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Building for the Future!

AIMM is building for the future! That means investing in **vocational formation for young people, training church leaders, and providing basic infrastructure to sustain communities of faith** among our African brothers and sisters. This year 24 students from Bible school to master's degree levels are being formed with the help of AIMM scholarship assistance. These leaders are equipping themselves to serve their churches and communities as pastors, evangelists, missionaries, teachers, medical personnel, and in other professions.

AIMM's African members are perhaps more attentive to the **importance of physical places for worship** than are those of us who reside in North America, where durable buildings abound, and some churches find the space in their buildings to be less utilized than in previous decades. We thank God for African churches whose **members have worked together to raise durable church buildings** that withstand inclement weather and are not vulnerable to the uncertainties of borrowed or rented spaces. The **AIMM family has added its contribution**, providing a boost to complete several recent building projects.

Students and teachers working in Lycée Miodi's new workshop space

Lycée Miodi is Retooling its Programs

Founded in 1974 as a **collaborative project between Congolese church leaders and AIMM missionaries**, Lycée Miodi is a high school that provides young women with **academic and vocational training**. The school receives an annual donation of sewing machines from AIMM that it awards to graduating seniors who have completed the seamstress program, but the workshop where students learn to sew has been under-equipped for years. In the last year, AIMM and donor partners have provided **a "retooling" of Lycée Miodi's sewing workshop**. To date, AIMM has equipped the workshop with 20 sewing machines, as well as worktables and supplies like scissors, fabric, needles, etc.

AIMM also supported the **completion of the construction work** on the workshop premises. Additionally, AIMM is planning to support the **new Information Technology program** at Lycée Miodi and will equip the new computer lab space with 15 computers later this year.

Christine Mbunduka of the Literacy Project in Kitwit studies while using her new glasses

The Literacy Project Illuminates God's Word

The **Literacy Project** in the DRC continues to illuminate the lives of the women who participate in it. People who cannot read or write in the Congo make up over 19% of the population, and the Evangelism through Literacy Project was started by women leaders of the three Congo Mennonite denominations in partnership with AIMM to address this problem.

Christine Mbunduka of Kikwit says that before joining the Literacy Project, she was "like a blind person, abandoned, marginalized and disregarded" due to not being able to read or write. Like thousands of others across the DRC, Christine is benefitting from new financing from AIMM and donor partners allowing the literacy centers to build new blackboards, produce new learners' manuals that will replace worn out materials, and provide reading glasses for those who need them. Christine is appreciative of her new glasses that allow her to read and understand Bible verses on her own. Christine says she "thank[s] the Lord because he has made [her] a useful person in the community, now that [she] is no longer like a blind person."

Young people in Burkina Faso living out their “faith and life in Jesus Christ” at a recent gathering for youth

The Future of the Church:

the youth are driving the church’s mission

It may seem obvious that youth are the future of the church. But among AIMM African partners, there is the added factor that around 60% of Africa’s population is younger than 25 years old. Youth make up a disproportionately large sector of the church, and congregations increasingly depend on them as drivers of the church’s mission.

In Burkina Faso, 150 young people gathered over the last week of March to worship, pray, and deliberate about joys and challenges in their lives. Speakers addressed topics such as how to remain zealous for the Lord; how to succeed in school, in agriculture, and in business; and how to develop healthy romantic relationships. The week was an opportunity for learning and encouraging one another and to reinforce their faith, especially for the large group of youth whose families do not agree with their choice to follow Jesus.

> Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.
>
> - Matthew 18:4-5

In the DRC, 135 Mennonite youth also gathered from the 10th to the 13th of March for encouragement and reflection. There was time for worship, teaching, and the contribution of several youth choirs alongside a soccer camp. André Kalenga, who leads the youth activities for the Mennonite Community of Congo (CMCo), said, “We give glory to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for his provision and protection. And we thank you who support us in prayer and in other ways.”

Accompanying the youth through educational assistance, counsel, and faith formation is a welcome challenge as AIMM African and North American members strengthen the foundation of tomorrow’s church.

Young women of CMCo

From the Ground Up: Buildings for the church

Much more than simply Sunday morning places of worship, many **church buildings house daily morning and evening prayers, weekly Bible studies,** and **women's and youth meetings**. A durable church structure serves as a base from which **mission initiatives radiate outward** into the surrounding communities.

» Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. «
- Exodus 25:8

(On the top left, members of CEM's Bufuki local church in Mwene-Ditu enter the church building; on the top right, François Tshiaba Mudiayi, an Elder at the Bufuki congregation in Mwene-Ditu, helps with construction. On the bottom left, Reverend Jean Felix Cimbalanga surveys the beginning stages of construction in 2024, The building has come a long way in not much time!)

