

Rally for Rwanda



May 8, 2018 to December 31, 2019

Goal: Raise \$50,000 to assist our partner churches which have been closed due to government order.

The funds will be sent to our partners in Gitarama Presbytery to use for the purpose of reopening churches.



We offer the suggestion of holding a rally by Kiski congregations as a means of Fundraising. Send us your videos, whatever your fundraiser, and we will post them on the Kiskiminetas Presbytery Facebook page to share with our partners.

Bicycle Rally, Car Rally **Rally for Rwanda** Motorcycle Rally

In early March 2018, the Government of Rwanda began closing churches across the country. These closings have affected our partner churches.

Currently, Gitarama Presbytery has 93 worship areas, including 39 parishes, and 54 chapels. Ten (10) parishes and 26 chapels have been completely closed, while 29 parishes and 28 chapels have been required to undertake some renovations with a limited deadline. This means that many facilities have been padlocked shut. Others have a provisional license to conduct worship, with a limited deadline to meet government requirements. At this point, it is our understanding that the term “limited deadline” means something like 15 days, to 3 months, depending on circumstances of the worship facility.

And so, we ask why. Why has the government of Rwanda taken this action? It is difficult to understand completely from so far away, but here is what we can tell you. But please understand that the items below do not simply apply to our fellow Presbyterians. They apply to all worshipping groups all across Rwanda.

- There are issues of safety in some churches across Rwanda. Many churches are old adobe style construction with small, modified tree branches as rafters, holding up heavy tile roofs. The structures are mostly older. The government says that safety is a concern.
- Churches are now required to have two men’s and two women’s “restrooms.”
- Some congregations worship in the open. In February of this year, a large group of about 200 people were worshipping on a mountainside in Rwanda when they were struck by lightning, and 17 people were killed. Some congregations also worship in tents.
- Some congregations were meeting in homes in residential neighborhoods, which were not equipped to handle the large number of people and were also becoming loud and imposing neighbors.
- Some “churches” are being formed by people without proper education in order to have a means to earn a living. Finding work is difficult in Rwanda. Therefore, the government is beginning to institute educational requirements for church pastors.
- And finally, there are concerns voiced by folks from outside of Rwanda that the government is concerned about the growing number of churches in Rwanda, especially as it relates to large group gatherings where voices of dissent may spread. If you look at the listing of requirements that are needed in order to be considered an appropriate worship facility, one has to wonder if safety of the population is the primary concern. (for example, churches are required to have paved areas for parking cars. A large percentage of the population in Rwanda does not own a car within their entire multi-family clan.)
- We are learning about proposed legislation which would make it a crime to make derogatory remarks about President Kagame, and would be punishable by a seven (7) year prison sentence.

The closing of churches not only causes concerns for the affected congregations, but also affects the pastors and their families who might not be paid because of the decrease in collections from or closing of the affected congregations.