

# Rwanda

## Africa

Teaching the Bahá'í Faith

Bahá'í Geography - Rwanda

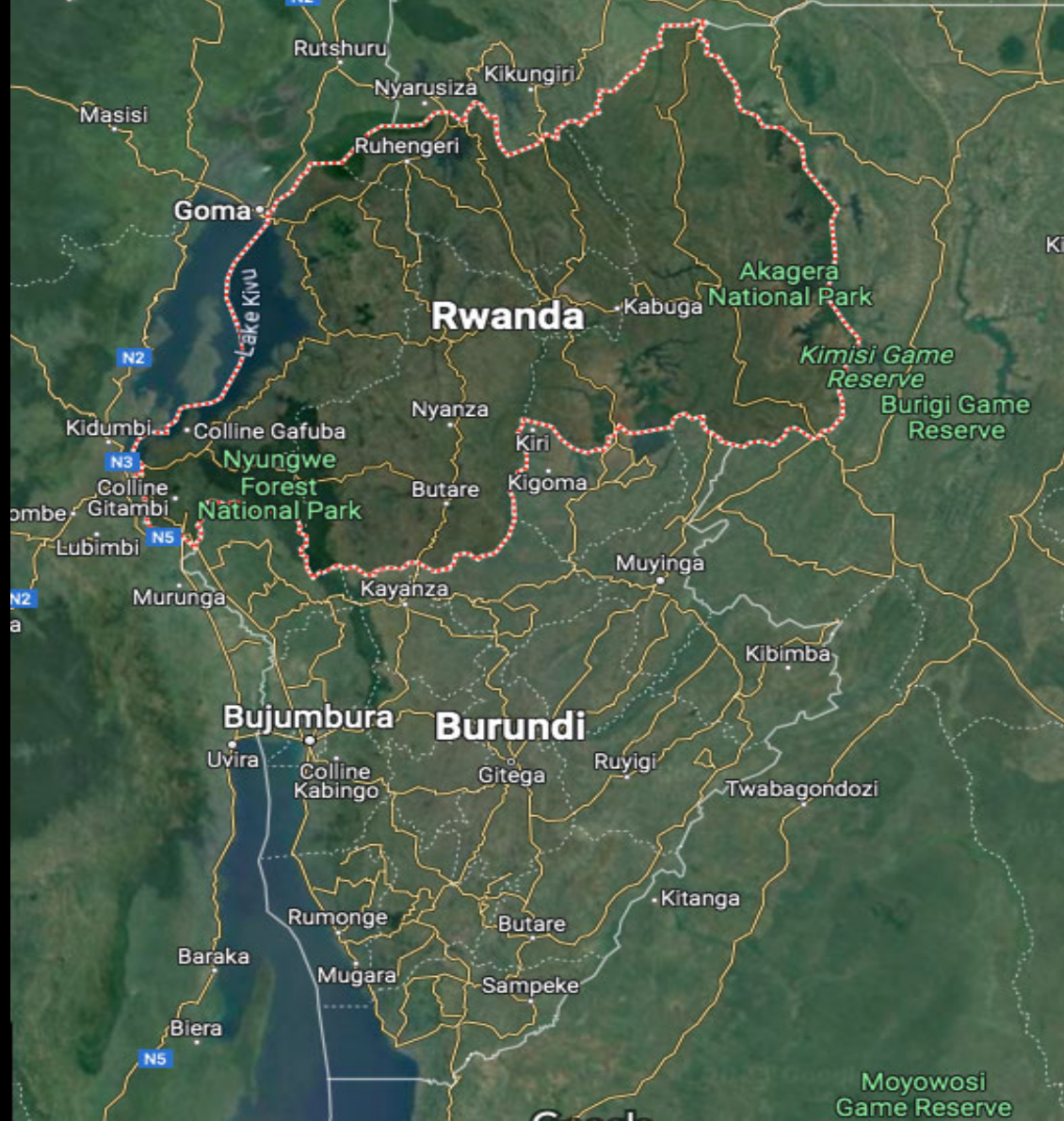
# Rwanda

The Republic of Rwanda is a land-locked country in the Great Rift Valley of Central Africa, just south of the Equator. It is highly elevated (from 950 metres to 4,507 metres) with many lakes, mountains in the west and savanna to the southeast. The capital is Kigali. It is the most densely populated country in Africa, with a population of over 13 million on 26,338 km<sup>2</sup>. Coffee and tea are the main cash crops. It was a German colony from 1897 to 1916, and then part of Ruanda-Urundi as a UN Trust Territory under Belgium until 1962.

