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Elburg, 12th December 2020

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:2)

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

In my last newsletter of March 11, 2020, I wrote that the Lord in His grace continues the ministry of the Gospel and of the Assembly (Col. 1: 23-25) in East and South Africa. That letter mainly provided information about the many activities of local brothers and sisters in the countries I regularly visit.

However, as a result of the corona virus, I have not been able to visit Africa since March. The governments of most countries took very strict measures to prevent the spread of this virus as much as possible. These measures have led to good results in many countries in recent months; the number of infections remained relatively low.

However, the measures mentioned also led to major problems for society, such as:

- Tens of thousands of day laborers were no longer able to work, leading to poverty, malnutrition, and sometimes infant mortality, especially in the cities.
- Public transport became a lot more expensive, because the number of seats per taxi was limited.
- Food prices rose almost everywhere because of higher transportation costs and border restrictions.
- Many families in the villages became in need as hungry family members from the cities joined them.

We are therefore very grateful for the many gifts we have received in recent months to help as many families as possible with food and medicine. We have consulted with responsible brothers in the respective countries on how to distribute this material aid in such a way that the important directions in 2 Corinthians 8 are realized, especially verses 20 and 21. These brethren are endeavouring in difficult circumstances to ensure that the distribution is efficient and transparent. As a result, their work was accompanied by spiritual blessing and deepening fellowship.

For months there were no meetings, so brothers and sisters did not receive spiritual food, especially those in Northeastern Congo who are illiterate. Once again it became clear how important the literacy work



of brothers Malisawa and Mangwasi is. They wrote in early September: *“We are continuing the literacy program to include some of our Pygmy brothers and sisters from Kazaroho, a jungle village opposite the Bible Conference Center in Mputu, and in the village of Bandisende. This village is 40 km from Mambasa, so the literacy program takes place from Friday to Sunday so we can attend the meetings on Sunday. Apart from the pandemic, we have other problems such as insecurity caused by militias and the muddy roads on which our motorcycles are often damaged.”*

Their translation work is also important, making many brochures and tracts available in Swahili.

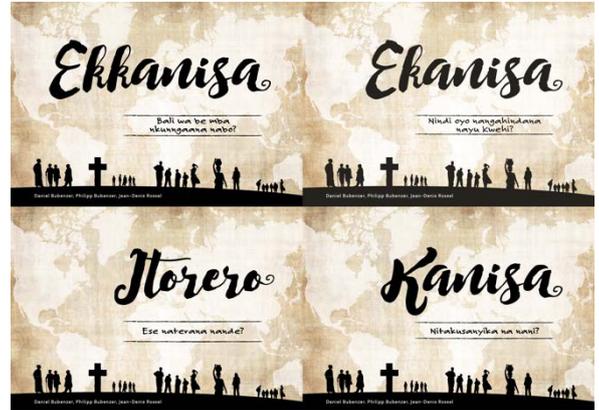
During the lockdown, brothers in Rwanda and other countries conducted Bible studies through a WhatsApp group. They also sent articles by email for mutual edification.

Online Bible studies

Several brothers and sisters who speak English and/or French have regularly listened to online Bible studies by Tim Hadley (Anchors for Life), Philip Svetlik and others (Life by Faith), Manuel Dieterman

(Encouraging words from the Bible), Paul Meijer (Series of Bible Studies), Daniel Bubenzer and others (edification.bible). However, the internet connection in their countries is slow and expensive. We have therefore asked ourselves whether we can make these online Bible studies available in another way. With the permission of the said brothers, the online Bible studies are now downloaded to USB sticks. Paul and - especially - Renate Meijer have already prepared a few dozen USB sticks for use. During his trip to Kenya last month, Paul distributed 57 sticks to the brothers attending the meetings and Bible studies in Nairobi (see: <https://www.allthenations.info/content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/201128-visit-kenya.pdf>).

The brochure “The Church” by Daniel Bubenzer and others has been translated into Lhukonzo and Luganda (Uganda), Swahili (Northeast Congo), Kyniarwanda (Rwanda and Burundi), and Swahili (Kenya). The USB sticks contain video clips in which Daniel explains each page of this brochure in English and French. Brothers in these countries, who minister the Word, first listen to these Bible studies several times themselves, so that they understand the subject well and, above all, have fed their souls with it. Then, in regional Bible conferences, they address this topic using a PowerPoint presentation in their own language. The brothers and sisters present follow the topic with the help of the brochure, also in their own language.



Similarly, other downloaded topics can be covered, providing Biblical teaching. We are grateful that current technology allows us to do this, especially as no Bible conferences can be held for now.

However, it is clear to both the aforementioned brothers and me that audio and video services are never a substitute for the Word of God itself. They are only tools to better understand God's thoughts in His Word, to nourish oneself with His Word, and to get to know and follow the Lord Jesus better.

Translations

The translation work, preparation, and printing of brochures, tracts, and youth magazines is continuing. You have read in previous newsletters that all our printing is done by a printer in Kampala that offers high quality at acceptable prices. We no longer have to worry about shipping, transport via Kenya and Uganda, and high import duties. It also saves the local brothers much time and energy.

From the hymnbook *Spiritual Songs*, 137 songs have now been translated into the Swahili that is spoken in Kenya. This translation work is done by brothers from Western Uganda in close collaboration with brothers from Kenya.

