



Africa Journal

Looking to
the future...

Volume 32

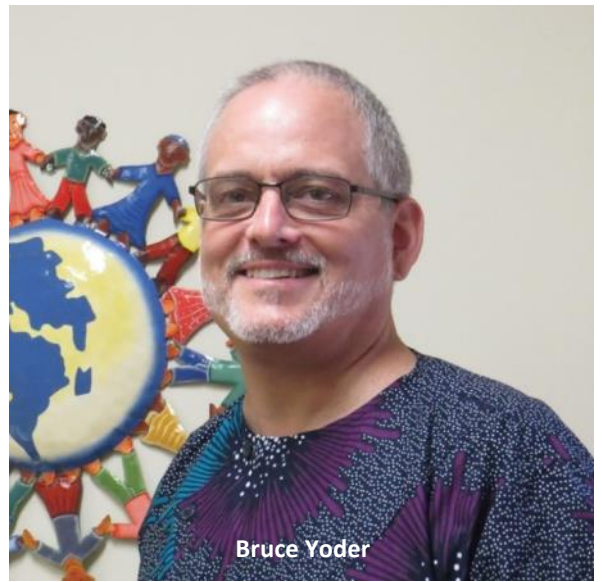
January 2021

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The Fumana Family from L to R: Lucie (spouse), Exauce, Emmanuella, Jenovie, Jessica, and John. Daughter, Mifie, not pictured.





Two candidates to serve as executive coordinators of AIMM

By Twila Albrecht

John Fumana is a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church of the Congo (CEFMC) and serves as deacon of his local church in Kinshasa, DRC. John received a bachelor's degree in education and has a certificate of training of trainers in Asset-Based Community Driven Development. John brings extensive experience working with international organizations such as Oxfam, World Vision, the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa, DRC, and Interchurch Medical Assistance where he has served as program and operations manager, cultural affairs assistant, logistics coordinator, and human resources manager. John lives with his wife and children in DRC.

"I praise God for this opportunity to serve in His harvest through AIMM...AIMM offers a space for the use of various gifts that member

churches have, bringing them together to serve the Lord (1Cor. 12: 4 -5), said Fumana. "At this time of great change in the world, I see in AIMM an opportunity to work with member churches in Africa to help them discover their potential, and to motivate, mobilize, promote and use this potential in order to empower the African church. With the growth of membership in African churches, I believe this will open a way to capitalize African local resources and make African churches more efficient in this missionary partnership. By God's grace, I see myself serving to contribute to facilitate, mobilize, and stimulate the church in Africa to move toward sustainability by valuing and making good use of local potential. I also see the opportunity to promote balanced partnership which will lay the groundwork of a new

direction to be developed among AIMM member churches.”

Bruce Yoder is a member of the Listowel Mennonite Church in Ontario, Canada. He has 26 years of experience working in intercultural settings in Latin America and West Africa, most recently serving with Mennonite Mission Network in missional development and as a teacher of missiology and of the history of Christianity in institutions of theological education in the Republic of Benin and Burkina Faso. Bruce has a PhD in Church History and World Christianity from the Boston University School of Theology and has done research in the areas of mission history and transnational Christian networks. Bruce and his wife live in Listowel, Ontario and have two young-adult children.

“With over a century of missionary engagement, AIMM’s work has been instrumental in the development of multiple African Mennonite/Anabaptist churches; intercultural relationships between African, North American, and European partners; and transnational Anabaptist networks,” said Yoder. “Time and again I am amazed and inspired by the vitality and resilience of the African Church and am pleased for the opportunity to engage partners on the continent and around the world to advance their collaborative mission initiatives. I’m humbled and honored to be able to contribute to this tradition of mission engagement in Africa and beyond.”

Process

The International Central Council (ICC) for Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM) met in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, in November 2019 following Rod Hollinger-Janzen’s announcement of plans to retire. The ICC provided the overall vision and direction for a search process and assembled a committee of stakeholders representing various contexts

and geographies where AIMM partners. The committee included: Steve Wiebe-Johnson of the United States, Liévin Kalubi and Kafaïre Kufutama of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Siaka Traoré of Burkina Faso, and Tany Warkentin of Canada.

