

THE RWANDA SCHOOL PROJECT

Robin Strickler, Principal
Libby Bullock, President
Burl Waits, Vice President
Jane Saari, Secretary

Karl Smith, Treasurer
Robert Sheburne
Joy Petty

September 5, 2008 -- Recapitulation of facts as understood and compiled by Burl Waits, Vice President, Rwanda School Project, U.S. Board of Directors.

Background

1. Before Rwanda's 1994 genocide there was no Lutheran presence in Rwanda.
2. After the genocide, the worldwide outreach Lutheran World Federation established a presence in Rwanda. In 1995, a contingent of Lutheran refugees moved back to Rwanda from refugee camps in neighboring countries.
3. Several farsighted Lutherans in Northern California became involved primarily with supporting individual Rwandans in their education and community development activities.
4. Several congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) Sierra Pacific Synod established sister parish relationships with the growing Lutheran Church of Rwanda.
5. Several Lutheran individuals and small groups have visited Rwanda in support of its recovery efforts.

Genocide recovery

1. Several books have been written about the million people slaughtered while most of the world refused to get involved. One of the best books that looks to the future is *A Thousand Hills* by Stephen Kinzer. A quote from his book: "Fourteen years after the 1994 genocide that claimed 800,000 lives in 100 days, Rwandans continue the daily work of rebuilding their shattered country."
2. An important support structure for this rebuilding has been the dedicated activities of the Lutherans Church of Rwanda (LCR).

Education and leadership for 2020

1. One of the reasons Rwanda may be successful in its recovery and future is that the present leaders developed a plan, envisioned a structure that included the emerging future, and forgave some of the past atrocities.
2. Many leaders and professionals were slaughtered in 1994. As terrible as that fact is, it has opened up a window for training future leaders and involving women.
3. Lutherans have found that Rwandans of all ages hunger for education.
4. The primary mission of the Rwanda School Project is to provide a useful secondary education for Rwandans now and raise up leaders for the future.

The Rwanda School Project

1. Some of the early Lutherans interested in Rwanda's recovery early on were members of St. John Lutheran Church in Sacramento, California.
2. Members of St. John's helped Robin Strickler file Articles of Incorporation for the Rwanda school project. In 2007, IRS gave its approval of the nonprofit status of the school.
3. In 2006, ELCA's Sierra Pacific Synod (Lutherans in Northern California-Northern Nevada) sent an official delegation to Rwanda in support of its companion relationship with the LCR. My wife Diane Lowe was a member of the delegation.
4. Karl Smith of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Santa Rosa, CA was also a member of the delegation and encouraged his congregation to make a major contribution to purchase land for a Lutheran school in Rwanda. Karl is now the Treasurer of the Rwanda School Project (RSP) Board of Directors.
5. I (Burl Waits) am Vice President of the RSP Board of Directors and am interested in worldwide video conferencing. I have assisted in establishing video conferencing for Rwanda School Board meetings.

The School Principal

1. Robin Strickler is a teacher and a dreamer who is working hard to make her dream come true. In July 2006, she arrived in Rwanda with a laptop computer, was greeted by her husband (a LCR pastor), and with a determination to help develop leaders for the new Rwanda plan.
2. It is now September 2008, a mere two years later. Robin has secured property for the school, is acting on a plan for opening classes in 2009, and has established incredible positive relationships with her local governing board members.
3. The key to developing the future Rwandan leaders is her ability to bring in the best of what we should do in the United States to the fresh new learners in Rwanda.

Waits' Vision for July 2010

- The Rwanda school facility is debt free.
- Dozens of teachers are using learning techniques introduced at the school.
- A large percentage of enrolled students would not otherwise have had an education.
- Students understand that education is key to leadership and success.
- Lutherans can be proud of the part they played in supporting the development and continued operation of a quality school in Rwanda.
- Support for the school reaches far beyond the church to include people from the greater world community.