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# Africa Journal

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## Hearing the voice of Anabaptism

### in South Africa today

**For the Anabaptist Network in South Africa (ANiSA), Anabaptism is a lens through which to re-discover Jesus and his call to witness and discipleship. The tradition offers a spirituality of *gelassenheit* and a posture of the believers' church.**

ANiSA's 21st century Anabaptist embodiment of Jesus' gospel highlights five theological convictions: **1** centralizing Jesus is integral to our realities and faith as we are not interested in Anabaptism as an end in itself, but as a lens through which to re-discover Jesus and his call to witness and discipleship: Anabaptism is an accompaniment to engaging the world, **2** a critique of the Christendom that both Catholic and Protestant traditions embodied in the Reformation and post-Reformation period, **3** the church as an alternative social body, the Messianic community, **4** we are at a distance from power, a critique of the state and civil society in South Africa, a radical alternative, **5** peace (*shalom*) and justice are at the heart of the gospel.



Yaya (Benjamin) and Madina Bengali founded a new group of believers in Jaluné, Mali.



## Ministering among the Jalunké of southern Mali

The Burkina Faso spring school holidays provided an opportunity for a reunion of sorts.

Yaya (Benjamin) and Madina Bengali, along with their two youngest children, have been living and ministering among the Jalunké people of southern Mali for the past year. Sent by the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso to be the first missionary presence in that part of Mali, their four older children remained in Burkina to continue their education. Spring break was a time for them to travel to Mali, for the family to be reunited, if only over the holidays, and for the older children to see their parents' ministry.

Indeed their work has been fruitful! A small group of believers has emerged. They meet every morning to start their day with prayer and are writing worship songs in their own language. Young people have responded well to Yaya and Madina's invitation to learn about Jesus and become the nucleus of a new community of faith. Praise the Lord!



Participants in the Kwilu Province's VSLAs hold their certificates and the strongbox at the training



## Economic stability in Kahemba, DR Congo

Join the AIMM family in celebrating the opening of five **village savings and loan associations (VSLAs)** in Kahemba territory of Kwango Province!

With AIMM's assistance, the Mennonite Brethren Church of the Congo (CEFC) started 9 VSALS in Kwilu Province in January 2022. They provided the **training and structure for 225 participants to increase their capacity to provide for their families.**

After three trimesters in operation, the 9 associations had added the equivalent of \$10,788 USD of their own savings to the \$2,700 of seed capital that AIMM supplied.

The 167 members of the 5 new associations in Kahemba, 114 women and 53 men, belong to a population once heavily involved in the search for diamonds. Since the diamond business has decreased, VSLA participants are investing their work and capital in other income-generating initiatives to increase the well-being of their households.

Please pray for success, that members' capacities will increase to the betterment of their families and the witness of God's people in Kehemba!



# Literacy in the DRC

**One woman's story of how the literacy program has changed her life**



**33% OF WOMEN  
IN THE DRC CANNOT  
READ OR WRITE**

By Anita Gizela Kasanza

I had polio starting when I was 2 years old. Because of the illness I was not able to go to school. Thanks to AIMM with its literacy for evangelism project I heard about literacy from Mama Fumana and my teacher, Mr. Kingulu, who taught me at home because I couldn't get around.

» I was blind, and  
now I can see. «

Now I am able to read and write correctly. I write letters and get responses. I try to respond with what I have learned in the literacy for evangelism program. I can also teach others at my home. The literacy program also helped me learn to count better and calculate numbers better.

It is also this literacy training that allowed me to attend computer training at CAL Congo (Computer Assisted Learning - Congo). They love me and it is also because I already had some knowledge from my literacy training that I was admitted to Cal Congo. God bless.

**AFTER SHE CONTRACTED  
POLIO AT THE AGE OF 2,  
Gizela's life changed.**

Unable to attend school, Gizela didn't learn to read or write until she joined the literacy program at the age of 40. In order to attend classes, however, **Gizela had to hire two motorcycles:** one to transport her wheelchair and one for herself. Earlier this year, AIMM provided Gizela with a second wheelchair to leave at the institute where she is taking computer classes so transportation is a bit easier.



