

# Catriona and Stephen Bennett

Link Letter no. 12 | August 2019

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*The call in action*

**Dear friends,**

Greetings from sunny Rwanda. We are back and it is hot, but it's good to be here. For those for whom this is the first of our link letters you have read, Steve is a consultant general surgeon and Catriona is a consultant anaesthetist, both from the UK. We now work at Gahini Hospital in Eastern Rwanda where our mission is to provide a surgical and anaesthetic service, develop the hospital's facilities, and train local healthcare staff.

## Gahini Hospital

Firstly, we want to say a huge thank you to all of you who raised money for the new operating table and light. It is brilliant. Only this week Steve was called in at night to see a young man who had lost control of his motorbike and fallen off, causing internal bleeding. The liver was torn into two pieces and it was a difficult injury to treat but thanks to the new light and new table in theatre, Steve could easily see what needed to be done. The patient was then transferred to the intensive care unit of the referral hospital in Kigali and the doctors there were very grateful for Steve's timely intervention and we hope for a good recovery. Please thank God for the generous donations from our supporters.

Since our return, Steve has been very busy. Thanks to a bank holiday one week, he was greeted by a 40-patient outpatient clinic the next week and he frequently operates on five-six cases a day. Some are review cases but most are new cases seeking local treatment as it is simply too expensive to travel to and stay in Kigali for treatment. Steve already has a waiting list of two weeks and we know that this will extend as time goes on.

Catriona, despite being on maternity leave, has been working most Tuesdays. Unfortunately, the container arriving in our absence means that the orthopaedic equipment was unpacked by a mixture of people – some hadn't understood the role of certain pieces of equipment and distributed them to the wrong areas, so Catriona has been playing a rather large game of hide and seek to find the anaesthetic equipment and put everything in its rightful place. She has also been liaising with the relevant companies as some items are not functioning properly. However, she is looking forward to resolving all these issues and being able to get back to her usual Tuesday theatre lists with the orthopaedic surgeon Dr Emmanuel, once Rachel is a bit older. Please give thanks for the new theatres and new rehabilitation centre – both will be an amazing blessing to the people of Rwanda.

## Gahini Diocese

Steve and John, our Rwandan colleague in charge of organising the English service, have been working really hard at trying to engage

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**Name:** Catriona and Stephen Bennett

**Location:** Gahini Hospital, Eastern Rwanda

**Our call:** To serve God and the people of Eastern Rwanda using our medical skills.

**Our role:** To provide and develop a sustainable surgical and anaesthetic service at Gahini Hospital.



*The new operating table and light in situ*

the teenagers at the service. Unfortunately no further help has come forward, a reflection on the few English speakers that we have around, so they are distributing roles amongst themselves. Playing some short videos has been a particular hit and the students are keen to see them repeated immediately to enable them to follow the content better. Please do continue to pray for this work as we feel it is an integral part of our mission here.

Bishop Manasseh was installed as Bishop of Gahini Diocese on 26 May following the retirement of Bishop Alexis. We unfortunately missed the elaborate celebrations but were delighted to greet him in his new role soon after we arrived back. He hopes to focus his ministry on work within the diocese, especially supporting vicars through teaching and resources, something he started before he was in post. He is a real people person so we are certain that this will bring great benefit to all. Please pray for him in his new role.

### Settling back into life in Rwanda

We spent the month of May having a very enjoyable series of church visits to our supporting churches in the New Forest area. It was lovely to see old friends and to make new friends as we shared about our life and work here. It also enabled us to thank in person the Lyndhurst Deanery who had gifted their Lent Project to refurbish our paediatric ward last year. We then had a short time back in Scotland saying our goodbyes before a very early flight to Rwanda on 18 June.

It has been a big change coming back to Rwanda following five months in the UK and no one has felt this more than our children. Hannah particularly misses friends and family in the UK and Rachel has been quite unsettled for the last month. However, we are now six weeks in and finally making some progress and we are both delighted as a little more sleep is now possible.

We have been warmly welcomed by our existing staff who have continued to work for us with the exception of our nanny. Initially, Catriona felt she wanted some time alone with the children to establish life here and to see what was possible in terms of childcare for her planned return to work in October. We are very grateful to all of you who have been praying about this; please continue to do so. This week we have appointed a young lady to help Catriona with the children. She has no qualifications, no experience and limited English but she is very kind to the children and so she is on a month's trial as our nanny.

All that is left to say is a big thank you to all our supporters; we are about to start our third year in Rwanda and without you this would not be possible.

Wishing you every blessing,

Catriona, Stephen, Hannah and Rachel



*Photos from top to bottom: Trying out the new operating table accessories; our cycling explorations continue; a family day out in the New Forest; Hannah and Rachel.*

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