We celebrate the Evangelical Mennonite Church of the Congo's completion of the structure for its Bufuki church in Mwene-Ditu. After lots of effort over several years, assistance from AIMM supporters provided the materials necessary to roof the structure. Along with masons and carpenters, church members young and old worked to add the bricks necessary to finish the walls and roof the building. A symbol of the synergy of church members' efforts and God's provision, the faithful make the trek for the rhythm of worship and community activities for which the church serves.

Several years ago members of the Kahemba Mennonite Brethren Church mapped local resources and developed a plan to develop their community as part of their Assets-based Community Development training. Today the training and hard work are coming to fruition. Relying solely on local resources, they have built the structure of a guesthouse, which they plan will be open to the public and will raise support for their congregation's ministries. Join us in thanking God for their initiative and for the progress to date!

(Above, workers put metal on the roof of the Kahemba guesthouse in the DRC; on the left, Pastor Solomon Bandor checks out the recent construction on the 6 Mile church building in Sierra Leone.)

For two years the Christ Salvation Mennonite Church in Sierra Leone has been raising the walls on a church building for its 6 Mile congregation, outside of Freetown. Brick by brick from the footer to the roof, with a delay due to damage by high winds at one point, the walls inched upward until this past April, when the roof was completed. We rejoice with the 6 Mile congregants, who can use the covered building while adding the finishing touches.

Pastors' Empowerment

Fifty-eight pastors from the three AIMM member denominations in the DRC are participating in an entrepreneurial project preparing them for bi-vocational ministry.

Three CEFMC pastors in Kikwit (from left to right: Pastors Kimbau, Job Sota and Daniel Kwakala) bought a cassava and maize flour mill that they manage as a partnership after receiving training and a loan from AIMM.

"In our neighborhood, children had a serious problem going to grind cassava, maize, millets given the distance and this created violence, and girls were exposed to rape. But since we installed the mill, this problem has been solved. We are very grateful to AIMM, through CEFMC, for having given us a fund that enabled us to buy a mill, which helps us a lot by resolving several financial situations in our 3 families, school fees, medical care, and food. We pay back our credit every month without difficulty," reported the three pastors.

CLIP & SHARE
Tell a 3-min story of God at work in Africa

Pray
WITH US

Please join us in prayer.
Clip & save prayer requests

Continue to **pray for peace in Burkina Faso and the Democratic Republic of Congo**. Our brothers and sisters in Burkina Faso live with the **constant threat of terrorist attacks**, and **2.1 million people remain displaced** by the violence. In Eastern DRC, **many children have dropped out of school** after fleeing the recent violence, and militias and the army are **forcibly conscripting young men**. Pray that political and military leaders will stop the violence. **Pray for protection for AIMM church partners and the whole population.**

Pray for the missionaries sent by AIMM African member churches. Pray for missionaries Augustin Boika and Dieudonné Ndimwaku who are spreading the gospel among Batwa people in the Bikoro Territory and Mbandaka in the DRC. Pray for Yaya and Medina Bengaly, missionaries form the church in Burkina Faso, who are leading a group of new believers among the Jalonké people in Mali. **Thank God for their work, and pray for perseverance and provision** and that their efforts will be fruitful.

Community Notices

Marking milestones within the AIMM family

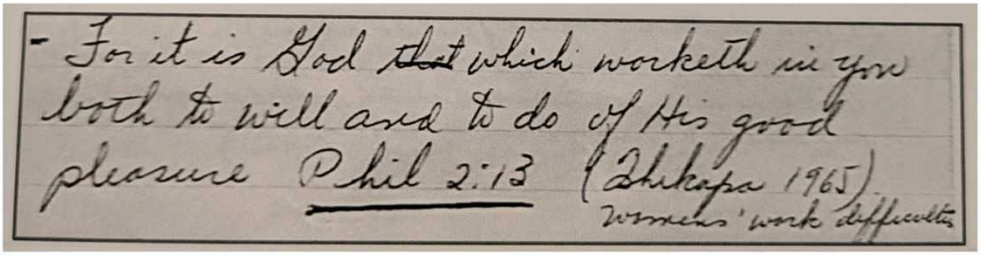
AIMM and the Kalonda Bible Institute are on a journey to increase the capacity of the church in Congo to prepare future church leaders. Having experienced a significant reduction in subsidies in recent years, alternative ways of sustaining this important work must be found. In April, KBI staff, students, and their spouses laid the foundation for a savings and loan initiative that will support a bi-vocational model for students and staff.