# Rwanda and Burundi



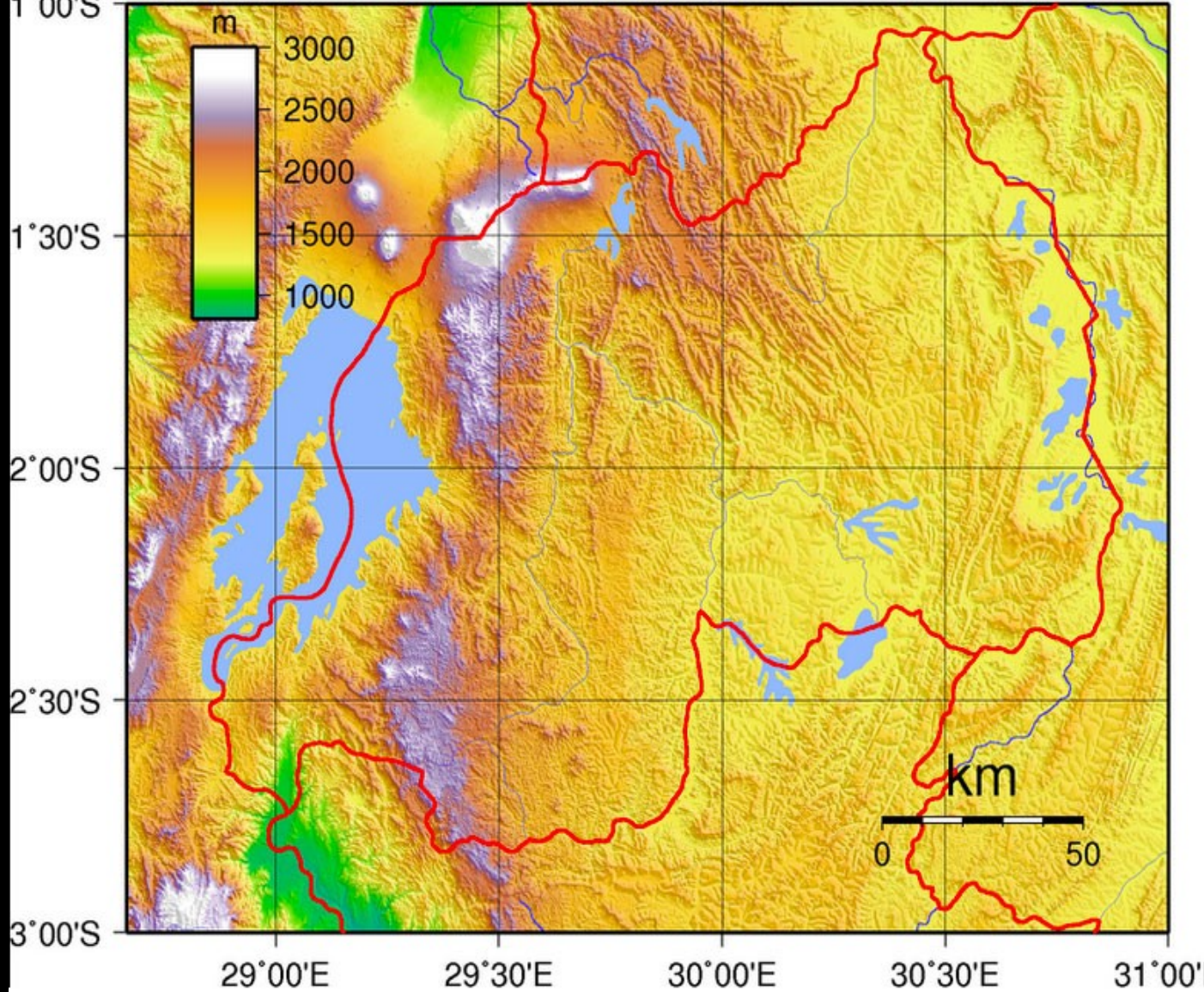
# Rwanda and Burundi



# Rwanda



Rwanda  
topography





Rwanda

photo Maria Ivanova



Rwanda

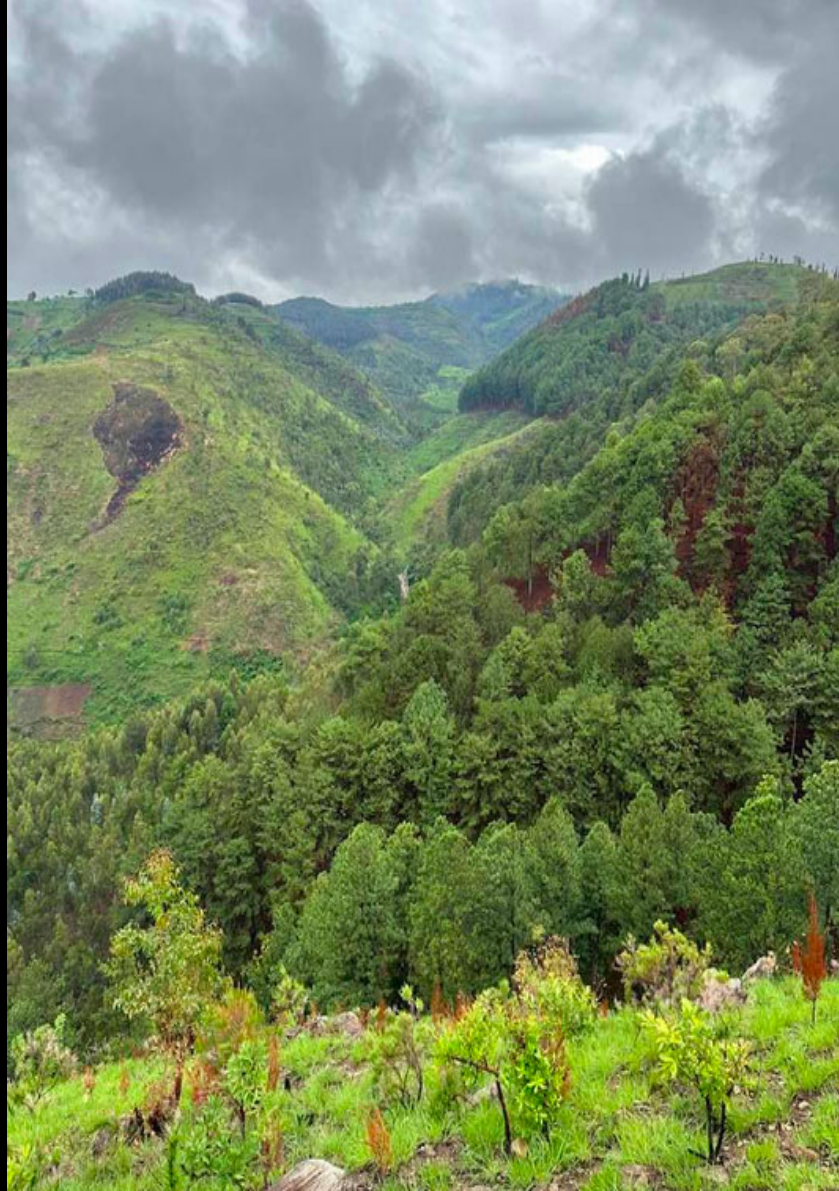
photo Maria Ivanova





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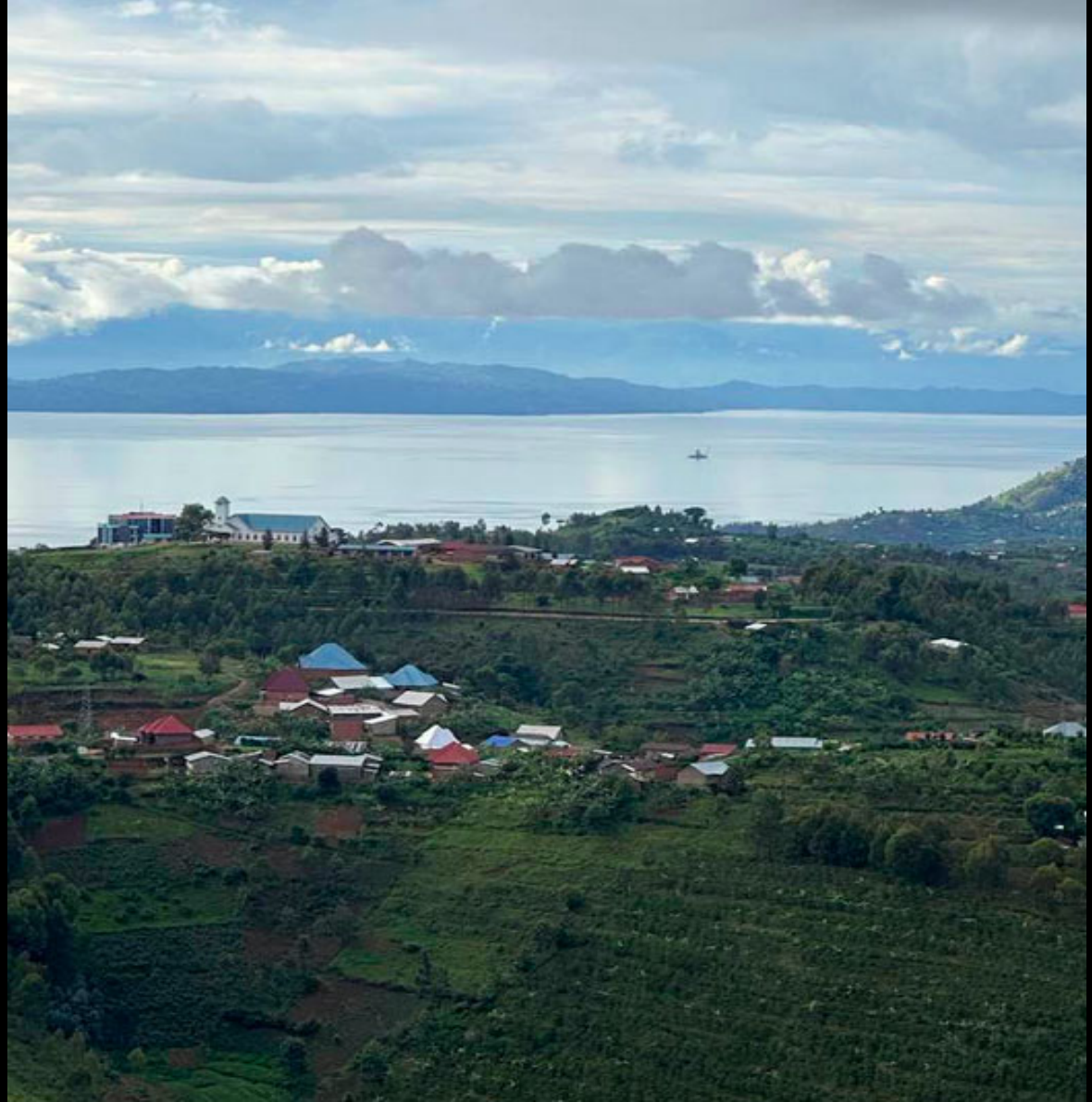
# Rwanda

photo Maria Ivanova



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# Knights of Bahá'u'lláh

Rex (1884-1983) and Mary Collison (1892-1970) married in 1920 and became Bahá'ís in New York in 1925. Mary prepared deepening study outlines on the Bahá'í Faith, and the first on '*Science and the Bahá'í Faith*' was written by Rex. In 1928, they made a travel-teaching trip across the United States, and Mary served on the National Teaching Committee, taught at summer schools, and was a travel teacher from 1945 to 1952, when they pioneered from California to Kampala, Uganda.

(based on Earl Redman, *Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 91-95)

# Knights of Bahá'u'lláh

Dunduzu Kaluli Chisiza (1930-1962) was from Nyasaland (Malawi), the son of a village headman. Highly intelligent, he went to a Presbyterian boarding school, but a racist teacher was outraged that he could get the highest marks with so little effort, and called him a 'monkey', finally failing him although he was the best in the class. That failure taught him about racism and strongly affected his future. To further his education, he went to the Aggrey College in Kampala, Uganda, where one of his teachers, Frobisher Kagwa, introduced him to the Bahá'í Faith.