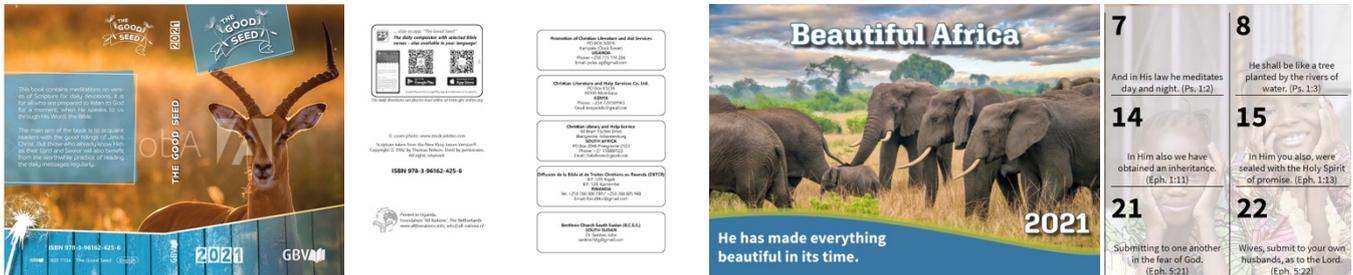
The issues of the youth magazines were printed from January to September 2020 and distributed and/or sent to the final destinations in Uganda, Kenya, and Northeast Congo: “Toi, suis-moi” (10,000 copies each issue), “L’Explorateur Chrétien” (10,000 copies), and “The Christian Explorer” (15,000 copies). The next issues of 2020 are now at the printer and will be delivered shortly. Five thousand copies of “The Christian Explorer” are printed at a time in South Africa. The same printer also has printed 2,000 copies of the aforementioned brochure “The Church” (English edition).



8 of the 14 tracts in Swahili

We are grateful for the great interest in the youth magazines, which contain very practical articles that discuss the living conditions of young people in Africa. Many answer the questions from the Bible study course at the back of these magazines.

In consultation with *Gute Botschaft Verlag*, the English calendar “The Good Seed” was also printed in Kampala at 20,000 copies. Brother Paul Meijer has designed a beautiful wall calendar, “Beautiful Africa”. Each month has a theme and each date of that month has a Bible text about that theme. Twenty thousand copies of this wall calendar have been printed in Kampala as well, primarily for distribution in Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda. However, the question is when the border between Uganda and Rwanda will reopen.



Constructions

Northeast Congo

- In the village of Efundu, the brothers built a simple meeting hall on a plot they bought themselves. They are confirmed in the faith and are increasing in number (Acts 16:5). We would therefore like to help them with the construction of a bigger meeting hall.

In the town of Biakato, our Bible centre was badly damaged by mortar impacts during fighting between local militias. It is now calm again so that we can start the repair work.

- In Butembo there is a great need for storage space for Bibles, books, and brochures. We buy large numbers of Bibles in Swahil in Bunia which are then transported from Butembo in smaller numbers to the Bible centres where they are sold. The proceeds at cost price enable us to buy a new stock in Butembo each time. The literature for Congo, printed in Kampala, is also stored in Butembo before being distributed. The current storage space is too small and very humid.

Uganda

- We were able to purchase a site in Mukono that is conveniently located on the main road from Kampala to Ninja/Busia. This area is well suited for a Bible centre and a large meeting room for Bible conferences. It is also close to several schools and universities with thousands of students. Please pray that the Lord will make young brethren willing to regularly distribute the above youth magazines to students. This would allow us to establish regular contacts with these students and hold meetings with them in the meeting hall yet to be built.

- Busia: shortly after my visit in February, along with brothers John Redekop and Mike DeJonge, the lockdown was introduced in Uganda, forcing the planned construction of a Bible conference hall to be postponed. However, on August 13, a team of 30 brothers began the first phase of the construction, which they completed on September 7.

In early October they started making cement blocks for the walls, and at the end of October the masons among them placed the first row of blocks. Every day the whole team was diligently bricklaying. Technical consultation took place at times when this was necessary. An electricity pole was moved with combined forces because it was too close to the new construction.

Yesterday, the second phase of construction was completed and at the time of writing, the members of the building team are on their way to their villages awaiting the third phase of the construction phase.



Buildingteam of 30 brothers from Uganda The first activities

Professional collaboration Completion of the 2d construction phase

Visits

It is not possible to schedule visits for the time to come, but please pray that the Lord will make visits possible again soon. I am very anxious to see the brothers and sisters in East and South Africa again. We will then be able to once again enjoy together the study of the Word of God and encourage each other from the Word in the sometimes difficult circumstances in which we find ourselves.

I am grateful that Brother Paul Meijer was able to make the planned visit to Nairobi last month. The brothers present from Uganda and Kenya informed me that this visit was a great encouragement and blessing to them. I am still recovering from shingles, but can maintain regular contact and consult with brothers in East and South Africa. Their emails and WhatsApp messages keep me informed of their activities. The possibilities are still limited, but they try to make as many visits as possible with a smaller number attending the meetings.

I inserted below some of the photos they have sent me and would like to recommend their ministry in your prayers.

We are very grateful to the Lord, to many brothers and sisters and local assemblies for their prayers and practical support in the past months!

Yours in our soon coming Lord,



The daily hard work in the fields



Meetings in the bordertown of Busia (Uganda and Kenya)



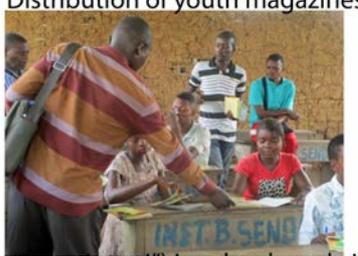
Meetings and a baptism of 5 brothers and sisters in Uganda



Visits and Bible studies in villages in Northeastern Congo



Distribution of youth magazines ("The Christian Explorer" and



"toi, suis moi") in schools and villages in Northeastern Congo

Hilvert Wijnholds