**Decolonization** means that concepts need to be conceived as invitations to dialogue and not as impositions—the expression of availability to engage in dialogue and the desire to exchange.

*(Maldonado-Torres, 2007: 261)*

» If you cannot hear the mouth eating, you cannot hear the mouth crying. «

*Rwandan proverb*



**ABCD Training for 50 People**

Thirty participants including students, teachers, Kalonda Bible Institute school management staff, high church leaders, and high school principals have attended ABCD training at Kalonda Bible Institute.

This has enabled the institution to **develop a plan of action based on local resources**. The training has helped to shift the mind-set of the Kalonda Bible Institute Community. They are now looking from inside, **starting with what they have, and building with what they know**. The school is developing the capacity to initiate projects with available assets and seeks leverage to expect growth.

The Mennonite Community of the Congo (CMCo) had its first ABCD training session from August 21 to 25, 2023, in Tshikapa.

50 participants attended, including national and provincial church leaders, women, youth, and lay leaders, education and health institution managers from all CMCo conferences.

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



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# Christian faith — at the site of struggle

**Praxis** through a Freirean lens refers to the attempt to keep theory and practice in a balanced dialectic so that one acts reflectively and thinks for action

**We ask**

**What significance does Anabaptism have in South Africa?**

**How might Anabaptism learn from communities in South Africa?**

**How might Anabaptism assist us in shaping our faith in South Africa?**

Reflecting about and **living Christian faith at the site of struggle** is the way Mzwandile Nkutha (Mzi) describes the ministry of AIMM partner ANISA (the Anabaptist Network in South Africa).

Drawing on the **legacy of four decades of AIMM missionary work** with African Initiated Churches in southern African nations, Mzi leads this network of congregations, pastors, and other **committed Christians** from many different churches and denominations. Despite different backgrounds, they share a **common conviction** that the Anabaptist faith tradition has something of value to offer their churches and communities. Some churches struggle to help members caught in cycles of poverty to find sustainable livelihoods. Others are coming to grips with the continued prevalence of practices and assumptions of Apartheid that have not disappeared, despite the formal end of Apartheid structures.

**Together**, ANISA members are discerning how to be, in both thought and practice, a **faithful people of God**. In the face of conflicts aggravated by inequity among people of different classes and races, they are working to build **communities of shalom** that share the healing Gospel in contexts where there is brokenness and violence. Through Mzi and his co-workers, **the Anabaptist legacy is strengthening Christian faith** in South Africa and beyond.



**PILGRIMAGE as a theological praxis**

- 1 The practice of pilgrimage is a way of unlearning speed.
- 2 It is a helpful paradigm for mission... the goal of the pilgrim is not to solve but to search, not so much to help as to be present.
- 3 Pilgrims are slowly confronted by a different world that begins to interrupt their own.
- 4 Pilgrims do not rush to a goal, but slow down to hear the crying and pain of the community. They are not as interested in making a difference as they are in making new friends. The pace is slower, more reflective.
- 5 Pilgrims set out not so much to assist strangers but to eat with them.

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# Pray

WITH US

Please join us in prayer.  
Clip & save prayer requests

## Please pray for abundant crops

In the Semente Mennonita Farming Project, Phase 1 production included sowing:

- 430 kg of beans
- 5,250 kg of manioc
- 150 kg of soya beans
- 50 bags of potatoes

Phase 2 is planting:

- 3 hectares of beans
- 5 of hectares of cassava (manioc)
- 2 hectares of soya beans
- 5 hectares of tomatoes
- 5 hectares maize

## Please pray for provision

For some concrete needs of the project:

- 1 Tractor
- 1 Grinding mill
- 1 Tricycle vehicle
- 2 motorcycles
- Fertilizer
- Seeds



For livestock breeding:

- Goats and sheep
- Barbed wire for security

## Please pray for ABCD training opportunity

AIMM is seeking to raise 84,000 US\$ for its projects in the Angola, Burkina Faso, D.R. Congo, Sierra Leone, and South Africa.

