

Lowell & Claudia Wertz
P.O. Box 1344
Kigoma, Tanzania

March 2026

Dear Friends,

So much has happened recently. In my last newsletter, due to election violence, we were hunkered down in our house, unable to go on the street. We had previously planned a medical-dental trip to South Africa for that time. Airline tickets and hotel reservations were bought. When the country had so many deaths, cut internet, closed borders, and many flights were cancelled. It was too dangerous to travel out through the Dar es Salaam airport.

The border crossing into Burundi was still open. It was a forty-five minute drive in the Land Cruiser. With two other missionaries we successfully crossed. A terrible six-hour drive got us to Bujumbura, Burundi's capital. My son Luke, in America, was able to purchase new airline tickets to Nairobi and then on to Johannesburg.

In Johannesburg, going through our medical appointments, Claudia's gynecologist wanted to do an urgent biopsy of a suspicious growth. Just one day in the hospital and the news was good – benign. She had difficult oral surgery to remove two molars and an MRI that revealed three vertebrae out of position. Treatments were started with a bio-kineticist. She has been suffering with a lot of back and leg pain.

While in South Africa, in the midst of political uncertainty and medical issues, we got word that the government was going to confiscate all of JOY's land and buildings for a Chinese railroad. A team of "evaluators" descended on all our properties with cans of red spray paint and marked every building, wall, and gate as being condemned. This was a total surprise as earlier we had been told by a survey team that the route of the train would not affect JOY. To be clear, this is what we stand to lose: our home, the community center, Radio JOY, four guest houses, computer school, feeding center, library, church, apprenticeship school, and all utility buildings, water wells, and supporting structures. We would lose all our land – every inch. Now in Kigoma, we are doing everything humanly possible to save the ministry. And what is impossible for us, we trust the God of the impossible.

In the midst of great challenges, God makes Himself very real. Frankly, I am surprised at how much of His peace we have received. We are concerned, of course —it has taken 35 years to build JOY. But after 46 years of missionary service, we have confidence in the Lord. He has taken us to mountain tops and through deep valleys. We know and trust Him. And now we wait on Him.

Your prayers are so appreciated. Let's see what God is going to do.

Love,

Lowell + Claudia

Joy in the Harvest®



Big Challenges — Prayers Needed!

Fullness of joy comes from our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. So we can be happy in the face of adverse circumstances.

Pastor Lawson Perdue

Charis Christian Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The time of the Presidential elections turned violent.

The President claimed 97% victory and protestors disagreed. In cities across Tanzania protestors went into the streets. The police and military opened

fire killing many. No one knows how many — some say hundreds or thousands. The country was locked down, internet shut off, borders closed. The government said it was putting down a “coupe”. There is an uneasy peace here. Many are mourning.

Then, JOY was notified that the Chinese are building an electric train coming into Kigoma. All our land and buildings are to be confiscated.

This would result in the **total and complete destruction of Joy in the Harvest.** Nothing would remain along a two mile stretch. We are doing everything possible to save JOY and we are hopeful. But all our buildings have red paint marking them for destruction. Prayers are needed! ☩

CHECKLIST

USA Office Address

Joy in the Harvest
P.O. Box 496
Lansing, IL 60438

Phone: 708-925-6681

usaoffice@joyintheharvest.com

Lowell & Claudia Wertz

Joy in the Harvest
P.O. Box 1344
Kigoma, Tanzania

wertz@joyintheharvest.com

Our Website

www.joyintheharvest.com

Facebook

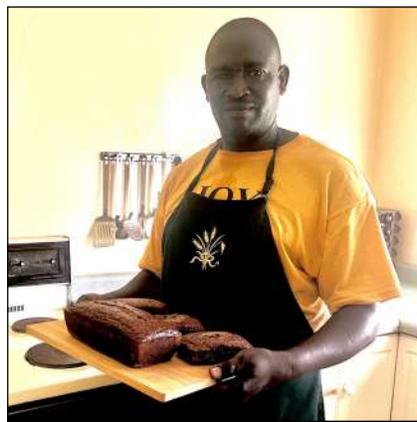
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WORKERS FOR THE HARVEST

In 1992, Emmanuel was the first person JOY hired. He started by doing yard work.

Born in a refugee camp, he was a man without a country. He had never been to Burundi, when he was deported there. We got him back when Tanzania granted him citizenship. Without the chance to go to school, he lacked reading and writing. After a few years, I asked him what was his biggest



Emmanuel
On the job for 34 years!

dream in life. He said being a houseman for a missionary. After several more years his dream came true. Then when our cook, Baba Destan, passed away, he started helping in the kitchen. Recently he served 17 for dinner every night. As a beloved member of our family, he is honest, faithful, and a devote Christian. We celebrated his marriage and now they have three children: 18, 13, and 9. All of them are in school. ☩



Good News!

Shorts!

- In January the *Global Methodist Church of Tanzania* used the JOY Community Center to hold their second annual conference.
- After a 6 months wait, the crate we shipped last August has arrived in Dar es Salaam. We now need to clear customs. It contains the items we need to upgrade our radio repeater on Heru Juu mountain.
- During a recent medical checkup in Johannesburg, Claudia's gynecologist was concerned about a suspicious growth. Putting her in the hospital for one day to have a biopsy, the news was good. It was not cancer and was benign.

Black Ink for 2025! Can You Believe It?

Each December 31 marks the end of our fiscal year. 2024 was a tough year for JOY. With the division of the *United Methodist Church*, our budget took a huge hit. We barely ended in the black. Some bills could not be paid. Furlough in 2024 and 2025 may have helped. We ended in a strong position at the end of 2025. What we noticed most was how our **supporters dug deeper** than ever before. One thing is very clear, those supporting this ministry want it to continue. We are so humbled by your sacrifices. You will never know, at this time of other troubles, how much lifting this burden means to us. Thank you! God bless you all.

The Newest Member of the JOY family!

We are so pleased to announce the birth of Eliana Jeni Mwenge. She is the fourth child of Janeth and Mwenge. Mwenge is the Africa Director of *Joy in the Harvest*. Born during the civil unrest, Janeth and Mwenge were 650 miles apart during the birth and could not be together. Lowell was honored to be asked to conduct the dedication service for this wonderful baby girl.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

When Do You Plan To Come To America?

Do you have a plan to come to the USA to do speaking?
— asked by a Pastor

Our 2024-2025 furlough took us many miles and we had many visits. But we didn't get to see all of the individuals and churches we needed to visit. So we made a plan to come back this fall for several months to do more visits. Starting in September, 2026, we plan to be



We love sharing what God is doing in Africa.

back to the USA. We hope to visit churches and friends and even visit some new churches. If we missed you last furlough, you are at the top of our priority list! But we also love visiting everyone. Feel free to contact us. **We build our schedule on invitations so please reach out to us.** We will use our travel trailer again. We will do our best to come and see you. ☩

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light... they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest." Isaiah 9:2,3