

Elburg, 8th September 2021

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1)

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

It has already been more than a year and a half since visits were possible in East Africa. The last visit took place in Rwanda and in Western, Central and Eastern Uganda in January/February 2020. Brothers John Redekop and Mike Dejonge (Canada) then accompanied me for technical consultations for the construction of a conference hall in Busia (Eastern Uganda) and for a Bible conference in Mukono (Central Uganda).

From March 2020 until the beginning of last month, visits in Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, North-East Congo and South Africa were not possible due to Covid-19. However, now the first three countries can be visited again. Visits in North-East Congo can also take place again, because MAF has been able to include the flight from Entebbe (Uganda) to Bunia (North-East Congo) in their programme again.

"On seeing them, he thanked God and took courage" (Acts 28:15b)

Last month I was able to make a ten-day visit to Uganda, where discussions, personal conversations, and Bible studies took place with fourteen responsible brethren from Uganda, five from Northeast Congo, and two brethren from Kenya. It was a great joy for all of us to see and speak to each other again. We thanked the Lord several times for our meetings, conversations, and mutual encouragement.

These and many other brothers in the countries mentioned have gone through a very difficult time. The strict measures resulting from Covid-19 were necessary, but also caused economic problems. They spent the funds entrusted to them with the greatest possible accounting accuracy and transparency (2 Cor. 8) to meet practical needs.

The five-day meetings on the spiritual and material aspects of the work in the above-mentioned countries

went very well. In the past year and a half we had regular contact through Whatsapp and email. But group discussions and personal meetings, however, have an enormous added value and allow for a good exchange of ideas.

Uganda

The work in this country takes place in three areas, namely in Western, Central, and Eastern Uganda. In recent months, the brethren there have continued the "ministry of the gospel and of the assembly" (Col. 1:23-25) with faithfulness and perseverance. They have regularly attended meetings and preached the gospel in other places along the way. There is a striking interest in "the gospel of salvation" (Eph. 1:13) and in the principles of gathering to the Name of the Lord, especially in Central and Eastern Uganda.

The brethren often receive invitations from groups of interested people who are aware of their sins and know that conversion to God and faith in the Lord Jesus are necessary. However, they have no biblical understanding of assurance of faith, salvation, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer and a walk with the Lord. Our brethren find many hearts opened to the teaching they receive from the Word of God.

We are thankful that there are some younger brothers in Eastern Uganda who are increasingly preaching the gospel in the villages.

In several villages during the past year, groups of believers have raised questions about the principles of gathering unto the Name of the Lord. These questions led to regular visits to give a series of Bible studies on the subject of the Assembly and meetings unto the Name of the Lord. Soon several brothers and sisters will start proclaiming the Lord's death in some villages.

In Western Uganda, some young brothers are very active in organising meetings for young people and children, and one-day Bible studies in several places.

Many school directors give them permission to bring the gospel to their students, even from Muslim-founded schools. The young brothers have established groups in these schools from which students receive and do Bible courses. It also helps them to keep in touch and correspond with students who show interest. Because of the lockdowns, some students were at home, but they could be visited there. This year we also regularly received large quantities of reading material for distribution in markets and in the schools mentioned, especially the quarterly magazine 'The Christian Explorer', and also the calendars 'Good Seed' and 'Lord is Near' and 'Beautiful Africa'.



Young girls and women



Brothers and sisters



Displaying copies of the calendars received



The team, involved in the preparations

Last year, they received from us about twenty USB sticks with recordings of Bible lectures given by different brothers in English and French. These were given to some families, who also copied the contents for others. In the past, they have also received audio Bibles twice in Lhukonzo and Luganda, which have been given to people who cannot read (especially the elderly and blind). These two devices are a wonderful tool for Bible teaching, and we are thankful to the Lord that they are appreciated.

With the Lord's help, these young brothers (together with brothers from Kenya) have almost completed the translation of the collection Spiritual Songs in Swahili Kenya. They have already begun learning the melodies in Busia and Bundibugyo. The Lord will make it possible for the books and tracts that we have translated in Lhukonzo to be printed in Kampala and received on time.

Kenya

In recent times, many new contacts have come about between brothers in Mombasa and believers in other places. These contacts were established by the couple Jean Gabriel and Biljana Gantet from Pau, France. These believers and those who are interested live quite far away from the places where meetings are held:

- Kilifi, two hours drive north from Mombasa, where there has been a meeting since the 1990s, as a blessed result of the work of brother Ernie Barnes.

- Meru, a six-hour drive north of Tala, where some of the brothers and sisters meet.

Brothers Richard and Mutavi of the Bible Centre in Mombasa have sent them brochures on Bible subjects and tracts. They were also able to make a visit to Kilifi where they had Bible studies and personal conversations.

In April they organised a Bible conference in Mombasa, to which also the believers from Kilifi and Meru were invited.

Besides biblical teaching on conversion and faith, the topic of the Christian's walk with the Lord was also covered. These believers also had a special interest in subjects like the Church and local churches, and "Conduct in the House of God" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Brother Mutavi Charles tries to visit as many schools as possible during his stay in Tala, Busia (near the Uganda border) and other places. Together with brother Dennis from Tala, he is allowed by the school management to bring the Gospel and also to distribute Christian literature, such as The Christian Explorer. Time and again, the interest in this youth magazine, which is distributed regularly in the same schools as much as possible, is overwhelming. Each issue also contains a Bible lesson, the content of which is linked to the previous issue.