The AIMM Executive Coordinator Search Committee was charged with bringing a recommendation for the next Executive Coordinator to be reviewed and approved by the ICC.

From January 2020 through October 2020, the AIMM Search Committee met regularly via Skype to identify and work through key aspects of the search process including: gathering stakeholder input, the creation and distribution of an executive profile, advertising for the position, reviewing applications and nominations, interviewing candidates, checking references, and finally discerning their recommendation to the ICC.

Like many other areas of work and life, the AIMM search process was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Original plans called for the committee to work both virtually and in-person. The reality of the pandemic meant that all committee work happened virtually. Although this was not the ideal scenario, search committee members worked hard and dedicated many hours in meetings, and between meetings, to this important endeavor.

During the process of collecting application materials, the Search Committee spent time in prayerful discussion about what it would look like to interview and potentially recommend a team for the future leadership of AIMM, given the broader implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for the future of an international organization.

In November 2020, the Search Committee brought a unanimous recommendation of two candidates of choice to serve as a team of

executive coordinators. Board members of the ICC approved the Search Committee's recommendation and appointed John Fumana of DRC, and Bruce Yoder of Canada as AIMM Executive Coordinators.

The AIMM Search Committee and the ICC recognize the importance of having executives that represent the North American and African constituencies of AIMM, and the value of each country's context where AIMM has ministries. Fumana and Yoder bring a breadth of intercultural experience and each of these candidates bring experience with AIMM partners.

"The process of naming a new AIMM coordinator to take over for Pastor Rod

Nancy Frey, Bruce Yoder, Jeremiah Yoder, and Deborah Yoder



Hollinger Janzen, who has arrived at his wished-for retirement, came to a conclusion... when members of AIMM's ICC validated the proposal of a team of two persons to work at the coordination of this large mission agency focused on African Mennonite Churches," said Pastor Jean Felix Cimbanga, President of the ICC.

"After a titanic work accomplished by the search committee for the new AIMM coordinator, led by the masterful hand of Pastor Carlos Romero (acting as lead consultant to the ICC), the names of brother Bruce Yoder of the North American Mennonite Church and brother John Fumana of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Congo were submitted for approval to the members of AIMM's ICC as AIMM's Coordination Team. In the name of AIMM's ICC, we wish the named team a fruitful mandate, and we pray that the Lord would accompany them in this ministry, which he has placed in their hands by His grace," said Pastor Cimbanga.

Following 15 years with AIMM, Rod Hollinger-Janzen expressed his gratitude for the work of the ICC and the Search Committee over the past year.

"This entire process has been led by the Spirit of God," said Hollinger-Janzen. "The complementary skill sets of Bruce Yoder and John Fumana, together with their shared passion for Christian mission and their vision for growth for the AIMM family, position AIMM well for an exciting future. Their shared leadership models the kind of mutuality in mission that AIMM is striving for."

Yoder and Fumana will begin to transition into their roles in January 2021.

Our Vision for the Future of AIMM

By Bruce Yoder & John Fumana

Our vision for the future of AIMM flows from our understanding of the Church's missionary mandate, the history of AIMM, and the situation in which we find ourselves in this, the third decade of the twenty-first century. In the biblical story we see the missionary task that Jesus embodied and that he has entrusted to us. This provides us with a model of missionary discipleship for our own time and place. The successes and challenges that AIMM has experienced over its long history fill us with immense gratitude, but also motivate us to greater trust and dependence on God. The resilience of Christian communities that we encounter, in Africa and beyond, fill us with hope. But a world that refuses to acknowledge God's sovereignty, in which division and injustice seem to abound, leaves us determined to carry out the missionary mandate.

Biblical and Theological Framework

Our vision for the future of AIMM is framed by our understanding of God's mission in the world and human participation in that mission. The apostle John presents Jesus' post-resurrection encounter with his disciples in chapter twenty of his gospel. He entrusted his ministry to them saying, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." The idea of sending is key for the theory and practice of mission. In the New Testament, Jesus sent his disciples into the world, instructing them to preach, heal, and deliver the people from sin (Luke 9,

10). The church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to share the gospel (Acts 13). Historically theologians have explained the relationship between the three persons on the Trinity by suggesting that the Father sent the Son and the Father (and the Son) sent the Holy Spirit. The words *mission* and *missionary* come from the Latin words that mean *send* and *the one sent*. God sent Jesus, and Jesus sends us to continue the ministry that he started.

