

# St. Luke's Church/Shyira Trust

## Shyira visit, January 2009

---

In the very early hours of January 15th nine members of St. Luke's left Formby bound for Rwanda. They were Harvie and Sally Nicol, Alf and Beryl Farrington, Colin and Margaret Cooke, Alan Powell, John Shaw and Allan Hobson. The journey to Kigali, via Manchester and Brussels would take 15 hours.

The visit was scheduled to last for two weeks, with the group leaving Rwanda on 29 January and arriving home on the 30th. However, Harvie and Sally had to return home after one week because of a bereavement. Some rescheduling of the activities in Shyira guaranteed that they were able to experience something of almost everything.

In Kigali some of us purchased a keyboard, see the picture, to be presented to Groupe Scolaire in Shyira on behalf of Range High School while others went to the National Genocide Memorial. After lunch we travelled to Musanze (The new name for Ruhengeri) and stayed there until Sunday.



The surprise in Musanze was the large new hotel built by the diocese who hope to use it to raise money from tourism. Come Sunday Allan would preach at the English service and Harvie at the Kinyarwanda service, with Emmanuel translating. After the service we travelled to Shyira for a week with friends.

People who had been to Shyira before were delighted to see the progress that has been made. While there is still a lot to be done the people of Shyira have made amazing progress with help from us in Formby, the King family and others. Much of the development can be credited to planning and organisation by Emmanuel who formed groups and cooperatives, and had the vision to start CEFOPS and plan for Living Hope Ministry. Emmanuel has now moved on to other things, but he will have a lasting legacy in Shyira.

There are potential future challenges caused by inflation in Rwanda and the fall in the value of the pound, these increasing some costs by 40%.

## Changes in Shyira and for people we know.

The past year has seen several changes affecting Shyira parish. Perhaps the most significant of these was finalised on 21st December 2008 when the new diocese of Kivu was formed. Shyira parish is now in Kivu diocese, not Shyira diocese, and its bishop is Augustin, not John. The reason for the change was the size of Shyira diocese—it was just too big for one bishop to get around all parishes.



The new Kivu diocese has 190 churches that are organised into 25 parishes and 2 sub-parishes. It has 36,494 members, 20 primary schools, 2 technical schools, 2 health centres and Shyira hospital.

The cathedral, shown in the picture above, was previously a parish church. An administration building has been added. Large grounds will allow expansion.

The Diocesan Accountant is Revd Samuel who was Pastor of Shyira for most of 2008. The Diocesan Secretary is Revd Kanane Alexanche.

In Shyira the new pastor is Archdeacon Anthony Ruzindana. He and his wife, Peace, are shown in the picture below. They have a family, with their oldest daughter studying medicine at university and three other children at secondary school. Anthony had previously been head of a technical school in Kibuye, and is committed to the development of young people. He is an excellent choice for pastor and will continue to work with the projects started by Emmanuel.

We should give financial support to Anthony as we did to Emmanuel and Samuel. The parish is then able to give some money to Moses who is the equivalent of a Reader, but works full time in the parish.

There is one other change. Eva has left Groupe Scolaire so that she can live with her husband, Francis, and children in Kigali. Previously she saw little of them. Archdeacon Anthony is now head of Groupe Scolaire as well as parish priest. Bishop Augustin hopes to appoint an assistant to work with him.

Bishop John has sent Emmanuel to study theology in Bujumbura, Burundi. He hopes to convert his diploma to a degree in about 18 months.



## Achievements in Shyira.

So far we have sent £118,086 to Shyira and Rotary have sent a further £44,000 so an important part of a visit is a review of projects. Described below are four that have a large contribution from us.

**Child Headed Families.** These children are among the poorest-of-the poor. Through our Alternative Gift Catalogue we have set out to rebuild homes and to pay school fees and provide uniforms. At our visit in January we visited the **Tenth** child headed family home to be rebuilt. There is still more to do, but thanks to everyone who has helped make the lives of ten child headed families easier.

**Maternity Hospital.** The new maternity building was completed in 2004, and then equipped by the Rotary Club of Formby. A midwife, Robinah, has now been trained and is working in Shyira. Robinah says that she is the only qualified midwife to be working in a hospital outside Kigali. Funding is now available for a second midwife to be trained. The hospital is proving to be very successful and we need to provide a second floor extension.

**Child Sponsorship.** 110 children at Groupe Scolaire have benefited from sponsorship. A further five at ASEC have also been sponsored. All sponsored children have been selected by the schools as having particular hardships. For example, of four children introduced to us in Shyira one was an orphan of genocide and its aftermath, one was an HIV orphan, one had no father and a traumatised mother and one had no father and a mother with HIV. The state does not provide for the children.

**Primary School.** The primary school has been totally renovated through successive Lent Projects and certain other gifts. It has a new and waterproof roof, repaired ceilings, new doors and windows, and a desk for every child. The classes are still too big, but the building is weatherproof and secure and the children are comfortable in class, thanks to everyone who has contributed.

## HIV Infection.

We have all heard of the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS across Africa. We were told by Caleb, and also by Francis, a national organiser for the church in the fight against HIV, that the infection rate has fallen to 3% of the population. While there must have been many deaths for the figure to fall by several percent, the good news is that the education programmes designed to slow the spread of HIV is working well.

## HIV Group

The HIV association was formed to provide mutual support for its members many of whom had lost or been abandoned by their families. They struggled to support themselves but had a poor diet and could not afford the anti-retroviral drugs needed to treat their condition. In January 2005 they approached a visitor from St. Luke's and said that they would like to establish a chicken farming cooperative to provide eggs both to improve their diet and to sell with the proceeds being used to buy the drugs they so desperately needed. However, it would cost around £2,000 to build a suitable enclosure and purchase enough chickens and this was well beyond their means.

A month or so later their request was put to a feed-back meeting at St. Luke's and a donation was made to set up the farm. The work began immediately; the enclosure was built, the chickens purchased and egg production began. Unfortunately, within a few months the chickens were struck by the bird flu epidemic and around half were infected and died. Undeterred by this setback, the group acquired some replacement birds but this time kept them in several small groups so that if infection returned it would not spread so easily or rapidly.

The project was and remains a success. The group have eggs to eat, they can afford their anti-retroviral drugs and their quality of life has significantly improved. Furthermore, success breeds success. At their own initiative the group has since taken up beekeeping and they now have honey to eat and to sell. Their latest proposal is to reutilise the original chicken enclosure to breed rabbits! This is a fine example of the sort of sustainable development that Shyira Trust wishes to encourage and support.

## Furaha

Furaha is 20 years old. She has partially formed legs that are distorted so that she is unable to walk. She can be made mobile with surgery and some artificial limbs, but with no health service the cost of £300 means that for Furaha this life-changing surgery is impossible. She remains immobile!



Don't you think we in the UK have a health service to be proud of?