

19/11/09

Start of trip to DR Congo.

Aware of how big a thing this trip is. It is good to be doing this though – God is in it. I am trusting the Lord to help me with the challenges ahead. Paul's prayer from Philemon 6 is a good one as we embark on spending time with our Congolese brothers and sisters ***'I pray that your partnership in the faith may be effective in deepening your (and our) understanding of EVERY GOOD thing we share for the sake of Christ.'*** Remember God, relationships, mission/vision and joy.

20/11/09

In Bunia. This is a troubled part of Congo determined to recover and being helped in that process by places like Shalom University which is taking a lead by God's grace to promote reconciliation and practice forgiveness. ***'The son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven'.*** Hebrews 1:3-4.

21/11/09

I have met a special man in Dr Katho today. He is a man committed to the Gospel and to reconciliation, a man who has suffered much, who still sees his country in chaos and yet he is a man of resurrection hope. I thank you Lord for Katho's obedience to your calling and for his visionary leadership. This kind of leadership will bring change to people's hearts and change to his country. Thank you Lord that in the midst of the chaos at Bunia airport Katho, Sarah and Kapucungu stayed with us and served us like Guardian Angels!

22/11/09

Greg Levoy said... 'Jesus promised those who followed him only 3 things: that they would be absurdly happy, entirely fearless and always in trouble!'

24/11/09

In Bukavu. The extraordinary time here continues. We got to the conference yesterday after a VERY EVENTFUL journey. After a good night at Beni we encountered more obstructions at Beni airport where we were asked for money and then our luggage got left behind. We had an 'interesting' flight to Goma, which included us losing our seats near Africa's most active volcano beside Goma! Having waited at Goma airport for 3 hours, miraculously we were ushered through a chaotic crowd in the baggage lounge to a jeep where our luggage was waiting. I did not believe we would see our luggage again – I think we had angelic help.

We arrived in Bukavu yesterday morning after a comfortable ferry trip (encountering some creative attempts at bribes along the way!) at about 10.30am. The conference was opened at midday and we got going in the afternoon. I was aware immediately of the hunger and desperation of the

clergy. Over 80 have managed to get here and some with their wives. The Bishop told us that he had heard that one of his clergy was kidnapped that morning by militiamen. Wonderfully, after many were alerted to pray for him, he was released that evening.

The afternoon session set the scene for the conference. When we called people forward for ministry EVERYONE came. God is at work here but a battle rages. We are seeing the Lord win so many victories as people are praying for us. Last night as we prayed, Simon had a picture of a machete. Today David called forward, through a word of knowledge, anyone who was suffering from a machete wound and 5 people came forward! It's not a word of knowledge I've experienced being given before!

Bukavu is beautiful, but there is so much chaos here as there is throughout DRC. We have no running water and the stories of the struggles of people keep spilling out. Today we received news of 2 children of a pastor here recovering from a traumatic abduction; many people are suffering both from aids and trauma because of rape; and tonight we prayed for a young man (Jeremy) who has lost most of his family (wife, parents, brothers and sisters) in an attack and is bringing up 7 children on his own. **And yet**, in the despair there are seeds of hope! As the conference delegates prayed for each other today heaven came down! 2 Cor 4:7-12 Has been given new meaning for me this week.... **7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.** Thank you Lord for the privilege of being here.

The Holy Spirit in Swahili is – '**Rom Takitifu.**' What a wonderful phrase! It sounds so like the Hebrew word '**Ruach**' the breath of God. The words exude the sense of the presence of God.

26/11/09

Yesterday Simon did the 'How can I be filled with the Spirit?' talk from Alpha. The ministry time was amazing with people rejoicing and crying out to God with all their hearts to be filled with the Spirit. This was led by the Bishop at the top of his voice. I spoke on 'the Lord keep you' and then David addressed anger. A number stood to repent of anger and ask the Lord to fill them with self-control. We will address un-forgiveness this afternoon from Numbers 6. I was sick last night and this morning – I have felt prayed for throughout this time and as I have felt unwell this morning. The prayer support has been phenomenal.