## Community Notices

Marking milestones within the AIMM family



### Phyllis Lehman

Phyllis J. Lehman, 95, of Kidron, Ohio passed away on March 31, 2023. She was born in January 17, 1928, and married Vernon Lehman in 1949. In 1977, Phyllis and Vernon went to the now-DRC/then-Zaire to serve as houseparents at the TASOK hostel in Kinshasa through AIMM. Phyllis' sense of adventure, ability to craft a good letter, and love of children served her well in her role as houseparent. Phyllis, Vernon, and their two youngest children were in Zaire from 1977-1979.

Read the full obituary at:  
[www.legacy.com/us/obituaries](http://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries)

### Gatherings of AIMM Family

Thanks be to God! Long-awaited gatherings with AIMM Co-Executive Coordinator John Fumana and his wife, Lucie, took place in August and September! We are grateful John and Lucie's visas came through and along with Co-Executive Coordinator Bruce Yoder, they visited with many of our AIMM family:

Waterloo, Ontario  
Newton, KS  
Mountain Lake, MN

Goshen, IN  
Freeman, SD  
Winnipeg, Manitoba.



Lucie Wumba Kembo, Aimé Ndunge (an AMBS student), and John Fumana at the Goshen gathering

## Continuation of relief efforts for internally displaced people in Bita

The church in Bita, DRC, is continuing to show God's love to their neighbors by supporting people displaced in the conflict between the Teke and Yaka ethnic groups. So far the church has provided:

- Temporary housing for 13 families
- Permanent housing for 8 families
- Health care for 6 people, including 4 children
- Surgery for 1 person
- 202 25-kg bags of corn flour to 58 families

Reverend Kutumbana reports that many of the displaced people have started to worship with Bita church members, and some of them have converted to Christianity.

Efforts continue to find training, housing, and farming opportunities for the internally displaced people in Bita. These efforts would not be possible with your prayer and financial support; thank you!

Gloire Nkumu's mother gives her clean water as a result of Bita relief efforts



*“The King will reply, ‘truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me’” Matthew 25:40*

Lord Jesus exhorts his disciples to bring hope and joy to the world by taking care of the weakest (the least), the marginalized, the needy, the hungry, the sick, the homeless, the widows, and the orphans.

**In so doing we are showing the love of Jesus himself.**

The Semente Mennonita project in Angola is impacting the village communities by **increasing their agricultural production** to support their families. The Assets-Based Community Development Training that has helped **promote local initiatives with local resources** is having a positive impact on the Kalonda Bible Institute and is gaining ground in the country. There is a high demand for training and funds are needed to respond to all these requests.

Please, join AIMM in being a blessing for “the least one of these brothers and sisters” by supporting this call to serve God and extend his Kingdom through acts of mercy, love, and compassion.

**Co-Executive Coordinators**

**John Fumana  
and Bruce Yoder**





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»» How beautiful upon  
the mountains are the feet  
of a messenger who  
proclaims peace ««

Isaiah 52:7

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**"whatever you did for one of these least brothers  
and sisters of mine, you did it to me"** Matthew 25:40

It is in response to the Lord's call, AIMM is working with its African partner churches to reach out to "these least of the Lord Jesus."

The literacy project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is **changing the lives of women** who could not read and write. They are now active in their churches and can undertake self-help activities for their families, including income-earning opportunities.

This project has also impacted some non-believers and people of other faiths who have now made the decision to **accept Jesus Christ** as their Lord and Savior.

The Evangelism through Literacy Project was **started by women leaders** of the three Congo Mennonite denominations in **partnership with AIMM**. Currently, there are a total of 2,803 people taking classes in 8 provinces spread out around the DRC. Literacy is changing lives and AIMM is proud to be part of this partnership!

MILLIONS OF  
CONGOLESE ARE NOT  
LITERATE, PRIMARILY  
WOMEN



Belinda Mukidi Misadi  
with her reader

