

October 2024

My heart is heavy this morning.

Last week the US experienced the tragedy of Hurricane Helene. Having grown up in NC and SC, I have friends and family affected by the flooding and devastation brought by the hurricane, and my heart goes out to them.

In eastern Congo the people face other tragedies. There are 6.7 million displaced persons in Democratic Republic of Congo... with over a million in Goma who have fled the atrocities brought by the rebels in the hills surrounding our town, seeking safety in the city limits and living in makeshift shelters with no water, little food, and desperation.

Here in the city, kidnappings, and attacks by a notorious gang, called the “40 thieves” continue. This past week a neighborhood in our town, Bujovu, was attacked. Many women in our church live there... I have visited their homes. One of our dear friends, Daniel, recounted the story of when they came into his yard, broke down his door as he slept with his wife and children and then held them at gunpoint as they took whatever they wanted. They went next door to his sister’s house and took everything, killing her husband as he tried to protect his family and belongings. Daniel now takes on the responsibility of consoling, protecting, and providing for two families and the children ...on his meager salary as a janitor for an organization in town.

Mpox continues to spread in the DRC, 24,000 cases as of last week: the majority of cases are children. It leaves lifelong scars for those who survive; particularly vulnerable are the children in the camps and those who come to our school and shelter each and every day. We heard yesterday that Marburg, a variant of Ebola has broken out across the border in Rwanda.



The day before yesterday we woke to the news that a large boat, overloaded with heavy cargo and carrying over 270 passengers tipped over and sank just 70 meters (3/4 of a football field) from shore in less than a minute as it was trying to make it into port here in Goma. There were less than 50 survivors, those who were on deck and could make the short swim to shore. All those trapped inside died. Bodies continue to wash up on shore...many from our community.

One of our EBA children was on the boat and miraculously was able to make it to shore. Our driver, David, lost his brother-in-law and one of our Sunday school teachers, Phillip, lost 8 close friends including his pastor and family members. Hardships and grief

surround us: news stories from our home in the U.S. and visible grief from our friends here in Goma.

Satan brought darkness into the world. The only hope is in Jesus.

We are simply human. But just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, we can reflect the light of the Son. Some days are dark and heavy... but I just remember this world is not our home. And we can reflect His light on a broken world. In church the topic was “Why do your people suffer?” We pray as individuals we can shine His light... and HEAL Africa will be a “torch of light” to the people of this region who have seen much suffering.

We know that Jesus is with us. I can’t fathom the sorrow of God as He watches over the earth. But we can pray. And we can continue to bring blessing and light to this world.