

AFRICA



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Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission: International Central Council

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ICC members, left to right: **Benjamin Mubenga, CEM**; **Daniel Geiser**, Francophone Network (guest); **Kalunga Komuesa, CMCO**; **Rod Hollinger-Janzen, AIMM**; **Damien Pelende, CEFMC**; **Phil Lindell Detweiler, MMN**; **Siaka Traore, EEMBF**; **Arnold Harder, AIMM (guest)**; **Hippolyto Tshimanga, MCCW**.

AIMM International Central Council Meeting 2009

For the first time since 2006, AIMM's International Central Council (Board) met face-to-face in Kinshasa, DR Congo, November 23-24. Meeting face-to-face is vastly superior to the telephone meetings that have been held in 2007 and 2008. However those same telephone meetings do enable us to invest more of our limited resources in ministry in Africa. Highlights of the 2009 meeting included:

- reporting on the August 2009 visit of ICC delegates **Kalunga Komuesa, Benjamin Mubenga** and **Damien Pelende** to **Bujumbura, Burundi** to further our knowledge of the existence of Mennonite churches in that country;
- budgeting \$1500 to make it possible for **Siaka Traore** to represent the ICC at a Fellowship of Evangelical Churches' (FEC) Consultation on evangelism among the Yalunka of Guinea Conakry. The Consultation will take place March 8-10, 2010 in Dakar, Senegal;
- underlining the opportunity for Congolese Mennonite churches to collaborate with the ICC in its African Missionary support program. The Burkina Faso church already jointly sponsors a missionary- **Paul Pohegnan**- with the ICC, in the city of Koloko;
- approving an overall AIMM-ICC 2010 budget of \$168,972. This budget includes \$39,500 in direct grants to Mennonite-related ministries in Africa, and provides a variety of additional support services to African churches.

Newly elected ICC officers include: **Benjamin Mubenga**, President; **Phil Lindell Detweiler**; Vice President; and **Steve Wiebe-Johnson**, MMN (not pictured), Secretary.

BURKINA FASO TRAINING CENTER

Siaka Traore, the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso's President, who has been supervising the construction of the Training Center, writes : " the Training Center is usable, the [national church



women's seminar] will be the first to use it. We have made provisional electrical installations, [outdoor] toilets are under construction, a hastily built straw covered sun canopy has been

completed. The canopy will serve as a dining hall. After the women's seminar we will move the Basic Bible Training course into the Center, and the students will be lodged there. THANKS BE TO GOD!"

Current estimates are that \$20,000 U.S. is still needed to finish the installation of electrical and plumbing fixtures. Are you willing to contribute to help finish the Training Center?

An up-to-date financial report for this project is available on request from AIMM.

Congo Story Gathering Project Progress Report

The Congo Story Gathering project celebrates God's grace at work in the lives of Congolese Mennonite Christians over the past century, by researching and telling some of their stories.



On November 25-28, 2009 in Kinshasa, the Story Gathering Project was launched through an orientation seminar.

All Congolese seminar participants pictured here are researchers except for the church Presidents.

From left to right: **Dominique Yona** (CMCO); **Beleji Mwatha Jackson** (CMCO); **Jean-Felix Tshimbala Nga Wa Mpoyi** (CEM); **Gregoire Moele Djenke Kaumba** (CMCO); President **Damien Pelende** (CEFMC- visiting); **Jean Boscoe Musakai Kabeya** (CEM); **Robert Sakayimbo Chibulenu** (CMCO); **Rod Hollinger-Janzen** (AIMM); President **Benjamin Mubenga** (CEM); **Salomon Luku Sa Muya** (CEM); President **Kalunga Komuesa** (CMCO).

Dr. Fohle Lygunda of DR Congo oriented participants in some basic techniques for collecting oral history. The researchers then learned how to operate the digital recorders and cameras with which they were equipped. They prepared themselves by making



lists of persons of interest to interview. They committed, beginning in January 2010, to each carry out 8 interviews per month. Motorbikes (7) were purchased to equip each researcher to reach all congregations and individuals in his area of language capability.

Income: \$53,300; Praise God for a great start! Thanks for your support!

Expenses: equipment \$16,313; orientation seminar costs \$5,800; research transportation fund \$3,500; project promotion \$2,290: TOTAL= \$27,903



Still needed: \$77,000 over the next two years for translating, editing and publishing. Your ongoing support is crucial!

