Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission
International Central Council

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Dear AIMM Family,

Could you imagine your church existing and thriving without the Bible? **The scriptures are essential for Christian faith and life**. What would your church do without them? Imagine what it would feel like to go to church and hear the message, but the actual scripture is always read in a different language—one that is not your native language. Imagine how you would feel to hold the word of God in your hand in your native language for the first time—how much more personal, how much more immediate the stories within might become to you.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, **AIMM missionaries understood the importance of people being able to read and hear the gospel in their own languages**. They worked with collaborators from Pende and Chokwe language groups to translate the Bible into their languages. The Luba people, another group in the Mennonite Church of Congo, benefited from the Luba Bible translated by Presbyterian missionaries in a neighboring region. Today the **Bashilele people also make up a growing portion of the church, but they do not have the Bible in their language**. "Language is a very, very important instrument of communication. It is also part of a people's culture and expression. Having the Bible in the Kishilele language will **deepen the expression in the communication of the Gospel with the speakers of this language**," said Elder Nganjambe Luendjoko of Kalina Central local church in Ilebo City.

In recent years the Bashilele have been persistent in their desire for scripture in their own Kishelele language. Emery Pitshawoto of CMCo's Ilebo congregation noted, "Sometimes we are preached to in Kikongo, Lingala, Tshiluba, French and so on. But our old people don't know these languages, so it is hard for them to understand God's word. That is why we were looking for help to get the Bible in our own language. Hearing God's word in Kishelele is going to make a good story because [to hear the word of God] is evangelism." In response, in 2016 the Mennonite Church of Congo requested and received assistance from Wycliffe Associates to organize **a translation initiative**. With AIMM's help, eight translators received training and embarked on the process to produce a New Testament for the Bashilele people.

After nearly 10 years of challenging but persistent work, the **Kishelele New Testament is finally ready for printing**. This is the fruit of the Holy Spirit's guidance and the generosity of African and North American partners. The translators put in long hours of labor. Consultants from the Congolese Association for Bible Translation guided them through the correction phase and helped prepare the text for printing. AIMM donors, the Schowalter Foundation, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Church Canada Witness, and the Tyndale House Foundation all provided financial assistance along the way.

Our vision is to see the gospel in Kishelele bring spiritual refreshment and renewal to the Bashilele people, whose churches will have the New Testament in their own language for

the first time! We envision believers having **a deeper encounter with Jesus**, whose message will now be communicated in familiar cultural expressions. Sharing Jesus with unbelievers will be so much easier! Pastor Meshack Masheke tells us that "the translation of the Bible into Kishilele would be most welcome here in the territory of Ilebo, precisely in the city of Ilebo where I am a local pastor. **People are waiting for this translation in Kishelele with open arms.**"

Will you help us make this vision a reality? It will cost **$17.40 to print and deliver each New Testament into the hands of a Kishelele speaker**, of which there are approximately 129,000. We would like to do a preliminary run of 1,500 copies. If 150 people each donate the cost of 10 New Testaments, the vision will be a reality!

In Christ,

Bruce Yoder and John Fumana, AIMM Co-Executive Coordinators

P.S. Contribute to renewal among the Bashilele people! **Cover the cost of 10 Bibles with a gift of $174, or 5 Bibles for $87.** Your investment will ensure deeper understanding of the gospel among Bashilele believers and new opportunities to share God's word with those who have not yet heard the good news.