

September 2017

Dear Friends and Family,

Greetings from sunny, dry Rwanda. As we await the coming of the rains, many of you are preparing for the beauty of autumn and the change of the seasons. Change is a part of life. Sometimes that change is something to be celebrated. That was the case this month for five of our graduates from the Protestant University of Rwanda (PUR). They were ordained as pastors, a joyful change in their lives.

Each August, the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda (EPR) holds a four day, church-wide evangelism rally. The end of the celebration is the annual ordination of new pastors. The rally is moved from presbytery to presbytery. This year it was held in Gisenyi Presbytery, in the northeaster section of Rwanda, at the northern tip of Lake Kivu, near the Congolese border. It is about a four-hour drive from my home in Huye, along winding mountain roads. Because I was teaching English for the Development Studies department on Friday and Saturday, I was only able to go for the ordination. Two colleagues and I left early Sunday morning to get to the football (to Americans, soccer) stadium in time for the final worship service – the ordination service of our former students.

This service is marked with pomp and ceremony. It begins with all the pastors of the church, in robes and stoles, processing in, led by a marching band. This year, since it was at the stadium, we marched around the field before taking our seats. Each section of “spectators” greeted us with cheers and whistling and applause. It is the first time, as a pastor, I have felt like a celebrity of a sort. After the march, we took our seats in the stands and the festivities continued with five choirs each singing before the liturgy actually began. Instead of a pulpit, an elevated stage served the purpose, complete with 12-foot speakers



*My five students being ordained.*



*Jean Claude Kanyandekwe taking the oath of service.*

suspended from scaffolds on each side of the stage. The volume was loud, for all to hear. Regardless of the rally like setting, when the time came for the preaching, the sermon was welcomed with reverence and great attention, as was the ordination ceremony which followed. This service is quite different from an ordination in America. Those to be ordained sit among the worshippers and at the designated time, the presidents of their respective presbyteries “hunt” for them and bring them to the front of the stadium, as scripture is read from Luke 10 of the harvest being plentiful but the laborers being few. When all those to be ordained are gathered in the front, with their spouses, they are asked constitutional questions and with hands raised before God, they swear their willingness to serve. Their spouses are asked to respond to questions of willingness to serve as well. Then the ordinands are robed and the rest of the clergy are invited to come down and lay hands on them for prayer, must as we do in the States. Their ordination is the culmination of four years of theological training and at least two years of internship in a parish. They are now ready to fully serve Christ’s church.

One of my blessings is to be a part of the training of these young pastors. This ordination service is, in a way, a culmination of what I have been sent here to do – to assist EPR in preparing their pastors. You are a part of this with me. As you know, PCUSA asks us to raise financial support for the work we are called to. I could not be here without your financial support and your prayer support. I thank you for that. You are a part of this ministry. But know that I am not fully supported. If you are supporting with prayer, I ask you to consider if God is calling you to increase that support to include the financial as well. Or maybe God would have you share this ministry with friends who would be interested in supporting the preparation of pastors to serve the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda. Please prayerfully consider the options. This is an investment in the future of Christ’s church.

As we prepare for the next school year to begin in October, even now, the church leadership is selecting the next class of students they will send for training. Please pray for the selection process, which will bring great changes for these new students. My prayers are with you as you move from summer to autumn and into the changes that only God knows that the future holds. May the change be filled with God’s blessings.

Yours in Christ’s love,

Kay (Cathie to the family)