by lorry drivers from neighbouring countries. There have been 99,931 cases with 1,332 deaths and 45,515 discharged from hospital. Sadly, Canon Azaria, one of the first clergy in Cyangugu, was one of the casualties. As of October 26<sup>th</sup> 5,179,627 people have been vaccinated for Covid. The Head of St Matthews School, Benson Muramira, reports that there are now 1,067 students in the two campuses and they had good results in the government exams. With 'income generating guest houses' shut due to the pandemic and churches also shut, it has been really hard for Bishop Francis and his staff to keep all the work going. He took over some of the big projects started by his predecessor Bishop Nathan. Covid has also made fund-raising almost impossible for us here in England, but Jill's elderflower cordial has sold well helped by some very helpful people at St Marys Warbleton, Christ Church Horam, Church of the Ascension Telham and St Marys Battle. We continue to work and pray for the funds to help the Anglican Church with essential building, also helping them with training of pastors, and building houses for them in the parishes. Bishop Nathan was taken to a hospital in San Antonio in USA for an operation on his back. This has been troubling him for years and travelling on the rough roads was agony. He is now back in his diocese of Kigali. I gather the operation was successful.

Here's an encouraging story from Rwanda. In 1995, the Committee of Genocide Survivors in Cyangugu asked me to build them a school for their children under the school age of seven, and to be a Christian school teaching in English when all other schools were still teaching in French. I was preaching in Cheltenham shortly afterwards and mentioned it. The vicar of St Matthews said he would give me the Christmas collections. These came to £13,000. So I used that to build St Matthews Nursery School, using prisoners from the local prison to do the building. The children grew and we went on to build the Primary and then the Secondary. The Mayor of a neighbouring town asked us to bring a branch of St Matthews to her town, Nyamasheke. At the official opening of Nyamasheke St Matthews School, a group of students from the Cyangugu branch came and sang their choice of hymn, "Blessed

assurance Jesus is mine”. A Christian school, teaching in English is what the genocide survivors requested. I hope you can open the attached link and be



encouraged. The school is popular and has grown, needing four more classrooms. The school is open to anyone and there are some Muslim students, whose parents are happy that their children get a good education, even though it’s a Christian school! The four classrooms for Nyamasheke is our current project which our builder John has got on with (attached) but as I write, still needs £30,000 to cover the costs. As usual with builder John, the building of the four

classes and the replacement school in the mountains is finished and the children are in there, trusting that we will send the money as we get it.

God’s blessing.

With our love and Christmas wishes,

Ken & Jill  
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Link to ‘Blessed Assurance’

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OoJGndYBgfZhkc5sCvx8wW3uLZHP-r6h/view?usp=sharing>