(based on Earl Redman, *Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 91-95)

Knights of  
Bahá'u'lláh

Dunduzu Chisiza

Mary and Rex  
Collison





# Dunduzu Chisiza

Dunduzu was highly sceptical He had witnessed the hypocrisy of the white Europeans he knew, who professed their religion but did not practice it. He carried a deep distrust of all white people. He attended an introductory presentation on the Bahá'í Faith by Ali Nakhjavani, a pioneer in Uganda at that time. He was soon won over by Mr. Nakhjavani's sincerity, but also by his assertions of the equality of all religions and of all men, and by the logic of his explanation of Biblical prophecies and proofs of Christ's return in Bahá'u'lláh.

(based on Earl Redman, *Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 91-95)

# Dunduzu Chisiza

Dunduzu wrote: “So it was that I who was made to detest white men with the religion they brought, was now challenged by another white man to accept another religion; I who cherished the Teachings of Christ but who strongly doubted that Christ was the Son of God, was now being challenged to acknowledge His Return; I who believed in the expulsion of the white man from Africa, was now ironically being made to consider him as a brother. It was a frightful insomnia that I had that night. A deadly war was going on within my divided self.” A student had yelled after the lecture that white men had brought their religion and took our land. This fellow is bringing a new technique of keeping you quiet while his friends snatch our land and domineer over us.

(based on Earl Redman, *Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 91-95)

# Dunduzu Chisiza

“I confess that I could not prove the contrary, yet some invisible force seemed to push me to a decision. The following day witnessed the end of my war. I had turned things over for nine and a half hours of the previous night. The result was that I had trampled down every bit of a doubt within me. Later in the evening a teacher asked me, ‘Do you really understand what you have done? I understand Bahá’ís have nothing to do with politics. Is that what you are going to comply with?’ What a loss to Nyasaland... Just why have you believed in the Bahá’í Faith?”

(based on Earl Redman, *Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 91-95)

# Dunduzu Chisiza

“I believe in the Bahá’í Faith because it’s the only solution to political problems. And if I have a solution to our political problems I don’t think it is useful to fiddle with politics. Let me add, sir, that the only thing an African can do to regain his freedom is to expel Europeans from Africa. But this is impracticable in view of the fact that Europeans have hydrogen bombs while we have only spears. The alternative to the above solution is to compromise our claims. But why take only half of what we want while the Bahá’ís give us the whole? They give us full equality.... Equality, which every African wants today, is what the Bahá’í Faith gives us and that is why I identify myself with it.”

(based on Earl Redman, *Knights of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 91-95)

# Knights of Bahá'u'lláh

When the Ten Year Crusade began and the Intercontinental Teaching Conference was announced for February 1953, Dunduzu attended and was energised by the talks of Hands of the Cause. Mary and Rex Collison were the first Americans to arise, and invited Dunduzu Chisiza to be their translator in pioneering to Ruanda-Urundi. On 1 May 1953, the trio arrived in Butare, where they shared a home together for the next eighteen months and taught the Faith.

(based on Earl Redman, *Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 91-95)

