

## PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION UPDATE

The runoff election between Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai is scheduled for June 27. Meanwhile, Mugabe is preparing for the election by having his police and military personnel punish the opposition as much as possible, so they won't vote against him again. To date, over 1,000 homes of opposition supporters have been burned to the ground, literally thousands jailed and/or badly beaten, and at least 43 opposition leaders murdered by the Mugabe forces. This morning's news from Zimbabwe includes this report:

"Authorities have arrested 12 activists of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change. Earlier this week, two of MDC legislators were arrested, and the body of a prominent activist was found."

Tsvangirai has been out of the country since the end of March, building political support from his neighboring African countries and asking the United Nations to have Mugabe stop the violence in Zimbabwe and allow a free democratic election in June. He is receiving some support, but Mugabe still has many "old revolutionary friends" in high places throughout Africa and in the UN.

Last week an assassination plot by the Zimbabwe military to kill Tsvangirai was uncovered as he was in route to Zimbabwe. He cancelled his flight and will try again tomorrow, hopefully with adequate security in place to protect him.

Rumors are flying that the military will not allow Tsvangirai to become president, even if he is elected. Whether that means a military coup, or a state of emergency declared by Mugabe followed by martial law, no one knows. However, the environment is volatile and very dangerous. The following report describes the current situation quite well:

"That Zimbabwe's people haven't resorted to violence is to their great credit. Zimbabweans bear their suppression and ravaging poverty with astounding grace, instead of lapsing into violent anarchy as postcolonial Africa too often does. This is an asset greater than diamond mines or oil fields could ever be.

"Zimbabweans must keep their eyes on the prize — freedom, an unimpeded civil society, a basic modicum of prosperity. The international community must tighten the screws everywhere, not just on armaments. Hard sanctions against Mugabe's regime, aid suspension, air-tight embargoes and trade restraints must accompany the rhetoric until Mugabe, long devoid of any moral legitimacy and now devoid of the last (fake, anyway) vestiges of democratic legitimacy, is gone."

The only hope for a peaceful transition to a new government is a clear understanding by Mugabe that South Africa and the other neighboring countries will not support a non-democratic Zimbabwe government. Already, there are over 3.0 million Zimbabwe refugees in South Africa, which is creating a very serious problem for the country. Within the last few days South Africans have attacked local refugees from Zimbabwe, because they are taking their jobs and creating great economic difficulties for their country. The same is true in Botswana and Zambia, but to a lesser degree. It is estimated that over 100,000 people have fled Zimbabwe within the last few weeks. The strain on the neighboring countries is growing every day. The obvious answer for this problem is changing the economic and political environment in Zimbabwe. The refugees then will gladly return home.

## BULAWAYO ORPHANS UPDATE

For almost a month it was impossible to transport significant quantities of food and supplies from South Africa to Bulawayo to feed the approximate 165 orphans in the current program. However, recently a large shipment of corn, cooking oil and soy-based food made it safely to Bulawayo, where it is securely stored. The food is being distributed to the orphans and their caregivers, as needed.

A few weeks ago several of the older orphans simply disappeared. Since then, most of them have contacted their families to say that they now are in South Africa. Exactly with whom they are living and what they are doing is not fully known. They have apparently followed the lead of so many other people and made their way to South Africa, hoping to find some way of surviving.

Obviously, this is a very sad situation, but it points out the reality of the current situation. These children need our prayers and continuing support.

## **CREEKSIDE ZIMBABWE MISSION TEAM UPDATE**

Because the presidential runoff election has been set for June 27, the Zimbabwe Christian Fellowship Bible School, originally scheduled for the week of June 23, will now be conducted June 30–July 4, the week following the election. Those attending the Bible School want to be home to vote, and then will make their way to Gwandavale as quickly as possible to attend the Bible School.

Team members George Bragg, Larry Broughton and Steve Phillips still plan to leave June 19 for Zimbabwe and join Robert Reese in Bulawayo two days later. During their first week in Bulawayo they will visit local missions and privately meet with local Christian leaders. Since this will be the week leading up to the presidential election, and since some level of civil unrest is possible, they clearly will avoid any crowds of people and anything that looks like a political rally.

Larry will return home as originally scheduled on June 30, and Steve and George will stay an extra five days to teach in the Bible School with Robert.

They (Steve and George) will leave Bulawayo on July 5, arriving home the following afternoon.

**Please pray for ...**

- **God's purpose to be fulfilled in this mission trip**
- **the safety of the team members and those they will be meeting and helping**
- **the people of Zimbabwe who are going through unimaginable challenges.**

## **SILENT AUCTION - JUNE 1 AND 8**

Creekside will hold a silent auction on Sunday, June 1 and 8 for exciting evenings and overnight stays in one or more of Broughton Hospitalities' beautiful boutique hotels. More information about the specific hotels will be announced shortly.

Money raised will assist the Zimbabwe Christian Fellowship pastors and local church leaders with their travel to the Bible School and cover their lodging and food expenses while there. Any additional funds will be used to: 1) assist the village of ZCF leader Jameson Mahlangu recover from a recent fire that destroyed several structures, and 2) offset a number of mission trip expenses.

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