Please pray for the researchers- that they would be led to the right people; that their work would indeed serve to give a voice to the voiceless; that their research would enhance the unity of the church; and that God would be glorified through the stories of faithful Christian witness in Congo. Pray also that the right person or persons could be found to transform research interviews into compelling stories.

Missionary in Koloko, Burkina Faso

Pastor Paul Pohegnan (far left) is sitting with Moumouni Traore (center) and a new believer (right) who began attending Mennonite worship in Koloko



after Paul prayed for him while sick, and the Lord healed him.

Seated outside his rented home on the outskirts of town last November, Paul pointed out the neatly swept area under a nearby tree where worship takes place every Sunday, as well as Bible study and prayer during the week.

Paul is reaching out to families who live in

the immediate neighborhood around his house, with the Good News of Jesus Christ. He also spends time near the local high school, assisting students with their homework and other issues such as medical needs, building relationships which can lead to faith commitments. The Burkina Faso Evangelical Mennonite Church, following God's call to mission by planting churches in urban areas, sent Paul to Koloko in October 2008. While the church provides pastoral oversight and some financial support for this work, partial support also comes from the AIMM-ICC through its African Missionary Support program. Indigenous African missionaries cost much less, and are often better able to bridge cultural divides, than

Western missionaries sent to similar settings. This year AIMM is helping to support Paul's ministry through a \$3,000 grant. Will you stand behind Paul's work, praying for him and supporting this work financially?

Mennonite Agricultural Innovators

I (Rod Hollinger-Janzen) grew up reading and hearing stories about how Mennonites have brought significant agricultural expertise and innovation



Issa displays beautiful heads of millet from one of his fields

wherever they have wandered: Prussia, the Ukraine, the Canadian prairies, Paraguay...

In November 2009, I saw and heard a similar story, this time about Mennonite farmers in Kotoura and Djiguera, Burkina Faso.

In Kotoura, several Mennonite church members are bringing new ideas and energy to traditional agricultural practices. Moumouni Traore has just finished a several year agronomy degree from the national university. When he returns periodically to his village,

he shares what he has learned with his family and others in the church. As a result, Moumouni's older brother Issa has started composting any organic waste that is produced in the household, in a pit especially dug for that purpose. Periodically he hauls the compost to his fields with a donkey and cart. He has noted grain production increases as a result. Issa is also working to diversify his income sources. He has planted a grove of cashew nut trees, raises guinea fowl in the dry season, and plants sweet

potatoes, melons, rice and specialty corn in addition to traditional crops such as millet and sorghum.



Paul, Mennonite farmer in Djiguera, tends his banana plantation

In Djiguera, Paul's village, there is a natural depression to the east which is swampy and holds at least some water year-round. Paul saw its potential as a water source for irrigation, and began to experiment. At that time some two decades ago, most of the bananas sold in Burkina Faso were imported from neighboring Cote d'Ivoire. Paul worked with other farmers in the village to form a cooperative. Together they control land and irrigation use around the water source, and work at marketing their produce. Today, many farmers in Djiguera grow bananas, rice and other labor intensive crops, and use irrigation which makes possible year round cultivation.

PARTNERSHIP DAYSPRING CONGO AND DAYSPRING USA

Ron Goertzen of Dayspring USA wrote several news updates in the weeks before his February 1, 2010 departure for Kamayala, Congo. Excerpts follow:

“As perhaps the poorest, most isolated and ignored of the Congolese tribes that had been a part of the former Mennonite mission work, I'd been told that the Chokwe region had not received a delegation visit from North America since the early 1980's. It's no wonder that our involvement has had such a profound impact. A friend recently shared this African proverb with me, “I know we are people because you came to visit us.” That is a picture of the hope and encouragement [that you as supporters of Dayspring] have been a part of; the simple power of presence and caring. “

“ My current plans, the best I've been able to discern, is that I will meet up with one of our board members, Simplicie, in Kinshasa and as soon as possible will head inland via some sort of ground transportation where we meet up with another member, Chibulenu, who will already be there on business. Then we head south where eventually all four of us will be together in Kahemba and Kamayala and will have our "Dayspring Congo" meeting... As Dayspring USA we have offered them \$7500 to use as they see fit based on the priorities they'd outlined. We also asked for some sort of implementation and accountability plan. That will be an agenda item for us as well as to see evidences of our financial investments. I'm excited about all this.”

