

# Les Mennonites. Soyons Unis dans L'AMOUR FRATERNEL

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*Naomie Ngalula*

*mother.  
survivor.  
student.*



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**O**n his recent visit to DR Congo, Rod Hollinger-Janzen, AIMM Executive Coordinator, gathered these stories of some of the extraordinary individuals working through AIMM sponsored programs in the Congolese church, transforming themselves and their communities through the love of God. These are but a few examples of the many saints in the Mennonite churches of Congo living into the kin-dom of God. Your continued support of AIMM and its partner churches affirms and empowers leaders and witnesses like these in their ongoing ministries, seeking healing and wholeness in the wake of violence and corruption.

*healing*

**N**aomie Ngalula has deep scars across her neck and her right arm where a Kamuina Nsapu militia member struck her repeatedly with a machete. "He entered my house with a rifle in hand", said Naomie. "I was fleeing and he could not use the rifle against me, so he tried with the machete. Once he struck my neck, to protect myself I put my arm up across my neck, and he struck my arm several times. I was finally able to get away." Naomie fled with her husband and children, and the family made its way



Rev. Ann Marie Kapinga teaches a literacy class

to Tshikapa, where they have been receiving assistance through the inter-Mennonite Kasai Relief Project. She found healing for her physical wounds through a Doctors Without Borders clinic in Tshikapa.



Kanzala Literacy Class

Now two years later, Naomie is attempting to rebuild her life. She regularly attends a literacy class at the Kanzala Centennial Temple, where a group of about 30 women are gradually learning to read and write. "If these tragic events had not happened, I would not have this opportunity to improve my life," says Naomie. Rev. Anne Marie Kapinga, an ordained Mennonite pastor trained at the August 2018 literacy training of trainers seminar of AIMM's Congo Literacy Project, teaches the class.

## *emerging*

This is Kanku Ngalamulume; he is 10 years old," says Joseph Nkongolo pointing to a young boy as we emerge from the Kanzala Centennial Temple in Tshikapa after worship. "A couple of years ago his village, Kamonia, was attacked by Kamuina Nsapu fighters and his parents were both killed in his presence."

Joseph continued, "Not knowing what to do, Kanku followed a group of displaced families as they fled from Kamonia and walked north for 75 kilometers to Tshikapa. When the group arrived, Kanku was identified as being among the most vulnerable displaced persons. He was registered with the inter-Mennonite Kasai Relief Project, placed with a family, and began to receive food assistance."

But Joseph noticed that as time passed, Kanku was losing weight and energy instead of improving. The family with which he was placed was itself very needy, and they were using Kanku's food allotment to take care of themselves. Mennonite Church of Congo's Distribution Committee talked over Kanku's situation, and they decided that a change was needed. One of the committee's members, Adolphine Tshiama, spoke up: "I will take him into my home."



Adolphine Tshiama, Kanku Ngalamulume, and Joseph Nkongolo

## *T*

he early morning mist is still lingering in the air as we make our way across Mbuji Mayi toward the north edge of the city. Businesses are not yet open, and the main activity we see in the streets

Joseph and Adolphine are among those who have given leadership to this Kasai Relief project right from the start. In Tshikapa there are approximately 600 families now receiving assistance of various kinds, almost 5,000 persons. The logistics of assisting so many people is a huge challenge for the distribution committee. What I find especially remarkable is the daily commitment demonstrated by Joseph, Adolphine and many others to pay attention, and to give of themselves in very significant ways, so that no one slips through the cracks.

Since Kanku began to live with Mama Tshiama, his situation has improved markedly. He is growing physically because he is receiving adequate nutrition. He is attending school, with assistance for school fees and supplies coming from the inter-Mennonite Kasai Relief Project. "Here is Kanku now!" exclaims Joseph. We meet him, standing peacefully beside his new Mama. She puts an arm around him, holding his trauma, his growth, and the emerging hope of the next generation.

## *rising*



are Congo's "truck drivers," pushing rigged up bicycles piled high with large sacks of charcoal.

We arrive at a modest tin roofed house, where we park the car and move toward the yard. One of the first things I notice is a small building not far from the house, with words painted on its side: "9ème CEM: Ministère d'Evangélisation par Alphabétisation" (9<sup>th</sup> Communauté Evangélique Mennonite/Evangelical Mennonite Church: Ministry of Evangelism through Literacy). A crowd of women, mostly youthful, some with babies on their hips, are gathered in the yard. They stop visiting to observe us curiously as we draw near.

A slight older woman steps forward to greet us, and she invites us to enter the building. It is 5 meters long, and 3 meters wide. Evangelical Mennonite Church (CEM) President Cimbalanga, CEM women's leader Jose Mbombo, and I sit down on plastic chairs which together take up more than 1/3 of the available space. Women crowd into the remaining area, but not even half of them are able to find a place. More crowd around the door looking in.

The students strain to look around each other to see the blackboard and follow the lesson. The teacher is unperturbed despite the difficult conditions. She has a strong sense of presence which commands respect. She radiates calm, and her gentle spirit communicates love to her students as she speaks and interacts with them.



Jacqueline Ntumba (L) with her class

Later, the teacher introduces herself to us: she is Jacqueline Ntumba, mother of 6 and the Director of a large CEM Primary school in Mbuji Mayi. She explains that every Sunday, Tuesday and Friday from 6:30-7:30am she teaches a literacy class here in this tiny storeroom before she heads off to her school for the day. In the afternoons of those same days, another teacher, Rose Kaleka, serves a second literacy class.

I ask Jacqueline what motivates her to add literacy classes to her already formidable workload as mother and school director. "There are two things," she states. "I am doing it out of love for my neighbors. I want them to have the opportunities I have as a literate person. Also, we study a Bible verse together at the end of every lesson. This means that I get to share God's Word with them and invite them into a relationship with Jesus Christ."