

## **Reconciliation** By Gary Edmonds

On January 5, 2008, I left for Kigali, Rwanda at the invitation of EPPR (Permanent Education for Peace and Reconciliation) and the government of Rwanda. I was joined by Dr. Christopher Hall, President of Eastern University. Together we were meeting with government, Christian organization and university leaders to explore a partnership that will foster “Reconciliation through Education.”

In 1994, over 100 days, some one million citizens of Rwanda lost their lives and more than one million fled for safety to surrounding countries. Today there is in the center of Kigali, the capital city, a memorial site dedicated to the victims of this genocide. One hall of the Genocide Memorial Center is dedicated to the thousands of innocent children, infants to teenagers, murdered during those 100 days. They had been shot, burned, stabbed, and macheted; some were only a few months old when killed. Always I am moved to tears and anguish when seeing the photos and reading the brief biographies of these little ones. Sadly, children were also recruited to be killers. It is estimated that five out of six children in Rwanda at the time of the genocide witnessed someone being killed. Satan and evil certainly had their day in 1994.

Every time that I travel to Rwanda to assist leaders in the peace and reconciliation process, I ask God to show me how good can triumph over evil. What is God doing to heal this nation? How do I participate in His reconciliation plans?

On January 11, we met with Ms. Fatuma Ndagiza, the Executive Secretary of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, a cabinet level position. This was not the first time that I had met with Ms. Ndagiza. During previous visits, we have talked about the possible causes of genocide and steps that are being taken to seek justice and reconcile perpetrators and survivors so that the nation may heal and find unity. After each time of discussion, I have prayed for the Executive Secretary, who is a strong woman of Christian faith. We finish our meetings by acknowledging that it will take the supernatural love and grace of God to bring healing and hope to the citizens of Rwanda.

During this meeting it became clearer to me how unique the present situation in Rwanda is. Ms. Ndagiza shared the story of a woman whose husband and six children had been murdered during the genocide. God began to speak to this woman about the need to forgive. Nudged by the Holy Spirit, she located the prison where the perpetrator was held captive. As it turned out, the young man responsible for the murders was developing a deep longing to know forgiveness. The first meeting between the widow and the young man proved to be too much for the woman. She simply could not forgive the one who took so much from her.

About one year later, the young man was released from prison and found his way back to the village he had come from, the same village where the horrendous crime had been committed. He went to the woman’s door and asked for her forgiveness. To shorten the story, the woman was now able to forgive and enter into relationship with the young man who had killed her family. The final outcome of this true story? This woman adopted the young man as her own son. Today they live in the same house. Ms. Ndagiza indicated that this type of story is not at all unusual in Rwanda.

God is creating a unique model of forgiveness and reconciliation in Rwanda. He is ultimately good and capable to bring good out of evil. “All this is from God, who reconciled the world to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)