Ron then reflected on the Dayspring Congo response to the above proposal.

“ I like what I see. What I note is a priority in taking care of the network of pastors who are a key link in the health and growth of the church there. Eight more bicycles for pastors would bring the total to around 32... I also like the prospect of setting up small businesses with them. Admittedly this is not something I can micro-manage. The principle is good and if this can be successful there is no one better than Wenyi Nzey (church deacon and businessman) in Kamayala to give it direction.”

The meetings have been held, and Ron has made it safely home to Nebraska. It is very encouraging to see a kind of “structured mutuality” emerging in this model, and growing trust as the partners get to know each other over time and are free to share ideas with each other.

CMCO CENTENNIAL WELCOME CENTER: WILL NORTH AMERICAN BUILDING TEAMS BE HELPING?



Dormitories, First Phase, in construction (Nov. 2009).

Mennonite Church of Congo (CMCO) continues to press on in its plan to erect a monument in celebration of 100 years of Mennonite presence in Congo. Plans are to build a “Welcome Center” which would include facilities for overnight lodging, a dining hall and a large meeting space.

The Welcome Center will enable the national church executive to better host church-wide meetings at its Tshikapa headquarters. Discussions with AIMM have led to a collaborative plan: CMCO has committed to make bricks, and provide lumber, sand, gravel, stone, etc. for the project. The church will also provide both skilled and unskilled labor for construction. AIMM and its North American partners will buy cement, metal roofing, electrical and plumbing fixtures, nails and other necessary imported construction materials.

Photo of the Cornerstone

Ceremony: (left to right) **Joli Birakara**, CMCO Vice President; **Laurent Kamizelo**, CMCO General Secretary; **Rev. Komuesa**, CMCO President; **Arnold Harder**; **Rev. Kikunga Mavule**, Regional Rep; **Sha Nyanga**, carpenter; **Mbya Inga**, mason.



Longtime AIMM Congo mission worker Arnold Harder

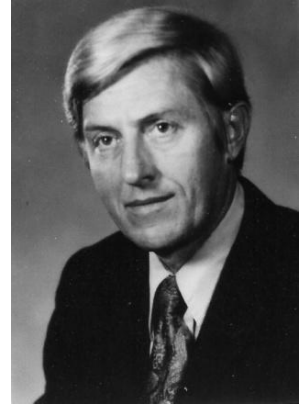
(agharder@frontiernet.net) has been walking with CMCO leadership over the past two years, as plans have been laid. The project has been divided into 5 phases. The first phase, a building with several rooms for overnight lodging, has been completed. CMCO is presently gathering materials for phases two and three- further rooms for lodging. As adequate construction materials are assembled, recruitment of building teams from North America may begin. Also helping with planning on the North American side are Dennis Miller of Silverwood Mennonite Church in Goshen, IN. (millerconcrete@comcast.net); Steve Nelson, Africa Mission Director for the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches, Fort Wayne, IN. (S.Nelson@fecministries.org). (Steve will be traveling during March 2010); and Carmen Good of Valparaiso (carmen_good@hotmail.com).

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN A BUILDING TEAM, IF THAT OPPORTUNITY BECOMES AVAILABLE?

The probable time frame for any such building teams would be between December 2010 and February 2011. Please feel free to contact one of the persons above involved in planning, or else the AIMM office. We should have definitive news on building teams to Congo sometime in June 2010.

In Memory of Loved Ones

Peter W. Buller, AIMM missionary to the Congo from 1951-1987, went to be with the Lord on August 28, 2009. Peter and his wife Gladys first served the Lord in Congo through starting Christian high schools and doing evangelism. Peter received a Masters of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary, and then taught in the Pastors School of Theology in Congo from 1966-1987. Peter's life was dedicated to building the church of Jesus Christ through sharing the Word of God. He did this through evangelism, through preaching and teaching, and through training pastors and church leaders. The loss of Peter is deeply felt by many, beginning with his wife Gladys, and his children James, Charles and Jeanette.



Thanks to all of you who made contributions in memory of Peter for pastoral training in Congo. We praise God for a life well lived, in service to Christ!



Lena Eitzen, pictured here with her husband Alvin, passed away on May 3, 2009 in Mountain Lake, MN. She was preceded in death by her husband in 2004. Lena and Alvin were strong supporters of God's mission through AIMM in several ways. Their son, Erwin Rempel, along with his wife Angela, served as AIMM missionaries in Botswana from 1994-2000, and Erwin continues to serve as President of the AIMM-U.S. board. Alvin and Lena were strong financial supporters of AIMM. That has

continued even after Lena's passing, as AIMM is the beneficiary of a substantial estate gift.