28/11/09

We had a great last day of the conference. God was with me as I preached and felt free to share my heart for the Church as David encouraged me to

listen and share something particular from the Lord. We finished with a prayer tunnel! The four of us created an arch through which all the pastors and their wives passed and then lengthened the arch and prayed for the others as well. This was a very moving 45 minutes especially as we were last to go through and everyone prayed for us. The tunnel eventually snaked prophetically onto the steps outside the church. I had a strong sense of everyone's fondness for us and that the Lord has done something significant in people's lives this week.

Evening. We had an extraordinary day again today. We were taken on a tour of some churches and schools in the archdeaconry of Bukavu. We encountered DRC at its most chaotic – people everywhere, dust, noise, the most appalling roads, sick people, cars and trucks driving everywhere and all around the signs of grinding poverty. We have been staying in a beautiful part of Bukavu (albeit in a guest house with electric that switches regularly between on, off and somewhere in between and one which has no mains water at the moment) but today has shown us some home truths about the need here. Whether it was the building site-like playground of the church school damaged by an earthquake last year, the antiquated church, or the squalid living conditions of one Godly almost 'angelic' pastor and his wife, the abject poverty of nation and church assault you everywhere you go. As David said about today, we were (literally) shaken and stirred by the experience. And yet the Church we have encountered is rich spiritually with a bishop hungry for God encouraging his clergy into a deeper joy in knowing God.

How Sylvestre Bahati has fathered his clergy is so impressive (we have seen this with Jeremy whom we prayed for earlier in the week). An Oxfam report sums up sadly and succinctly the situation here. Congo is 'both a beautiful place and one of the most difficult humanitarian crises we face anywhere in the world – a "hell in heaven."' Praise God that we have been seeing heaven invade the 'hell' here this week. We need such wisdom with SOMA and others about what a longer term response means.

29/11/09

Church at the Cathedral today was something! Unlike any cathedral service I have ever been to. Wonderfully chaotic, (we started when most people had arrived) the choir swaying down the aisle rather than the usual po-faced procession most cathedrals are used to. Worship was wonderful as ever, full of joy and the church gradually filled. The cathedral which withstood an earthquake last year, is wonderfully African, a bit frayed at the edges but full of life and joy. David spoke powerfully as part of over 3 hours of worship. We gave out words of knowledge towards the end and 400 or so responded! What an amazing the hunger for God. After lunch during speeches, I sensed a genuine love for these people – it has been an amazing week and a huge privilege.

1/12/09

Kampala

Safely back to Kampala yesterday but reminders of Congo's fragile state were always before us. As we arrived at Kivumi airport, after another interesting drive, the MAF rep arrived late telling us that a friend of his had been murdered the previous night by militia men. The Rwandan border is not far from here. I have known the Lord's peace here despite constant reminders of danger. Our flight back to Entebbe was a gem – on a clear day in a very small plane (5 seater) we had stunning views of the beautiful Congolese landscape. We flew past 2 volcanoes getting amazing views of the lava flow from the latest eruption of Africa's most active volcano, Nyiragongo which ploughed through Goma to the lake. We stayed a night in MAF guesthouse in Kampala.

Today, having had supper with Woodings last night, I re-connected with the Karis Kids folk in Kampala. I was delighted to hear of God's work in St Peter's Wandegaye since we started our support. This church has become a place of hope and Christine has a huge heart for these people. We visited 2 families in the slums. What a difference generosity can make. Esther (the mother of the family we support) was so grateful to us and the Lord for our help. She has come to faith and there is hope for her and her children despite the squalid surroundings in which they live in. I spent an hour with Bishop Zac this afternoon, the 3rd visionary and Godly leader I have had the privilege of meeting this fortnight. We enjoyed chatting and began hatching a plan for an HT visit to Kampala. I sensed such warmth from Him. Like Bishop Bahati, he is a true Bishop!

Wow! What a fortnight! I have covered a lot of ground. London – Entebbe – Bunia – Beni – Goma – Bukavu – Entebbe – Kampala – London. I have caught up with all our East African Church links and taught at a Conference for Congolese Clergy. Reminded of this verse from Ephesians this morning....
Ephesians 5v15 ***Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, 16 making the most of [redeeming KJV] the time because the days are evil.***

I believe I have been 'redeeming the time' here and I pray I will continue in this as I return to Richmond.