To send and to be sent necessarily implies movement beyond the community. This is the crossing of borders or boundaries, be they boundaries of faith, culture, geography, race, ethnicity, socio-economic level, etc. Mission is the crossing of boundaries in order to continue the ministry that Jesus started. God chose Abraham and his family in order to extend God's blessing beyond the circle of Abraham's family to all the nations of the World (Gen. 12). John provides a vision of the fulfillment of God's intention in the book of Revelation 7:9-10. There people from all the nations of the world gather, side by side, before the throne, to worship God together. There is a thread of missionary vision that spans the biblical story and links these two passages: the prophets who announced that other nations would come to Zion to worship God (Is. 2), the Syrophoenician women who insisted that Jesus minister to her daughter (Matt. 15, Mk. 7), the inclusion of non-Jews among the believers (Acts 15), among other passages. There is an ever-widening circle of

people of all sorts who are touched by the gospel. One day, we will be together with people of all cultures, races, ethnicities, languages, and socio-economic levels before the throne worshipping God. With that vision before us, we respond to Jesus' invitation to cross boundaries in order to continue the ministry that he started and to move towards the realization of the vision of Revelation 7:9-10.

Being part of the Anabaptist community, AIMM is shaped by biblical and theological Anabaptist values. In the sixteenth century the Protestant reformers highlighted divine initiative in their theological understanding of sin. They proposed that it was God who saved humans, and that it was not the church or works that people did that provided salvation. The Anabaptists agreed, but they did not set aside human responsibility. If it was God who saved, it was the human being who accepted or rejected God's offer of salvation. In accepting salvation, discipleship became a necessary response. For the Anabaptists, following Jesus became an indispensable response for those who responded positively to God's offer of salvation. In their understanding of divine initiative and human responsibility, they affirmed both. Anabaptists today have a similar understanding of the mission of God (*missio dei*). It is God who saves, who stimulates church growth, who brings peace, who makes reconciliation and social justice possible, and who accomplishes God's will on earth. We worship, pray, fast, and participate in other activities in recognition of God's sovereignty. But participation in the mission of God is an indispensable part of being a disciple of Jesus. With our missionary initiatives we participate in God's mission to save others, to stimulate church growth, to make peace, to make reconciliation and social justice possible, and to accomplish God's will on earth. In so doing, we seek a balance between divine and human initiative,

recognizing both our missionary responsibility and the sovereignty of God.

History

Beginning in the last years of the nineteenth century, Mennonite churches from North America started mission work in Africa in order to evangelize people there. These mission engagements resulted in both charitable works and new Mennonite churches in several African countries: Tanzania, Kenya, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, Zambia, the Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso, among others. Part of that movement, AIMM is an inter-Mennonite/Anabaptist group composed of individuals, groups, and churches dedicated to collaboration in mission. For several decades North American churches and their mission agencies provided resources for the work that they had started. This assistance supported initiatives of evangelization, education, health, and development. People received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, schools and hospitals were built, local leaders for church and educational institutions were trained and several social projects were started to contribute to the well being of those touched by the gospel. These mission engagements resulted in new African Mennonite/Anabaptist churches; intercultural relationships between African, North American, and European collaborators; and transnational Anabaptist networks.

It is important to note that churches in North America were the primary financiers of mission efforts. African churches continued to receive support from North American and European mission agencies for decades. Demographically, African churches have grown considerably. However, the same progress has not been made in the area of financial stability. This is partly due to the fact that the populations and the churches in Africa developed the habit of depending on foreign

charity that was the fruit of North American and European Christians who responded to the call of Christ to make disciples of all nations and to support social projects (faith with works). A historical challenge that is still felt today is the fact that many African churches are not yet able to exercise their missionary role due to insufficient financial resources. North American missionary assistance has resulted in a mentality of dependence on foreign aid, which has repercussions even in the areas of economic and political development.