Lena is mourned first of all by her children: Howard, Erwin, Norman and Barbara.

Dr. John Edwin Zook went home to his Lord on August 14, 2009, in Portland, OR. John and his wife Jeanne served from 1955-1977 as medical missionaries in Congo with AIMM, in various locations such as Mukedi, Djoko Punda, Tshikapa and Tshikaji. In a written statement read at John's funeral by Dr. John Martens, Jim Bertsche recognized John for his joy for life; excellent relationships with Congolese; deeply held convictions; adventurous spirit in practicing medicine; and great generosity.

Thank the Lord for a life of service to Christ that still speaks! Those left to mourn his passing include first and foremost his wife Jeanne, along with their children Rebecca, Daniel and Paul.





Steve Estes, at 53, was senior pastor of Salem Church (FEC) in Flanagan, IL. when he suddenly passed away on Dec.19, 2009.

Survivors include his wife Jacqueline; parents James and Mary Estes; and two brothers, Timothy and Joseph.

Pastor Estes earlier served at Boynton Mennonite Church, Hopedale and later at Meadows Mennonite Retirement Community as chaplain. He was also interim pastor at Flanagan

Mennonite Church and Praireview Mennonite Church rural Flanagan. He authored over 12 books on Mennonite History. Steve was a joyful man of God and lived his life according to God's word. His passion for the Lord was deep and love for Jesus was great. On October 25, 2009 Steve led a worship service which celebrated what God has done through the Salem church as it sent missionaries to Congo to share Christ's love via AIMM. Jim and Jenny Bertsche, present at this service, were among those whom Salem has sent.

Sara K. Friesen Peters, 84, of Loveland, CO. passed away February, 5 2010. Sara, after receiving training as an R.N., served in Congo from 1951 to 1960, with AIMM. After returning to the USA, she married Howard L. Peters in 1966. Sara is survived by her stepson Max (Marcia) Peters, brother Abe Friesen, and sister Lena K. Friesen. She was preceded in death by her husband, parents and two sisters. The medical work Sara helped to establish is now carried on by Congolese Mennonite Christians. We give thanks to God for a life lived in service to Christ!



Hope for Congo Projects

"Providing fishing poles and access to the pond"



And the parched ground shall become a pool. Isaiah 35:7

1. Safe drinking water project- Projected dollar = \$8,000; 100% funded

The plan is to contain the spring at the source and with piping re-route the water to a storage tank where the water can be filtered and accessed. The goal is to provide water that is safe to drink and easy to access. The Congolese have already cleared the area at



the spring source. Next step is to purchase the tank, piping and supplies and arrange for shipping the supplies down river from Kinshasa to Ndjoko Punda.

**2. Technical trade school project – Projected dollar = \$5,000;
100% funded**

Land, Building & License have been secured. The first technical trade school is scheduled to start this September with 15 – 20 students at Tshikapa. Arrangements are currently being made to secure the necessary carpentry/masonry tools and a generator to provide electricity.



**3. Church roof repair and replacement – Projected dollar = \$15,000;
0% funded**



This church at Ndjoko Punda, built in the 1920s, has withstood the test of time and is a testament to the early missionaries that built it. Today a portion of the roof has collapsed and is being repaired and there is a need to replace the corrugated roofing.

**4. Bibles and hymnals project – Projected dollar = \$6,000;
25% funded**

Bibles are scarce in Congo. A typical Bible is old and tattered from use. We want to arrange for the printing of 500 Bibles and 500 Hymnals in the Tshiluba language to make available at a reasonable price. The plan is to subsidize a portion of the selling price. The cost is \$9.00 for a Bible and \$3.00 for a hymnal.

Future projects being considered include:

- Four additional trade schools in strategic locations
- Technology based communication infrastructure
- Upgrade of eight different medical facilities
- Bicycle manufacturing

For further information, contact Brad Graber at:

bradleygraber@yahoo.com .

Loving People Into God's Kingdom **Missionary celebrates her 100th birthday**

HESSTON, Kan. (Mennonite Mission Network) – **Irene Weaver** asked for the impossible. She didn't want "a lot of hoopla" for the celebration of her 100th birthday. But Weaver, who has served God on four continents, makes events memorable by her mere presence.

