

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. Colossians 3:16

We need your partnership through prayer, relationship, and financial gifts to continue to empower the church. Thank you for your generosity.



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Front and back cover photos of Easter 2018 service to welcome new members at Paroisse Ditalala (CEM), Mbuji Mayi, DR Congo. By Zac Bowman Cooke.

Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission

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Leadership coaching in Nyanga & Banga

Charles Buller

Once again, God met us in powerful and surprising ways as we taught men and women on the essentials of forming transformational leadership teams. It was heartening to see how the Holy Spirit led us to focus on the particular challenges each community faces. In Nyanga, we felt an urgency for the church leadership to proactively invite young persons to help shape both the direction and leadership of the community. Once we began to address this need, a few young adults present courageously shared deep pain with the assembly about how tradition and exclusion was driving many to drift away from the church to seek out more welcoming environments.

In Banga, during the customary introductions of our team and community leaders that typically open the our seminars, we noted immediately that men in leadership were being individually introduced, while their wives and other women leaders were relegated to the pews, and then only introduced as a group. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, Leonard stopped the introductions and asked the women to also introduce themselves. A palpable awkwardness ensued.

Then the women began to share their names and the roles in which they served in the community.

Congo Leadership Coaching Team: Charles Buller, Albert Mulamba, Antoinette Kiswangi, Leonard Kiswangi, Albertine Mulamba, Macaire Kilambo, Tracy Buller, Bercie Mundedi, and Robert Irundu

The atmosphere changed to one of a visible joy as they shared. We concluded by applauding these women for their unsung service. As the seminar continued, this theme of valuing and including women for who they are and the gifts they possess was highlighted again and again. Our sessions provided numerous opportunities for women to step out in their gifts.

Beyond our teaching we found numerous opportunities to minister to physical, emotional, and spiritual needs through the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. In both Banga and Nyanga we packed churches with youth to watch inspirational movies and invite them into a journey of life-transformation. Soccer games equally brought out hundreds to watch & hear the gospel. Because of the generosity of folks back in the US, we were able to hand out 250 reading glasses to senior seminar participants, and we gathered 750 youth in Mukedi to teach on sexuality while handing out over 350 Days-for-Girls kits to female students.

No one else but you

Rod Hollinger-Janzen

“It was an immense joy for me,” states Rev. Bercie Mundedi about being named Director of Kalonda Bible Institute in 2016. “I understood that the Lord sees one’s heart. The Lord doesn’t take account of the relations one has, or only consider people who have superior academic diplomas. But God looks at one’s work, at what a person is. The church said, ‘No one else but you.’”

Rev. Bercie finished high school at 17 years of age. By the time she was 18, she had a job teaching biology and religion at the Nyanga Institute (high school). Around that time, she explains, “the mamas at Nyanga- I don’t know what they saw in me- but they said, ‘this woman can go to study theology, and come back to help us.’ They chose me themselves at their women’s meeting. I had so much thirst to continue studying, to go further.”

“When others made a lot of noise [about a woman studying theology], I said to myself, ‘I did not request that my church send me to study theology. It is God who chose me and God who has a plan for my life.’ I had all the necessary courage to do this, though I saw examples like Leonie Khelendende, who had studied theology and was never ordained. But I always believed that it would happen. The way I respond so well to theological study—



Rev. Bercie Mundedi with current Kalonda students and their families

no, this is not from me, it’s the Lord who has opened the way for me to enter. I told myself, ‘I will enter this field, and the Lord will use me.’”

When Mennonite Church of Congo made the decision to begin ordaining women, Rev. Bercie was one of the first to receive ordination, in 2013. In 2016 she became Kalonda’s first female director and the first woman in the church to hold a significant, national-level leadership position. When asked what she would most like to foster in her students, Rev. Bercie did not hesitate: “My wish is for their hearts to be transformed. Someone who has a transformed heart, who has a good connection with Christ, that person can change the world.”

A calling to lead, to see change

Rod Hollinger-Janzen

“I would say for me, when I look at it afterwards, I would say there was a sense of a calling on my life to lead,” says Lawrence Coetzee, reflecting on his role as pastor with Grace Community Church in Cradock, South Africa. “I can still remember, I was playing rugby, and I was captain of our first team for about 3 years consecutive. The coach was a very, very good coach and ex-player and we respected him a lot. He was very hard on me because he

believed that not just as a player but as a leader, I can take charge of situations on and off the field. So that is what I have worked on when I entered a Pentecostal church, by setting an example, by being inquisitive, by working harder, by proving myself to stand out among people that I work with.”

Lawrence joined Grace Community Church, a member church of Mennonite World Conference and an AIMM partner church, as a young married man in 2000. He grew up Anglican but felt the need to make a change. “Around our area there were a lot of Pentecostals, and we respected them all these years. The way the Word was ministered... they are dealing daily, they are dealing straightforward with God in their ministry. It was for me very moving. I decided



GCC Cradock special worship in community center

that this is what I want. This is how I would like to see my children grow up. In the Anglican church, the doctrine and the programming of serving the Lord was like ‘some things are for certain people,’ whereas in the Pentecostal church you could really sense the Spirit of God is ministering throughout, and there were no time boundaries that restricted what could happen.”

Pastor Lawrence appreciates the Mennonite emphases on reconciliation and community. He sees the need for these spiritual values everywhere. For his day job, he works at the prison in Cradock, for spiritual care services. “There are a lot of similarities when I work with my people in the church as well as



Praying on site of new Cradock church facility

in the prison. I enjoy working with the young people. It gives me so much confidence and the driving force to move on, when I see change.”

“There are a few leaders that I’ve been working with in the church, some of them female, and that is why I am

looking forward to develop their leadership abilities. And I’m very, very much open to give them opportunity in leadership in the church. There are young people who are very gifted. Leading includes growing leaders. We won’t be around forever, but what we do now we are to do to the best of our abilities and try to see change.”



Lawrence Coetzee