Current Realities

Today AIMM is an evangelical Anabaptist community in which African, North American, and European churches work together to continue the work of the Lord. In this time of great change in the world, we are driven to adapt to present realities. By means of equitable partnerships, AIMM seeks to assist African churches to fulfill their responsibility to spread the gospel. We aim to build the capacity of churches so that they can discover, mobilize, and reinforce their potentials (their assets), and use them to promote development and move towards financial self-sufficiency. We seek to encourage the use of local resources and improve efficiency while stimulating local effort.

With that in view, our aim is to facilitate and mobilize African churches to enhance their ways of working in order to marshal local resources for sustainable engagement. With the help of the International Central Council, we want to develop the necessary funding sources to strengthen the capacity of African churches in order to make them more active and effective in their mission of holistic evangelization. The executive coordinators will play a mobilizing and motivating role to encourage local churches to own and implement such initiatives.

We envision AIMM serving as a model that encourages and facilitates the crossing of boundaries in order to continue the ministry to which Jesus has called the church. We seek to strengthen equitable partnerships that will pave the way for AIMM member churches to faithfully respond to that call. We can imagine diverse initiatives that respond to the priorities of partner churches and that provide channels for missionary engagement. These might include: strengthening leadership capacity, ongoing leadership renewal, conflict transformation, asset based community development, fraternal visits and reciprocal capacity building among partners, mutual aid, church growth, intercultural dialogue, etc. These initiatives should first of all correspond with the Anabaptist biblical and theological values of AIMM. As such, they will be evaluated by their conformity with the example of Jesus' ministry. He is the paradigmatic case that critiques all mission activity. Second, AIMM initiatives should move participants closer to the vision of Revelation 7:9-10. Ministry that increasingly embodies the diversity of God's creation and channels that diversity towards the worship of God has more missiological value than ministry that does not move God's people in that direction. Third, AIMM initiatives should increase empathy, trust, mutual respect, and equity in interpersonal and intergroup relationships. Such values sometimes seem difficult to embody, but they can be cultivated through sustained commitment to shared values, goals, and projects. Finally, AIMM initiatives should strengthen the spiritual vitality of the individuals, congregations, and others groups that participate in them. Spiritual vitality is essential in order to guide and maintain the boundary-crossing ministry to which we are called.



