



TRANSFORMING
BURUNDI
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Choose Life

More than just a name | News from Burundi
Guilt or Gratitude

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MORE THAN JUST A NAME

The film *Of Gods and Men* was based on events in Algeria in the 1990s. Eight Cistercian monks were faced with the ultimatum of leaving their monastery and calling or getting killed by Islamic militants. Violence escalated, a group of Croatian aid workers were murdered, but the monks refused all army protection. Each one had to decide for himself whether to stay or go. The film as a whole is a powerful witness to the monks' love for their Muslim neighbours, and their belief in the possibility of community between the two religions. The audience is left to battle with what decision they might have taken, and whether the monks' collective decision to stay (and die) was the right one.

I resonate with so much that the monks went through. I admit to living with fear in the immediate aftermath of my own death threats years ago in Burundi, but once processed, those fearful emotions were replaced by deep peace. As one of the monks said, "I'm not scared of terrorists, even less of the army. And I'm not scared of death. I'm a free man." Free because death is an emasculated enemy for the child of God. As D.L. Moody said, "*The valley of the shadow of death holds no darkness for the child of God. There must be light, else there could be no shadow. Jesus is the light. He has overcome death.*"

Every so often I bump into someone I haven't seen in a while, and their somewhat incredulous response runs along the lines of: "Wow, you're still here? And with the family? Wow!" Their surprise is definitely a positive one. They are encouraged that we remain. It's a sign of hope, of solidarity, of commitment to this precious nation.

“ I admit to living with fear in the immediate aftermath of my own death threats years ago in Burundi, but once processed, those fearful emotions were replaced by deep peace. ”





Food production has been hit by drought making hunger even more widespread

Emmanuel is a very common name out here. Two of our key leaders are called it. But it's so much more than just a name.

***The Christmas message can be distilled
down to just that one word, one name –
Emmanuel – ‘God with us’.***

Many Burundians have felt God-forsaken over the last traumatic year. As I write, 310,000 have fled the country, most of whom are languishing in miserable refugee camps. To choose the uncertainty, misery and squalor of refugee camp life, things have to be bad. It is oft repeated that Burundi is poorest and hungriest country in the world now, with the highest rate of malnutrition.

That is why Emmanuel is such an important name to me. The gospel has to be lived, incarnated, modelled. It has to be authentic. Like the above monks, we've prayed and come to a place of peace in choosing to stay. That doesn't mean we'll be here forever - we Guillebauds - but the beautiful extended GLO family, comprising several hundred men and women of passion, integrity, gifting and vision, will continue living out Christ's costly call in Burundi – that's for sure.

What a privilege to stand with them through these difficult times! Thank you so much for your prayers and financial support which enable us to sow into the hundreds of thousands of lives transformed in Jesus' name.

Simon Guillebaud

Kings Conference Centre - a light in the City

One of GLO's most strategic projects is the King's Conference Centre, a leading social enterprise, listed on Tripadvisor as one of the best hotels in Burundi. It's a powerful symbol of Christian unity, integrity and hope in the centre of the capital city, Bujumbura, as well as providing jobs - a lifeline for many.

Any profit goes to support the work of Scripture Union in Burundi, reaching thousands of young people with the gospel.

Many hotels have gone bust in the crisis but we praise God that the Kings Conference Centre continues. Here's an update from Gorette Wege, General Manager and one of the most highly respected women in Burundi:

Praise God with us because His faithfulness endures forever!

Some months have been harder than others since the unrest started in Burundi, but with faith in our heart, we've always waited for better days. Indeed, they are here! There is relative peace and it's now much safer to travel in the capital city as well as upcountry.

Nevertheless, in terms of business, the situation has not yet recovered. It takes time for travellers to regain confidence to visit places where horrific events have been reported. Our bookings for seminars and conferences are relatively healthy but numbers of staying guests are really low. We are particularly saddened by the UN decision to stop the training of Burundian Peacekeepers for Somalia here as this was our biggest client.

It's great to welcome back guests who had been regular visitors before the crisis in 2015. Clients are returning from all sorts of different



Kings Conference Centre is a hub for many conferences and meetings, pictured here with Gorette Wege pictured on the right



organisations including the United Nations Refugee Agency and the World Food Programme.

