



James
Steve Vinton, January 20, 2008

A passenger bus has crashed outside of the city of Mbeya in western Tanzania with many deaths. We have very significant reasons to believe that James who is heading up our school building program at Nankanga was on that bus.

We have spoken with his aunt who knows that he left this morning for the bus station and much to our dismay she remembers him telling her that he would be trying to get on that particular bus. He is seven hours overdue in Mafinga where all of our school principals and those who have been overseeing our school building projects were to meet together by noon before coming here to Madisi for our meeting. When we call his cell phone we get a recording that the phone is not in service. However, we have learned that his name is not on the passenger manifest for the bus which crashed, but that gives only slight hope because people routinely get on the bus at one of its many stops besides the main bus terminal and none of those people are issued tickets and their names never appear on any passenger manifest. We sent one of our former students who lives in Mbeya to check at the general hospital but he says that the crowds at the hospital to identify the injured and the dead are large and from his position in the line he doesn't expect to have any news for us until either very late in the night or perhaps not until morning.

James is a good man and has done an exceptional job of working with the people of Nankanga to build that school. Godfrey and I have been looking forward to him sharing with the rest of our school principals and community representatives why it is that we

have considered his work to be exceptional. God used James a couple of months ago when our school at Nankanga was hit by very high winds that ripped the roof off of two classrooms to rally the whole village and to get everyone to work together to salvage the roofing and to put the roof back on within six days. A lesser man would have failed to do anything more than send word to us of the disaster and ask us what he should do. James wasted no time and did the extraordinary thing of rallying people to do a wonderful thing. I have been so looking forward to James telling the whole group all about it. And then just two weeks ago James organized the whole village to have what is called here a "harambee" in which people raised in one afternoon enough money to buy bricks to build another teachers house. He had run out of bricks and because the rains have started already it simply was impossible to propose that people in the village make more bricks -- not before June when the rains would stop. But James came up with a creative solution of holding that fund-raiser and convincing people who had made their own bricks for additions they were going to build to their own houses this year to agree to sell the bricks to the community so that another teachers house could get built. A lesser man would have simply accepted that with the rains having started there was no way to get that building built. And so Godfrey and I had worked into the program a time for James to tell everyone else about these two wonderful things that he had done and to inspire us all to greatness in this coming year.

I have a great desire to see James and it's not just that I want to hear from his own mouth these stories, I just really want to see James

again. He recently married and his wife I know wants to see him again infinitely more than all of the rest of us do. If you have time today we

would appreciate your prayers for James.

It looks like it will be a very long night here.

[Editor's Note: The next day Steve & Susan sent out the update which follows: "*James, thankfully, took a different bus and was not on the bus that crashed. We rejoice, we're very, very thankful. And yet we are mindful that there are many today who mourn. Our thanks for your prayers on our behalf and your concern for us all here.*"]