# Knights of Bahá'u'lláh

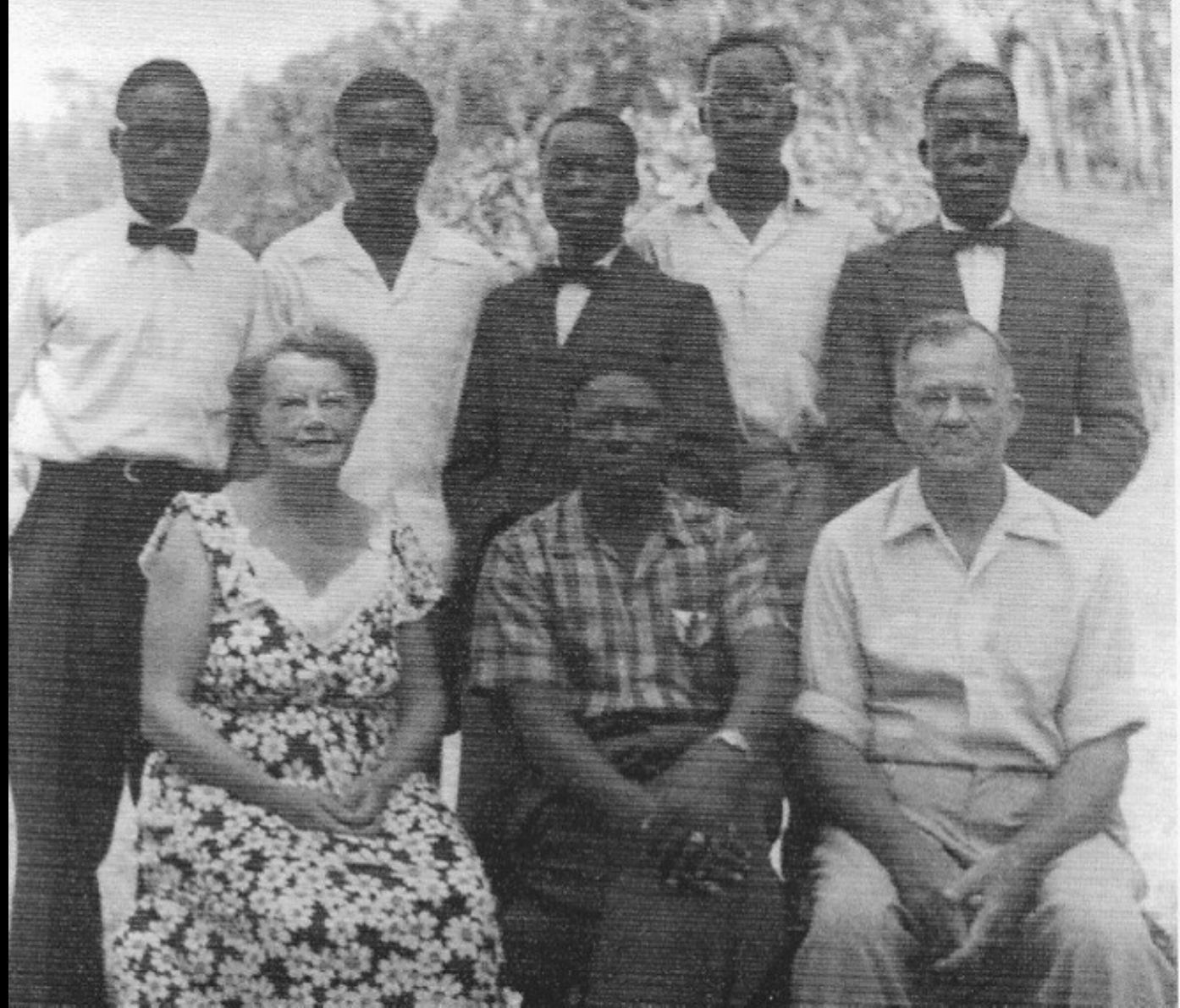
On 11 March 1954, the Collisons wrote:

“We seem to have reached the limit of English-speaking contacts here. Of these we think two will probably become Bahá'ís in time but we have found it very difficult for various reasons to find time when they are able and willing to meet with us either in their own homes or here.

We are not at all discouraged as to the eventual progress of the Faith in R.-U. Although education is conspicuously lacking, many people here are thinking for themselves. Many are eager to talk with us directly. Teaching through a translator is most difficult for all concerned. He [Dunduzu] indeed is a rare interpreter who doesn't take most of the spirit out of anything in transmitting it.”

(based on Earl Redman, *Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 91-95)

First Bahá'í  
community  
in  
Rwanda  
Burundi



# Knights of Bahá'u'lláh

In spite of their visa, because of government policies, they were only able to stay for 18 months, but by the time they left, there were 20 Bahá'ís. Dunduzu died in a car accident in September 1962.

Back in Uganda, the Collisons were involved with the construction of the Mother Temple of Africa and then became its custodians. They returned to California in 1966 and settled in Geyserville where there was a Bahá'í Summer School. Mary passed away in 1970, but Rex continued teaching the Faith and lived to the age of 99.

(based on Earl Redman, *Knights of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 91-95)



Bahá'í  
House of  
Worship  
  
Kampala  
Uganda



Geyserville  
Bahá'í  
School



California

