COVENANT REFORMED
BAPTIST CHURCH-KIGALI



THE HISTORY OF THE COVENANT REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH, KIGALI

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Some of the members in 2017, in Kanombe



Covenant Reformed Baptist Church, Kigali, started in 2017 as a House Bible Study group in a place called Kanombe in Kigali.

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STARTING POINT

In 2012, at a University Bible Group (GBU, in French abbreviation), some men who had heard the gospel from the discipleship groups came to start evangelizing to their fellow students at the University of Rwanda, Huye campus. While the GBU's method of evangelism was so much centred on pragmatic methods, two of those brothers, Emmanuel Kagabo and Ezra Kwizera came across the doctrines of grace.
Kagabo through a book by A.W Pink (the Sovereignty of God) and Ezra via online sermons of Calvinist preachers.

Then those brothers tried introducing the faith in the campus GBU but were rejected, resulting in them hosting private Bible studies with some men and women who had been interested in the faith in their hostels

After leaving school in March 2017, those men with some whom they had evangelised, and with some who had heard the gospel outside that campus from different online preachers, started meeting in the house of Audifax Byiringiro. The group then had an attendance of almost 15 people: Emmanuel Kagabo, Ezra Kwizera, Audifax Byiringiro, Emmanuel Masengesho, Grace Arakaza, Seth Ruhumuriza, Celine Ishimwe, Consolateur Mbanda, Bella Mbanda, Christie Mbanda, Pravda Mbanda, Johnson Karasanyi, Daniel Kwizera, Annick Majyambere, Rachel Ntabana, and some who came to join later as they came from the university after that year.

In the initial days, the meetings were just Bible studies, and the members were still attending some other churches while meeting for the Bible study on Sunday afternoons. It was in April 2017 that they decided to be meeting on Sunday mornings, and not go to any other church, because they saw that the gospel was not being preached there.

MOVING TO KABUGA IN 2018

By the end of 2017, they had moved to Kabuga, still in Kigali in the house of Mr. Mbanda (the 4 children were part of the congregation, but the parents were not believers)



Some of the members in 2018, in Kabuga

And they offered to host the fellowship in their house until 2018 when a government regulation came in Rwanda prohibiting all church gatherings which are not registered by the government, following the closure of so many churches. The congregation then moved to Gikondo, in the house of Daniel Kwizera.

During those days, with the help of a Pakistani church called Sutlej Reformed Church, brother Ezra went to a theological seminary in Uganda(ARTS), and when he came back on holidays, he had converted to Reformed Presbyterianism, which the rest of the members in Rwanda did not agree with.

Then in 2019, with the help of a brother from the Ugandan seminary named Olivier, the congregation rented a house, and one brother was staying there while it was also used for church meetings. All along, the congregation was increasing and was by now about30 people who are in Kigali and more who work from outside Kigali but were considered members of the same congregation, though others had also left(especially the family of Mbanda that had moved to the USA).

While in the initial start of the congregation, the members did not understand the difference between a Baptist and Presbyterian church, but they simply referred to themselves as “the Reformed Church of Rwanda'', the issue with brother Ezra made Emmanuel Kagabo and Emmanuel Masengesho, who was overseeing the church, to start studying these matters seriously, which led them both to the Reformed Baptist understanding.

Note also that the majority of the members (with the exception of one family) rejected infant baptism, even if they didn't understand much about every other difference.

Going back a little bit, in the congregation, we also had some events like weddings and baptisms, for which every time we could ask for reformed lecturers from ARTS (African Reformation Theological Seminary, Uganda)to come and help us.

At the beginning of 2020, the congregation was still meeting in Zindiro,

In that house (always in danger of being caught by the government) but we kept increasing in number and in commitment to the Lord. In the process, we came to know another group of brothers, the church in the house of Mathias Maombi, who was also operating like us, and we started the journey of evangelizing together.

Through Mathias also, we came to know brother Bill Issa from Uganda, who visited us once. We also came to know, from the then fiancée of Emmanuel Masengesho, the reformed brothers in Kenya, especially pastor Michael Maura.



Until March 2020, when COVID came, and we could no longer meet in person, we had Sunday services every week, Wednesday verse-by verse bible studies on a specific book of the Bible, and Saturday Bible study on the basic doctrines of the Bible. Then after the lockdown in Rwanda, the church started having meetings online, but those close to one another could meet in person.

By June 2020, the church could not afford the house anymore since they were not meeting, and some had lost jobs. And by the first opening of activities in Rwanda in August 2020, only a few churches were allowed to reopen in Rwanda, and the Reformed Church of Rwanda being an unregistered house church was not among them. But the zeal for the fellowship, and the bad internet in the country, led most of the members to start meeting in an informal way in the house of one of the members, and by the end of 2020, the whole congregation now of around 40 people present (since some have been relocated by jobs outside Kigali) had resumed meeting again in the home, until the new rules at the end of the year 2020, which put huge fines on anyone who will be found meeting in a home.

All along, Emmanuel Kagabo and Emmanuel Masengesho have been the informal leaders of the congregation, but in December 2020, Kagabo went to Europe, leaving Emmanuel Masengesho pretty much as the leader of the church. A brother called Johnson Karasanyi, who was still at university, could come along to help, and some other brothers in the church are used every week in preparing Bible studies. As the congregation, we saw that we needed a church structure since Emmanuel could not keep serving alone, and so we wanted to elect elders and deacons until we learned from elder reformed

Brothers from outside the country that we needed a church to help us in that process since elders cannot self-appoint. Now the church saw that the urgent need is first a church plant and be legally registered in the country, and everything else will be fixed from there.



Some of the members of the Church on Sunday, in Kimironko in 2020

As of December 2020, the church was having Sunday services on Google Meet, Wednesday bible study which is now focusing on the book of Romans and Saturday Bible study on the 1689 London Baptist Confession of faith. Believers are being fed with God's word and the church members try as much as possible to follow up on one another's daily life, both spiritual and physical.

In May 2021, the church officialized its membership, with the initial members being 25 people. We also elected a steering committee of 5 men: Emmanuel Masengesho, Jean Marie Murwanashyaka, Johnson Karasanyi, Titien Gatera and Jerry Junior Mutoni.
The church also changed its name from Reformed Church of Rwanda to "Covenant Reformed Baptist Church, Kigali" and fully subscribes to the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith.
In March 2021, Kabwata Baptist Church-Lusaka adopted Covenant Reformed Baptist Church-Kigali along with Reformation Baptist Church to be their church plants in Rwanda.



Pastor Emmanuel Masengesho and Pastor Mathias Maombi being ordained by Elders from Kabwata Baptist Church from Lusaka - Zambia

By November 2021 also, we had the first baptism as CRBC-Kigali, with 52 people getting baptized. Then around 50 people were admitted into church membership. In 2022, Brother Emmanuel Masengesho was officially ordained as the missionary pastor for CRBC-Kigali by Kabwata Baptist Church-Lusaka.



Sunday morning servicein Gasogi, December2022.

By 2022, the Church has a membership of 104 people. We now meet in Gasogi, and we got registered by the government on December 29, 2022.

TODAY, WE HAVE TWO PREACHING POINTS, ONE IN HUYE, AND THE OTHER IN RWINKWAVU. WE TRUST IN GOD FOR HAVING THOSE PREACHING POINTS BECOME CHURCHES SOON.



In Huye, the Lord blessed us with the first baptism, where around 18 people got baptized.

Soli Deo Gloria!