Pastor Muya and KBI Director Bercie Mundedi

Pilgrimage event in South Africa

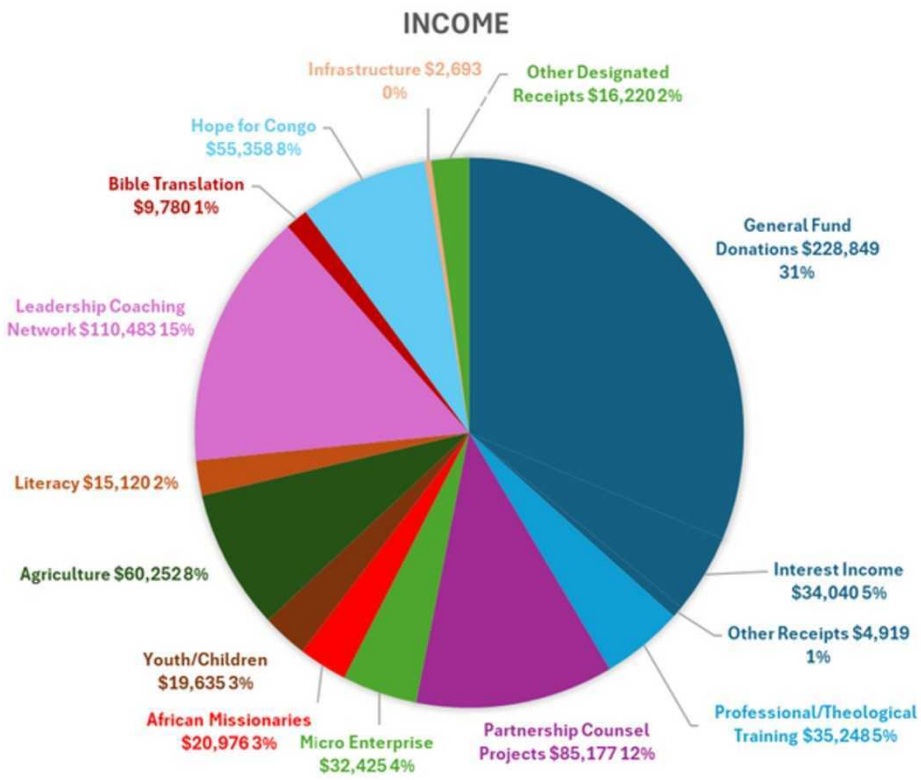
In a recent **pilgrimage event in Johannesburg, South Africa**, AIMM partner Iziko Lamaqabane brought Christian leaders together to reflect theologically about land. They explored biblical stories and teachings and visited work by the Women in Agriculture and Rural Movement. These church leaders went home with new ideas about agricultural practices and ways of caring for God's creation.

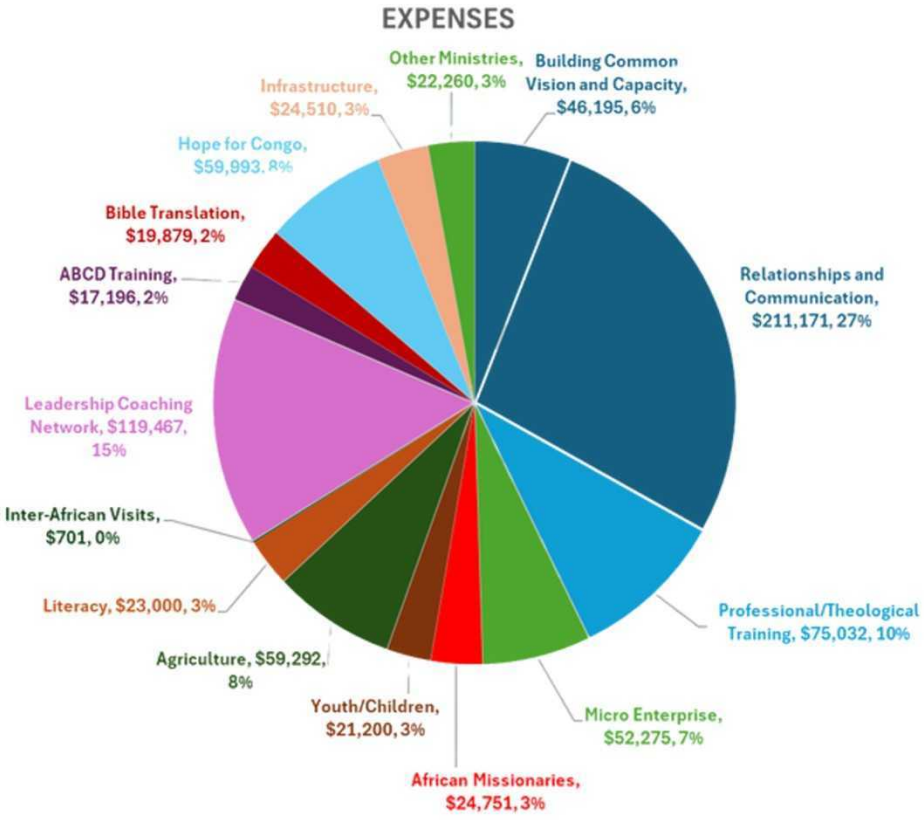
Martini Janz celebrated her 98th birthday on May 15th! Martini has been a long-time supporter of AIMM and specifically of the girls' school Lycée Miodi in the DRC. Martini, her husband Arthur, and their children served in the DRC from 1951-'69. Martini then worked in the home office from 1977-'94. Below is a Bible verse Martini copied into her journal in 1965 while working with women in the DRC.