An overflow crowd filled Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan., on Jan. 23, to mark a century of faithful living by an extraordinary woman who was guided by singleness of purpose – drawing others toward God through love.

"The older I get, the more I realize that the whole purpose of life is to love people into God's kingdom," Weaver said. "That is my strategy of mission. People say to me, 'Irene, that's too simple.' But, I just tell them, 'That is the finale of my experience in mission.'"

In keeping with Weaver's deep commitment to Christ, her birthday celebration included communion. While Weaver held a container of bread pieces in her lap, people filed past, touching her shoulder as a sign of blessing or speaking a few words with a hug before moving on to dip the bread into chalices held by family members.

"I feel so blessed," Weaver said at the end of the service. "I have come through many things, not all of my choosing, but God has been with me. I

thank him."

Weaver has lived all phases of Mennonite mission. Born in India, just 11 years after the first Mennonite missionaries arrived, she grew up on the Dhamtari mission station, immersed in the ethos of those who described their work as that of being "light-bearers to a dark and famine-stricken land."



Weaver and her husband, Ed, began their mission careers in India. Although they spoke out against administration exclusively by expatriates, they always tempered their remarks.

"I can't criticize the way [the previous generation] worked because if I had been there in that time, I would have done the same thing," Weaver said. "But, this is a new day in mission."

An opportunity to breathe life into a different way of being sent in Jesus' name came in 1959 when Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, a predecessor agency to Mennonite Mission Network, invited Ed and Irene Weaver to respond to a request from churches in Nigeria. Over the next decades, the Weavers articulated mission strategies that are still foundational to Mennonite Mission Network's partnering with indigenous churches. Weavers also served with AIMM in Botswana from 1975 to 1977.

An important aspect of the Weavers' approach is a learning, collaborative posture. "We do well to forget who we think we are and recognize our need to learn before trying to teach others," Irene Weaver said.

One of the beautiful lessons African Christians taught Weaver was to abandon her pride and move in worship. She shared this lesson with North American churches. Joe Miller, a former member at Whitestone who wrote the history of the congregation, remembered Weaver dancing down the aisle during a service that she and her husband, Ed, were

leading. Weaver stopped by the pew of Howard Hershberger – CEO of what was then Hesston Corporation. Grabbing Hershberger's hand, Weaver danced him to the front of the congregation. As this story was being recounted at the centennial celebration, Hershberger approached the executive-style chair on wheels in which Weaver sat and asked her to dance. Weaver is a resident at Schowalter Villa in Hesston.

By Angela Rempel and Lynda Hollinger-Janzen, Mennonite Mission Network

AIMM Office News

AIMM 2009 Budget: We are deeply grateful to God who provides what we need, and to the faithful and loyal members of the AIMM family- yes, I mean YOU!- who have given generously and even sacrificially throughout 2009. It is only as we pray, walk, work and give together that AIMM is enabled to make a positive impact in God's mission. For this last fiscal year, which ran from February 1, 2009- January 31, 2010, giving to the AIMM General Fund and budget related projects was strong, totaling \$168,084. This puts us well above our budget goal of \$165,000. THANK-YOU! This is the fourth year running that the newly structured AIMM has finished the year with a positive balance.

We at AIMM continue to need your strong financial support this year.

Please give generously so that our shared work for God's kingdom in Botswana, Burkina Faso, Congo and South Africa can continue to bless many!

Estate Giving: Also during 2009, we received estate gifts from Elmer Neufeld and Lena Eitzen, totaling \$15,886. These gifts will be invested in longer term projects which build our African church partners' ministry capacities.

Don't forget to include AIMM in your will.

AIMM Speakers Available for your Congregation or Sunday School Class

The following persons welcome invitations to share with you about what God is doing through AIMM.

Brad Graber

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Stan Graber

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Arnold Harder

agharder@frontiernet.net

Dr. John Martens

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David Rocke

dcrocke@netins.net

Rod Hollinger-Janzen

rod@aimmintl.org

Jim Bertsche, former AIMM Executive Secretary, will speak at the spring meeting of the Illinois Mennonite Historical & Genealogical Society in Metamora, IL on April 24, 2010. IMHGS is the home for the AIMM historical archives.

Archives: The AIMM office accepts artifacts, papers, letters, photographs, journals, and more for storage in AIMM archives and for display. If you have items you wish to donate please contact our office.