



Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission International Central Council

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Dear AIMM friends and partners,

Words fail me when I think of you and your faithful commitment to expressing the love of Christ to our African church partners through your prayers and your financial support for AIMM. Your love for the church in its African expressions and your deep desire to bless and encourage believers there, as well as give witness to God's love for all people everywhere, is an enduring source of hope and strength for me. Truly we are in this together. The AIMM family is a deep and wonderful expression of fellowship, of bearing one another's burdens within the worldwide body of Christ. Thank you for the crucial role you play, your active participation in this family!

We are all in unusual times right now, not unprecedented, but certainly unusual. At the very least, our routines have been significantly disrupted. For some of us, there is income loss, perhaps even job loss, and all the pain and difficulty coming from those events. Others are struggling to continue working while caring for young children who would normally be in school. Yet others are learning how to carry on with activities amid physical distancing, mask wearing, stay-at-home orders, and more. Many of our African partners are also beginning to experience great difficulty.

7 out of 10 people in sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to electricity and therefore do not typically have refrigerators and freezers in their households (83% in Burkina Faso, 85% in DR Congo, and 94% in Sierra Leone live without electricity). Therefore, most families must purchase food at the market each day. Meanwhile many of their cities are locked down, making food transportation challenging. Everyday commerce has slowed significantly because of stay-at-home orders. In this environment it is a huge struggle, first to earn enough money for daily food needs, and then to find the food one needs for self and family. Also, you are likely aware that many African health care systems have little access to the ventilators and other equipment needed to efficiently treat severe cases of COVID-19. Please keep our dear African sisters and brothers in your prayers as they face into this daunting situation in the next weeks and months.

Despite the reality of these huge and complex challenges, I wonder what God is calling us to in this time? What would the Spirit have us learn? I think of churches such as the Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim. This church began in Nigeria during the Spanish flu epidemic of 1917-1918. Anglican believers gathered in small prayer groups and asked the Lord to intervene and to heal them. Jesus did indeed intervene, many were healed, and these prayer groups developed an intimate, trusting relationship with Jesus while retaining African cultural expression. Many African believers came to feel at home in this environment, and the prayer groups eventually formed their own church outside of the British-controlled Anglican communion. Since that time, the Cherubim and Seraphim church has spread across West Africa and into Europe and North America. What is the Spirit sowing in the hearts of believers now, in response to the current pandemic?

"Following Jesus, Making Disciples, Serving the Church"

While many ministries supported by AIMM are paused right now for the sake of public health, I am happy to report that our African church partners are still being as active as possible, given the circumstances. Here are some examples:

- The city of Ndjoko Punda, roughly 850 km east of Kinshasa, DR Congo, was devastated over the last several years, first in 2017 by a sustained attack from Kamuina Nsapu rebels, and then in 2019 by a storm which destroyed most of the city's buildings. These events resulted in scarce health care resources and a scourge of child mortality in January 2020. Through concerted action March 1-12, 2020 by a team of Congolese Mennonite doctors and medical personnel assisted by Mennonite Church of Congo development coordinator, Joseph Nkongolo, over 2,200 persons received medical treatment in Ndjoko Punda. THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT FOR THIS EFFORT! Nkongolo is now working on a second phase of this emergency medical work, which will provide surgery for those in Ndjoko Punda who need it.
- AIMM is currently in discussion with Congolese church leaders about how best to help local Mennonite congregations in Congo learn to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- In Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, construction is proceeding on the church in the Kodenii neighborhood. This congregation, begun with a group of children, will soon be an established presence in this predominantly Muslim neighborhood. Thanks to AIMM church partners in Canada and the USA for their support for this project.
- Church leaders in Burkina Faso are working with trained farming expert, Arouna Sourabie, to establish an agricultural training center. Several pieces of land are being considered as part of the discernment process. When land has been secured in the church's name, AIMM will send \$21,600 in grant funds we received from the Schowalter Foundation for the digging of a well and the building of the training center.

Please keep AIMM in your thoughts and prayers going forward. You are likely aware that plans are for me to step down as AIMM Executive Coordinator at the end of 2020. I trust that God still has work for AIMM to do beyond my time of leadership. Your involvement will be crucial to AIMM's future. Thank you for continuing your support for AIMM in the coming years!

Your prayers and financial gifts are concrete expressions of the love of God. They are much of what holds all this work together. As you are able, we need your support as much as ever right now. We also want to assure those of you in difficulty, of our love and our walking with you in prayer.

In Christ,



Rod Hollinger-Janzen
AIMM Executive Coordinator