

About Friends of Burundi Registered UK Charity No. 1117715

In 2005 a group of mainly British Christians, many of whom had had links to Churches in Burundi, set up the Friends of Burundi. Its aims are to pray for, support and publicise the needs of Burundi and of its people; also the work of the Christian Churches there and the needs of Christians. It seeks to keep these concerns in the thoughts and prayers of the Church in this country and interesting young people here in those needs. It also wishes to support financially small charitable projects in Burundi. Other concerns include helping the many Burundi (people from Burundi) refugees now spread across the world including this country and the rest of Europe.



The Most Revd Bernard Ntahoturi, (left), Archbishop of Burundi and Mrs Jane Williams, wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury kindly agreed to be our patrons.



Burundi is an independent African country, about the size of Wales, lying at the north end of Lake Tanganyika. It is landlocked, bordering Tanzania to the East, Rwanda to the North, and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the West. It is densely populated with a population of some 8 million.



Historically, Burundi was ruled by a king, with chiefs under him. It was visited by the explorers David Livingstone and H M Stanley. Later, it was annexed by Germany to become part of German East Africa together with Tanganyika. After the First World War it became a League of Nations protectorate under the Belgians - combined as Ruanda-Urundi with the similar-sized country, now called Rwanda, to the north. Both countries received independence, separately, in 1962.

Burundi has suffered many years of inter-ethnic violence which culminated in a civil war. This resulted in millions of refugees fleeing to the neighbouring countries – Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania. Some who fled have spent most of a lifetime in refugee camps. Many others moved to Internally Displaced Persons' Camps.

Following a peace accord, there were democratic elections in 2005. The new president, Peter Nkurunziza, committed himself to national unity and the refugees displaced internally and in neighbouring countries began to return. There were further elections in 2010 although some parties declined to participate. Peace is still fragile. As a result of the Peace Accord, there has been a massive resettlement process for the Internally Displaced People and resettlement of the hundreds of thousands who have returned from refugee camps abroad. Inevitably, there are conflicts over land rights. Reconciliation between those who have suffered at each other's hands is vital for future peace.

In 2007 Burundi joined Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda in the East African Community (EAC).



Traditionally, Burundi has been a strongly Christian country, with 80 per cent of the population baptised Catholics. However, there are also many Protestant churches arising from the missionary movement and some indigenous independent African churches. For about 30 years, starting from the late 1930s, there was a remarkable religious movement known as the East African Revival. This started in the Anglican Church in Rwanda and spread to neighbouring countries, including Burundi, where it is still remembered with affection. It eventually had an influence worldwide. **In recent years the small Muslim community has expanded substantially.**

Burundi is a mountainous country, intrinsically healthy, and has become very densely populated, to a level that is hard to sustain. Soil erosion and exhaustion of nutrients make farming increasingly hard. The country has few natural resources (although there is exploration for oil and minerals) and is one of the poorest in the world. In recent years, the situation has been aggravated by prolonged droughts and severe flooding, possibly related to global warming.

Like most countries in sub-Saharan Africa, HIV and AIDS not only causes immense personal tragedies but affects productivity at both family level and nationally.

Friends of Burundi seeks, by prayer and assistance, to help those who seek to alleviate the spiritual physical and emotional needs of the country. Friends of Burundi has linked with projects as diverse as famine relief, AIDS counselling, reconciliation ministries and Bibles for prisoners.