



Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission International Central Council

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Dear AIMM Family,

In October AIMM Partnership Council members spent days traveling in cars, busses, and planes to meet in Burkina Faso and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Representatives from Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, the DRC, Angola, South Africa, France, Canada, and the United States reported on what God is doing in their churches and ministries. They also talked about their visions for the future, shared advice, and planned collaborative mission engagements. The testimonies that we heard there are a tangible result of your faithful prayer and financial support to AIMM ministries. We are grateful. African partners too asked us to express their deep gratitude for the support of their North American brothers and sisters. You are an essential part of AIMM ministries, and we invite your continued prayer and donations.

In Bobo Dioulasso three congregations of the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso (*Eglise Evangelique Mennonite de Burkina Faso*, EEMBF) provide a Christian witness amidst the threat of terrorist attacks from neighboring Mali. During the partnership council meetings, Pastor Siaka Traoré was called out to provide pastoral care to a relative who had been injured by the explosion of a roadside bomb. Given the jihadist identity of the terrorists, church members have been seeking creative ways to demonstrate Christian love to their Muslim neighbors. With burdensome burial costs when family members pass away, Christians and Muslims together have bought a hearse with the assistance of AIMM donors. Dubbed the Fraternity Hearse, this collaborative project provides an important service for families of both faiths. It also affords the church a way to embody the gospel and cultivate deeper relationships with their Muslim neighbors.

In addition, to fulfill its holistic mandate, the church in Bobo-Dioulasso has established the Hakilitiguiya (Wisdom) Primary School in the Colma neighborhood, a majority Muslim area. Such formal education opportunities are scarce, and poverty is prevalent in that zone. The school has gained a good reputation due to its students' success with their secondary school entrance exams. Since the families of some of the students cannot afford to pay full school fees, the church subsidizes the enrollment of those disadvantaged children. The Hakilitiguiya Primary School is yet another way that the church can witness to the gospel in a very tangible way. Raising the financial resources to complete the teachers' salaries and ongoing professional training is a constant challenge since not all families pay full school fees. Your contributions to this need can help this important witness among Muslim families to continue and reach even more children and their families.

Congolese AIMM partner churches have identified the Congo Literacy Project as one of their priorities in the coming months. The DRC is the third largest country in Africa and has the third largest number of people in poverty in the world. In 2018, an estimated 73% of the population, about 60 million people, lived on less than \$1.90 a day, which is the international poverty rate. As such, about one out of six people living in extreme poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa live in the DRC. The impacts of COVID-19

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have only exacerbated this challenge. This situation presents a major challenge for the church and its Literacy Project.

Started by women leaders and focusing especially on women who have not had the opportunity to become literate, this program trains literacy teachers and provides teaching materials for the literacy training centers that they have developed. Learning to read and write in their local languages provides participants both spiritual and material empowerment. These added skills help women augment their earning capacity, thus increasing their ability to nourish and educate their children. Many are able to read the Bible for the first time in their lives after participating in the literacy program.

Among the participants at the AIMM October International Council meeting in Kikwit, DRC, H  l  ne Jos   Mbombo of the Evangelical Mennonite Church shared how she and other women are providing leadership for the literacy effort. She explained the teaching method, how instructors split words into simple syllables to help participants recognize their meanings by both sight and sound. The method is efficient, allowing illiterate people to start reading after three months of evening classes. After just six months, Mbombo noted, participants typically have quite functional reading skills. To facilitate training at the literacy centers, AIMM donors provide funds for teaching materials such as student and teacher manuals, blackboards, posterboard, and markers. While the adult literacy instructors donate their time and energy, AIMM provides resources to train the instructors. Your support for the Congo Literacy Project has helped H  l  ne and her colleagues implement this important ministry among women and other vulnerable populations. A donation now is a way to participate in the exciting initiative and will help the program to move forward.

Along with increasing literacy among the most vulnerable, Congolese Mennonites face the challenge of training new pastors. Those trained decades ago are reaching the end of their lives. During the past three years a higher number than usual have passed away, raising the need to prepare others to replace them as well as for new congregations that are forming. The increased need is outstripping the current resources of the church. Your financial support for training new pastoral leaders is welcome and will go a long way to ensure the future of church leadership.

Your prayers and donations of any amount allow AIMM to support our dynamic African church partners as they witness in their diverse contexts. Estate gifts and retirement account distributions are two significant ways you can contribute to the vitality of these expanding communities of Christian faith. Such gifts can be part of your legacy as a partner to our African brothers and sisters and are an important investment in the future of the African church. Contact the AIMM office to learn about this partnership opportunity.

In Christ,



R. Bruce Yoder
AIMM Co-Executive Coordinator



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