

CONGO

(Democratic Republic of Congo)

By David Wilson

The Democratic Republic of Congo is situated in the heart of Africa. Formerly known as Zaire, suffering has been enormous over many years for those living in this area. More than five million people have lost their lives through wars, violence, starvation, and the collapse of the health system. Thousands of Christians and hundreds of missionaries were martyred in the Simba Rebellion of 1964. Many others have died in the conflicts from 1991 until today, as tribal warfare continues. There has also been exploitation by foreign countries and corruption by dictators. Now, it seems that recent elections have paved a way of peace for these 86 million people, and all the suffering has prepared a harvest of souls for the Kingdom of God.

I did not intend to open any more branches of our ministry overseas, but our Brazil director (Bruno) was invited to the Congo (West) by a mission to help teach evangelism. He returned, believing that we should be in the Congo. Then, a Christian friend in Australia wrote to me. He had known a missionary who served in Zaire (now the DRC) years ago, and during the uprising, she was brutally treated. He felt a burden from God to one day see our



FRED IS A FRONTLINE EVANGELIST, BORN IN THE CONGO

ministry established there. When he saw my newsletter asking prayer for the Congo, he contacted me saying he would underwrite the opening of a branch there. I prayed for God's will to be done. Then last year, I met Fred (Mvunyinka), a Congolese brother translating for us in Kenya. Immediately, I could see that he had the gifts to be our pioneer evangelist for the Congo. To confirm this, I waited for him to approach me. Several months later, he wrote, saying he felt led to join our mission. After successfully applying to join our staff, Fred (30) was there to meet me at the airport in Rwanda. We stayed in a Christian Guest House, which had been for street children on drugs. Run by a dedicated Christian, he had tried to bring peace during the genocide. They killed him, and his tombstone is in the yard.

After about a four-hour bus trip, we entered the Congo at Goma. The first requirement was to publicly wash our hands and have our temperature taken because of Ebola, a deadly disease that has claimed over 1000 lives in the North Kivu Province during the past year. Lake Kivu was visible, where many take boats for traveling to towns. Just before I arrived, over 100 had drowned when an overcrowded boat overturned. Apparently, there were no life jackets.

Just eight miles from Goma stood Mount Nyiragongo, an active volcano. In January 2002, it erupted, sending a wall of lava through the center of the city. Over 40% of the city was destroyed, and some

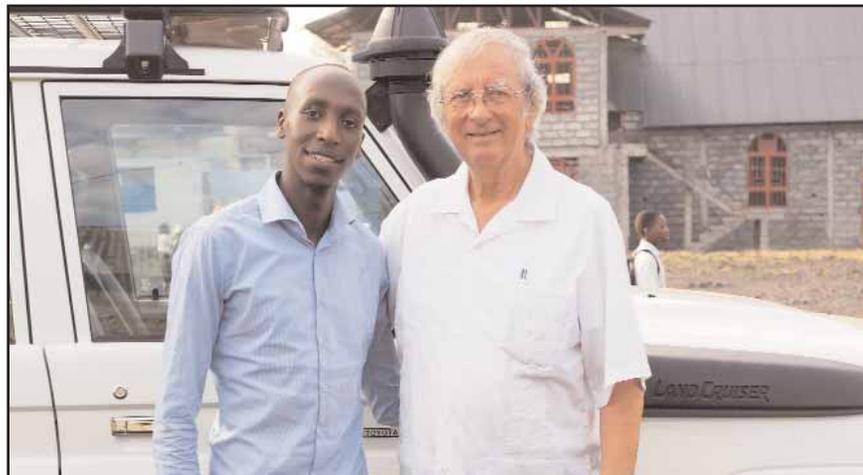
were killed. The airport runway was shortened by one-third due to the lava. The streets are strewn with volcanic rocks, making walking and driving difficult. None of the one million inhabitants of Goma seem to be worried. Tourists are guided to the top of the volcano.

True to his word, the Australian Christian brother sent the money for a new Toyota Landcruiser (no other vehicle will stand up to the "roads"). He is also supporting Fred and the ministry. The Constitution and Bylaws I have written for other branches were translated into French, and the Congo Government approved our application to register OAC DRC (I used the name of OAC because I registered Kenya as OAC in 2010). The \$2,500 worth of film equipment I was carrying passed through both Rwanda and Congo Customs duty-free in answer to prayer.



TORRENTIAL RAIN MAKES THE DRIVING EVEN MORE DIFFICULT

Although electricity and water were rarely available, this actually helped our ministry. Most people did not have a TV, so they gladly came to see our film. One Christian businessman warned us that it would be very dangerous to go out in the open air at night but to only show the film inside churches. I told him, "Christ has commanded us to go to people everywhere and preach the Gospel, and you are