Brother Mutavi Charles preaching the gospel in schools



In Busia, he also visits the schools during each visit and thus builds up good contacts. He has a special interest in street children because he himself used to be homeless. In Busia, he is in contact with an organisation that offers these children shelter. Through Mutavi we were able to support this work and give Mutavi even more opportunities to build personal contacts.

Northeastern Congo

The five brothers who attended the meetings in Uganda have meanwhile returned safely. We are very grateful for that because it is dangerous to travel on the main roads. MAF has resumed its flights to North-east Congo, however with a large diversion via Arua (Uanda) and Aru (North-east Congo). A journey by car via Kasindi (at the border crossing between Uganda and Congo) - Beni - Komanda - Mambasa is still too dangerous due to regular attacks by rebels. Both MAF and the local brothers strongly advised me

against it, although these brothers do make this journey themselves via detours and longer sections on foot.

I would like to refer you to their recent report on the many visits they make: www.all-nations.nl/content/uploads/2021/09/210510-report-visits-northeastern-congo.pdf They faithfully continue these visits in spite of the many dangers they live with all the time.

< they are wearing a suit and tie as an exception; because of the Covid only "business meetings" were allowed >

During their talks in Uganda, they again emphasised the need for Christian literature and Bibles in Swahili. They were very thankful to the Lord when they heard that funds are available for the reprinting of these Bibles and youth magazines for the schools. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in Northeastern Congo, and the countries mentioned above for our youth magazines in

French and English.

Together with the two brothers from Kenya and five brothers from Uganda, they also participated in a week-long bookkeeping course at the Bible centre in Mukono. Brother Festo can already work well with the online accounting package, which brother Paul Meijer taught him and others to use last year. Festo was therefore able to help the other brothers to enter the accounting data correctly.

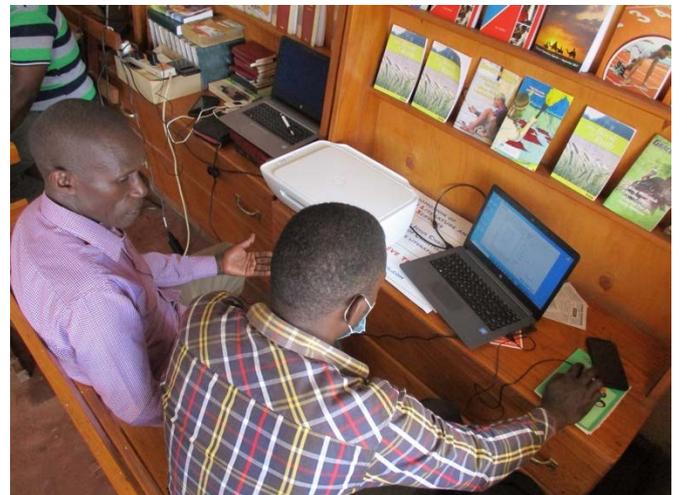
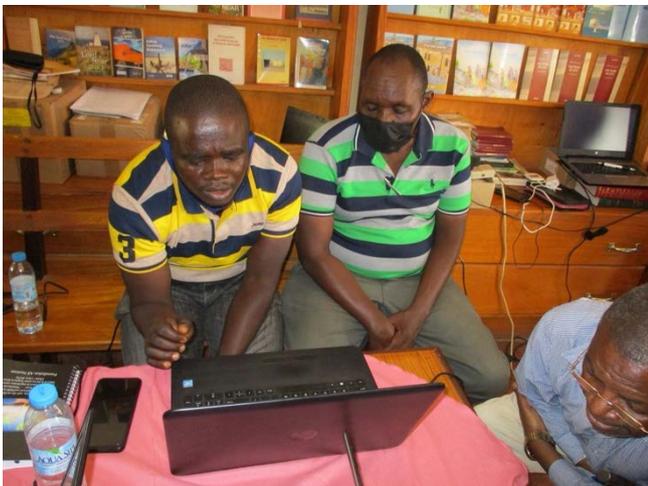
These brothers have the desire to always have their bookkeeping in order (2 Cor. 8) and this software is a great help for them.

Hopefully we will soon be able to visit meetings, attend Bible conferences and make house calls again. The 20 or so brothers from the three countries greet you all warmly, also on behalf of the brothers and sisters elsewhere in their countries.

With warm greetings in our faithful Lord,

Hilvert

▼ Brother Festo teaching the online accounting package in the Mukono Bible Centre ▼



PS

An outbreak of meningitis has been declared in the north-eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. So far, more than 120 people have died from the disease.

The first cases in the DR Congo were reported in July. More than 100 people are receiving treatment at home and in health facilities.

The outbreak has been difficult to contain because of the community's beliefs that it is linked to witchcraft, the World Health Organization (WHO) has told the BBC.

Many have died and the community's unresponsive nature is partly to blame for the high mortality rates being reported.

Instead of seeking treatment, they moved from one place to another hoping that the disease would not follow them.

Meningitis, a potentially fatal disease, is transmitted among people through droplets of respiratory or throat secretions from infected people.