- For it is God that which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure Phil 2:13 (Shikapa 1965) Women's work difficult

AIMM Reports: 2024 Income and Expenses

With much gratitude AIMM can witness to God's provision over the previous fiscal year. Thanks to unrestricted income, including general fund donations, AIMM has gathered partnership councils through which young people received scholarship assistance, pastors undertook training in entrepreneurship, illiterate women learned to read and write, African missionaries initiated new faith communities, and displaced people received food aid. General fund giving has allowed AIMM to be a bridge for these collaborative ministries between North American and African partners.





AIMM investments over the previous year demonstrate the value given to building for the future. Preparing new church leaders and reinforcing the capacity of current leaders through theological education, entrepreneurial engagement, and coaching ministries ranked high among priorities. Constructing new worship spaces, Bible translation, African missionary outreach, and reinforcing agricultural capacity among village churches are helping to lay the foundation for the years to come. As such the AIMM family strives to be faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to us.

"Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received."
– I Peter 4:10

» Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. «

Matthew 6:10

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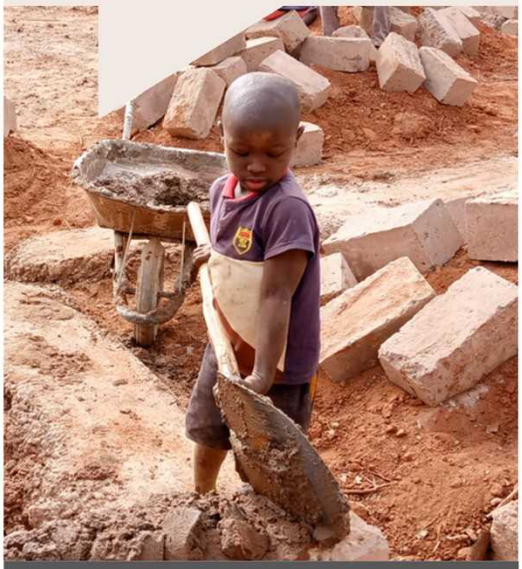
Cover photo: Emmanuel Traoré hauls bricks for the Samogohiri church project in Burkina Faso. Emmanuel is actively involved in church life in Samogohiri.

"It gives me great joy to see how we are all giving thanks for God's great work at Samogohiri, the fruit of our *koinonia* as in the days of the early church," wrote Fabé Traoré, pastor of the Samogohiri Mennonite Church in Burkina Faso. "Since we embarked on this church building project in 2016, everyone brought what they had to fill this need. The community did what it could, and you all brought what you could to show the strength of the church. For this we thank you! The fruit of this communion is that today we have a building that can hold several hundred people for many different kinds of occasions. This building will be used for gatherings of the Samogohiri congregation, for other churches in the area, and for activities of the Burkina Faso Evangelical Mennonite Church."

Indeed, AIMM partners in Africa, North America, and France joined their forces to respond to the need for a meeting place for believers in Samogohiri. The local community, the Burkina Faso Evangelical Church, Mennonite Men from North America, the French Mennonite Mission, and the Prieb Foundation all generously contributed for this new worship space to come to fruition. Praise be to God!

EVERYONE HELPS WITH CHURCH CONSTRUCTION IN SAMOGOHIRI



Emmanuel Traoré, the same young man on the cover; in this picture from 2021, Emmanuel was helping dig the foundation for the church building.