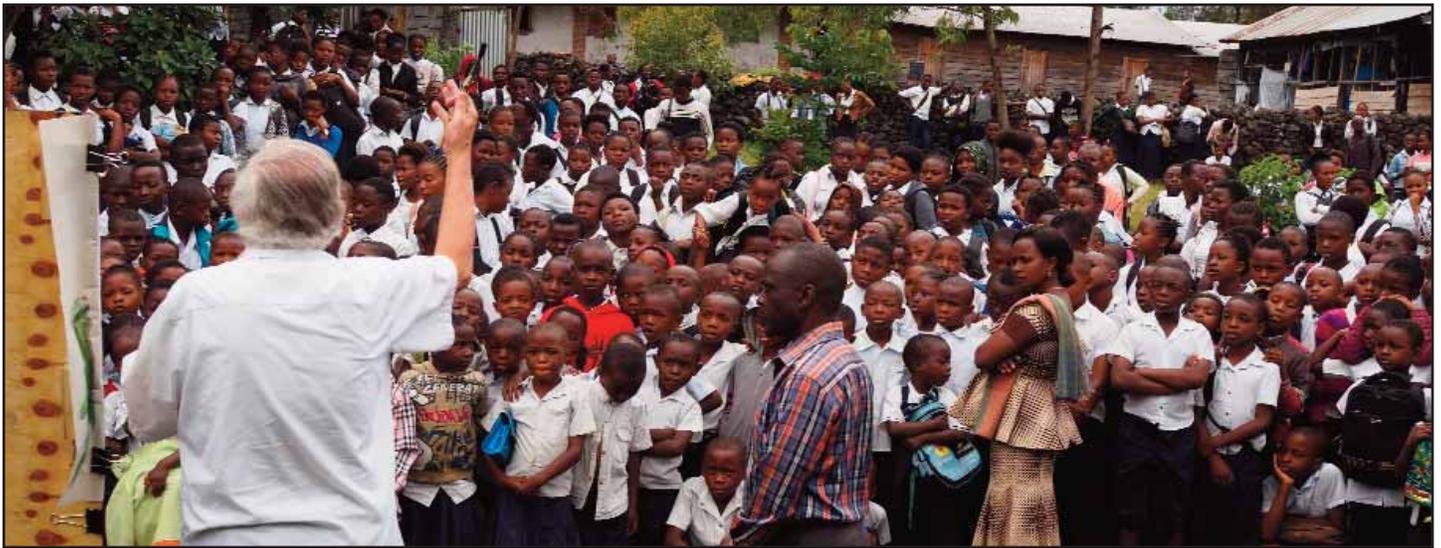
FRED AND DAVID WILSON BEGIN OAC CONGO (OAC VAN IN BACKGROUND)

telling me not to go. Whom should I obey? I will obey Christ." We went by faith to our first open-air film meeting in Goma. The rain was threatening, but even as we put up the film equipment, people were gathering. About 400 stood for 90 minutes to watch the JESUS film and hear the gospel message preached with Fred translating. When many responded to put their trust in Christ as Savior, there was applause. There was no opposition or anti-foreign reaction. We were presenting Christ as the only

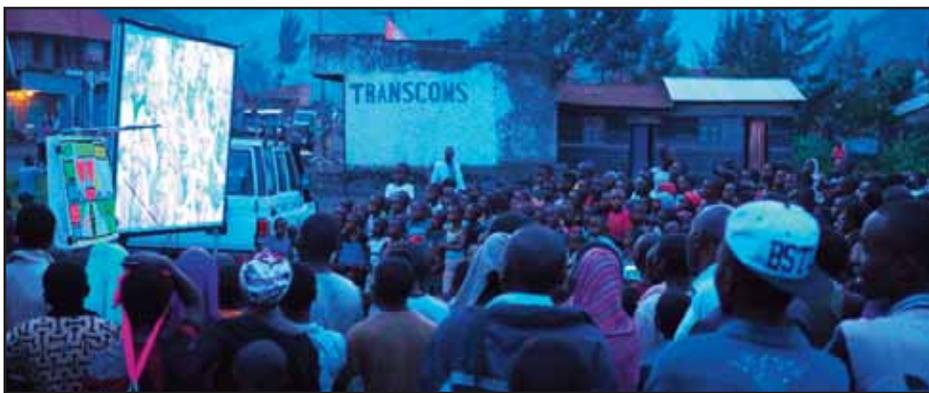
answer for our lives in time and eternity with no political or tribal agenda. The same happened at the following meetings with up to 600 attending. In one village, people even stood in light rain to watch. We had to use iron stakes and a rope to keep the crowd from pressing forward on top of our video projector and us. After many responded to trust Christ as Savior, people cheered and shouted as I have never seen before. Usually, we had a local pastor with us for follow-up. The man who warned us not to go, after hearing what God was doing, begged me to take him to our next film meetings! Fred now continues to hold open-air meetings using the film and sketchboard messages, with crowds of all ages up to 3,000 people.



FOLLOWING THE MESSAGE, THE CHEMICAL CROSS ILLUSTRATES SALVATION



SCHOOLS ARE WIDE OPEN FOR THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL



CROWDS PRESSING IN TO WATCH THE JESUS FILM



PREACHING ON THE BROAD AND NARROW ROADS (FRED TRANSLATING)



IMMORTAL SOULS CHOOSING WHAT THEY WILL DO WITH JESUS

The median age in the Congo is just under 17 years due to war and disease (AIDS, etc.), so it is very important that we also target the youth. Each public school district has a pastor who readily invites us to preach to all the students in the elementary and high schools. At one place, they combined both schools to give us 1000 students. The interest and attention were tremendous, as well as the response to Christ as Savior. Fred now continues to do school assemblies using sketchboard messages. Each student and teacher is given a comic tract (Chick) on salvation in French. Headmasters are begging him to return.

Churches invited me to preach in their Sunday services, and one lead pastor wants to arrange a one-day seminar for pastors and leaders on evangelism when I return. We will follow this with open-air film meetings near their churches using their members as counselors. Truly, the Lord of the harvest has led us to the Congo and established OAC DRC in 2019.