

Rev. Kate Warn, Rwanda Country Coordinator

Young Adults in Global Mission, ELCA

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This month the Lutheran Church of Rwanda (LCR) celebrated its 20th anniversary. To mark the occasion, LCR members gathered in southeast Rwanda near the border with Tanzania, in the town where the first Lutheran congregation was established in 1994 by refugees returning from exile. Two trees were planted for the anniversary: one tree to commemorate 20 years of Lutheran ministry in Rwanda, and one tree to symbolize the LCR's connection to the global Lutheran community.

When I think about planting trees in the Rwandan context, I think about a vision described in Revelation 22:1-2: "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life... flowing from the throne of God.... On either side of the river is the tree of life... **and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of nations.**"

For many years, Rwanda has been a nation in need of healing and reconciliation. But how does a nation heal from the wounds of genocide and exile? And what is the role of the church in such healing? These questions continue to frame mission and ministry here in this place.

In many ways, the stories of Rwanda's recovery from genocide and the LCR's growth over the past 20 years are quite remarkable. From the ashes of death and destruction in Rwanda, there has been new life. Rwanda is at peace and rapidly developing. A church founded by refugees now has over 40 congregations, 26 pastors, and a vision for a sustainable future.

Still, the wounds of genocide and exile are deep, and the need for healing remains in Rwanda. As the LCR planted trees this week to mark the past, this church also proclaims a commitment to God's mission of redemption and reconciliation. "The leaves of the tree are for the healing of nations." May it be so in Rwanda.



Bishop Mugabo and LCR leaders bless the newly planted tree.



The Akagera River marks Rwanda's border with Tanzania. The YAGM's in Rwanda are Sarah Brock, Lars Meisner, Luke Hanson, Emily Bishop, Ryan Bose, Jakob Sprang.

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