When opportunity allows, all the staff (including those whose contracts have been terminated due to staff reduction!) gather to praise the Lord together. We have been one family and intend to stay so.

Please, pray for genuine peace talks to end the cycle of violence in Burundi.

Goretti Wege

Fighting Malnutrition in the Hungriest Nation

Eight out of ten people in Burundi live on less than \$2 a day and struggle to eat. Already the world's hungriest nation, the situation has been made worse by the economic decline since the crisis and by drought. There is a widespread desperation. Meanwhile our malnutrition project has been keeping hope alive in Ryarusera. Milk for Transformation provides high yield milk cows replacing unproductive Burundian long horn cows. The project has transformed a whole community.

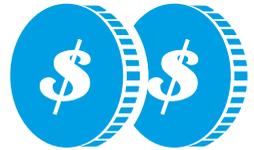
As well as providing a market for milk, in this village, many have come to faith in Jesus, praying and seeking the face of God every day.

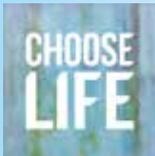
Project visionary and director, Evariste, says, *"We are so pleased that the crisis that is pushing Burundi on a sloping and dangerous downhill, has spared our region so far. People can plan for the future, even if the general situation in the country is not clear. It has been a blessing that farmers have never stopped selling their milk; otherwise even their livestock would be dead especially with the continual drought."*

As well as benefitting hundreds in the Ryarusera area, 21 project staff members receive a regular salary and 450 malnourished refugee children are fed every day with surplus milk.

There are ambitious plans to buy property to site the milk factory at Gihanga, 20km from Bujumbura and to import 200 more cows by 2020.

8/10
people





app update



We can't all go to Burundi but **Choose Life** is a great stimulus to help put your faith into action wherever you are. Check out Chooselife.org.uk or download the **Choose Life 21 Challenge** app on your phone for free. It's based on the award-winning devotional *Choose Life – 365 Readings for Radical Disciples*, by Simon Guillebaud. Here's a taster challenge, the first of 21:

GUILT OR GRATITUDE?

Romans 12:1: *Therefore, in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices.*

I'm proud to be English but I'm not so proud of our national pastime – moaning. We're World Champion moaners, and yet we're living in the most affluent time in the history of humanity, with access to so many wonderful benefits and blessings.

When I give talks around the world, I often say very explicitly: *"Listen people. I don't want to give you a guilt trip. But I do want to give you a gratitude trip."* And then I tell them about the time someone was trying to kill me and in one of

his unpleasant letters to me he said he was going to cut out my eyes! You know, for the first time in my life, I thanked God for the gift of eyesight. And it is a gift, isn't it? It's by no means a right – just ask a blind person.



That experience was an epiphany for me. Most of us have grown up in an entitlement culture. It's all about our rights. That's why most of us are grumpy. If you recognise everything you have is a gift, you'll live a life of



gratitude to the Giver – and grateful people make happy people. In Paul's words above, the original Greek word for 'mercy' is plural. He's saying in effect, "in view of all the grace gifts (mercies) of God in your life, live and die for him." When I'm tempted to moan, I often go through all the gifts I have – sight, food, peace, education, family, clean water, and more.

What an amazing list! How blessed am I! Listen, Jesus says: *"To those who have been given much, much will be required"* (Luke 12:48). With privilege comes responsibility. Don't feel guilty about how blessed you are, but do feel grateful, and then think about how you can use what you've got to make a difference in Jesus' name.

Challenge

Be creative in this, but DO something that demonstrates your **OUTRAGEOUS GRATITUDE** to be alive, and share it with someone. **TODAY!**



It's free to take part in the
Choose Life Challenge at
www.greatlakesoutreach.org
or download it from the app store.



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Community Transformation

- Housing, healthcare, sanitation and education for the poorest
- Interfaith dialogue
- Christian Initiatives for Peace
- Pygmy outreach



Young Leaders

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Social Enterprise

- Kings Conference Centre
- Burundi Bio Agricultural Communities



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Thank you !