

Christian and Abouba: Forever Friends Changed in Rwanda

BY CAMI OETMAN



The jet came to a rolling stop as I thrilled at the thought of returning to speak in “the land of a thousand hills,” as Rwanda is called. Warm memories from 2016 came flooding back, when Adventist World Radio President Duane McKey and his wife, Kathy, had invited me to join them on my very first mission trip with AWR360°/Total Member Involvement (TMI) to Rwanda, Africa.

My assigned spot, Jenda, located in Southern Province, was truly a unique mountain town. Between 700 and 1,000 local people responded nightly, faithfully trekking down the mountains many miles to my outdoor site. Their enthusiastic singing echoed across the hills, and I preached my heart out!

I knew I was making forever friends there, and now, eight years later, I was returning to Rwanda to present my Unlocking Bible Prophecies series during the AWR360°/TMI Rwanda for Christ 2024 meetings.

I was stunned to reunite with several people from Jenda who had traveled four hours to the capital city of Kigali, including the now-retired pastor, his wife and adult son, the elder and my translator. They shared how the people of Jenda still remember and treasure the messages of God they heard during those meetings.

I then traveled to the Muhima Adventist Church in Kigali, which welcomed me with open arms. It is a large, beautiful, newly-built church that had been dedicated only a few months before. What an honor that this was, the first evangelistic series ever held in their church! And just as I’d experienced in Jenda many years ago, over three weeks in February 2024, many new friendships were forged.

One special story features two young men, Christian and Abouba, ages 19 and 20. They stood out because it became clear to me—after only a couple meetings—that these two young men sat in the exact same spot every evening. The front pews were reserved for visitors, and there they were, without exception, attentively taking in every word.

Weeks before, Christian had noticed a large banner stretching across the church gateway, advertising a picture of a foreign woman who was coming to talk about Bible prophecy and what it reveals about our lives today.

He invited his neighbor friend to join him. Interestingly, his neighbor, Abouba, had grown up a devout Muslim, so Christianity was unfamiliar to him. He knew nothing about the Bible and he had never even heard of Jesus! Intrigued, he accepted the invitation.

Starting with the very first meeting, I ended my Bible presentations with an altar call, inviting anyone who understood and accepted the truths presented that evening to take a public stand. Without hesitation, each night, both Christian and Abouba were always the first to come forward unashamedly. Even on the weekends, when the church was packed and overflow seating had to be set up outside, they were not shy! They sincerely took their stand for Jesus with each newly-introduced doctrine.

Two nights before the end of the series, these two young men raised their hands requesting baptism. They then asked to meet with me in the pastor's office. My heart was full of joy at their conviction. The pastor ushered us to his office, and the young men told me they each had a specific request.

Christian's request was: "I want to be used like you, Ms. Cami. I want to share Bible truth with my people, too!" With a big smile, I relayed Jeremiah 29:11 and shared how God has plans for him—to give him hope and a future!

Abouba requested special prayer, as he would be the first-ever Christian in his large Muslim family. And as the first in his circle to learn about Jesus, his deepest desire was to witness to his family and

friends!

On that last Sabbath day at the Muhima site, 178 people chose "God's way" and were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Each baptismal candidate received his or her very own Bible, and I watched these two young men's eyes fill with tears as they clutched their Bibles tightly. Now they could study these truths in their own homes, sharing what they had learned with their families.

At the end of that series, Christian handed a gift to me with a written note. He admitted that it was the first gift he had ever given in his life. He had saved up money to purchase a cloth tote bag displaying African artwork. How special! But it was his handwritten letter that I will forever treasure, and here's a small excerpt: *"I wish to thank you for everything you've done here...now I have Jesus in my life. You know why? Because you removed all confusion I had, and I understand the Bible."*

Since Christian knows some English, he's remained in contact with me and frequently requests links to more of our AWR "miracle videos," saying he's never heard any stories like these and they keep him hopeful and inspired.

This is why nothing compares to being "boots on the ground" as a vessel for Jesus—shining a bright light all over this dark world. The impact is eternal!

Cami Oetman is the Vice President of AWR. This story was shared with permission of Adventist World Radio 360°.

World Church Prayer Requests

SEPTEMBER 20 — 26, 2024

1. **United States:** Pray for Doug Batchelor and *Prophecy Odyssey*, an evangelistic series starting this weekend, September 20, in New York City. Pray that many eyes will be opened to the truths of God's Word.
2. **Kenya:** Pray for Gilead Sanitarium Center as they seek to treat chronic lifestyle illnesses, provide abandoned elderly persons care, and install a solar panel system and borehole drilling.
3. **Canada:** Pray for a group of SDA believers in the Nunavut Territory. They do not have a church building or regular services, and are praying that the Lord may help them find a place to meet and worship Him every Sabbath.
4. **South Africa:** Pray that *Revere God Ministries* will be able to publish the first ever hymnal for Seventh-day Adventists of African origin and in IsiZulu, the predominantly used language in South Africa. The church in this part of the world has been, and still is, using an incomplete compilation of *Christ In Song*, which has never been updated. The project started in 2013, and is now completed with 650 hymns, as compared to the current version of 300 hymns, mostly unedited and unsynchronized with their English counterparts.
5. **South Sudan:** Pray for a small company as they seek to construct a church on land they recently purchased in a war torn sensitive area.
6. **Papua New Guinea:** Pray for Kukupalu SDA Church and surrounding communities as tribal fighting has left church members homeless. It is difficult to attend church services and activities here.