Prism Beams

By Mary Elise Burns

maryeliseburns.com

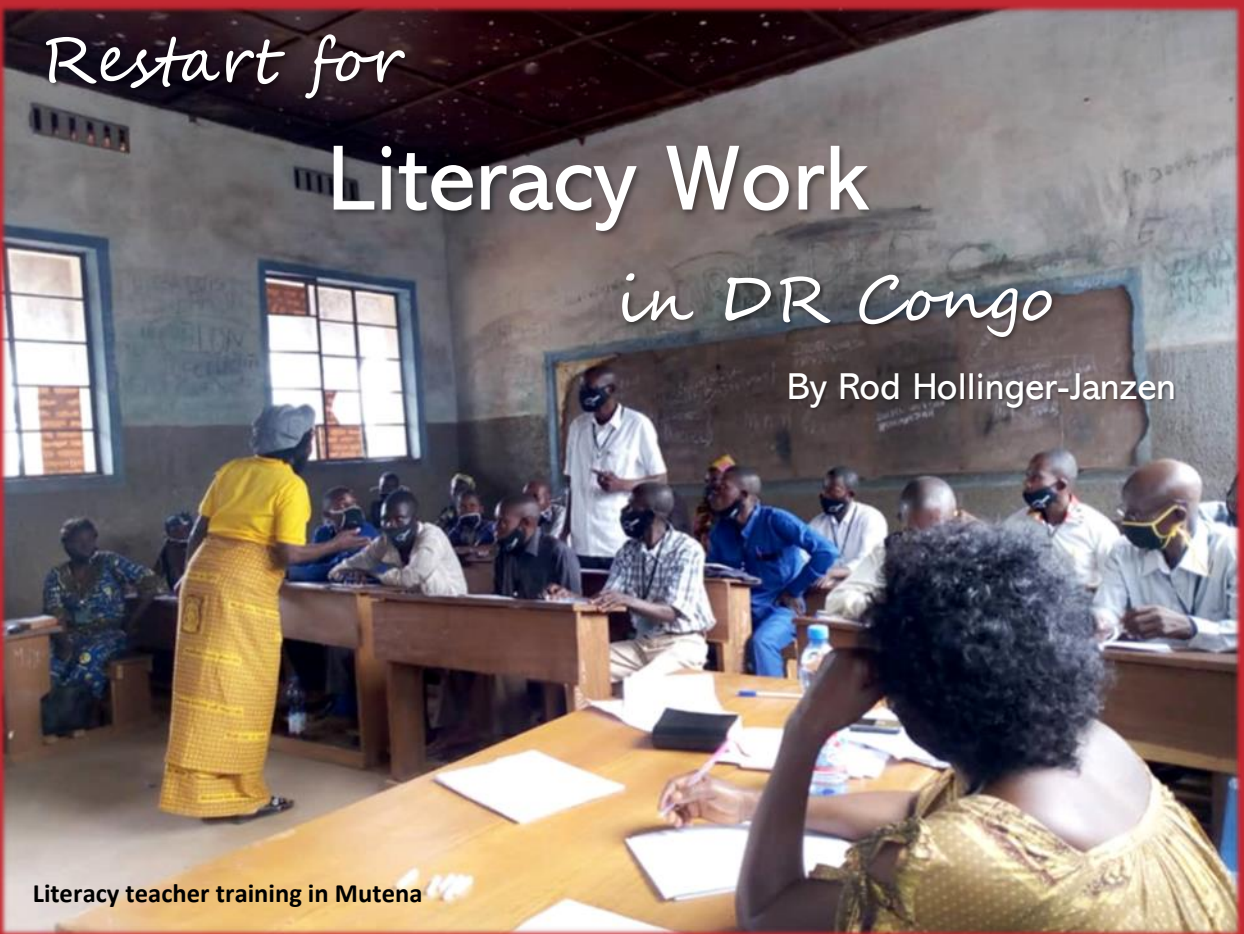
MEB

Restart for

Literacy Work

in DR Congo

By Rod Hollinger-Janzen



Literacy teacher training in Mutena

Following a half-year pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Congo Literacy Project has restarted. 103 literacy teaching centers, mostly located in Mennonite congregations across southwestern Congo, have begun again to offer a unique combination of teaching reading and writing skills accompanied by prayer and biblical meditations, several times a week. The centers are staffed by volunteer teachers who have received AIMM-sponsored training in teaching literacy. The training takes place in one of Congo's four national languages—Lingala, Tshiluba, Kikongo or Swahili. This project serves the most vulnerable,

especially women and children who have not had the opportunity to attend formal schooling. Students come both from within Mennonite congregations and from the wider communities in which those congregations are located.

Along with the reopening of teaching centers, project coordinator, Joseph Nkongolo, has worked with regional supervisors to organize 4 teacher training events. Together these events are training 80 new literacy teachers. 80 more congregations will soon be equipped to begin their own teaching centers. The training seminars at Mutena and Kamayala, took place December 26-31. The remaining



events in Kamiji and Bita were held January 3-8, 2021.

Literacy combats poverty, raises self-esteem, opens the Bible to people, and opens the church to the community as community members are invited to literacy classes and sometimes join the church as a result.

Banner for literacy teacher training in Mutena

New Church Building inaugurated in Kabwela

*By Jean Felix
Cimbalanga*

The Evangelical Mennonite Church of Congo (CEM) celebrated its annual national worship gathering November 26-29, 2020, hosted by the Kasekeyi congregation in its new church building in Kabwela. The worship theme was "God, our help in distress, who never fails." High points included the dedication of the church building, the official presentation of COPAM members (CEM Mennonite Pastors' Council), the appointment of a spiritual leader for Kasekeyi, and prayer for all CEM pastors, as its necessity was revealed to Pastor Emmanuel Nangunangu.



Congregants fellowship outside Kabwela church

The hand of the Lord truly accompanied us during these moments of worship, and we had a large crowd participating.

Organizing for Mission in Burkina Faso

By Siaka Traoré



Church planting sometimes happens organically. Over the years, longtime Evangelical Mennonite Church pastor Siaka Traoré has started several businesses in Orodara, including a bookstore and a hardware store. He could not, by himself, both run these businesses and pastor. He chose to train several young believers to manage the businesses. As these enterprises grew, Siaka began to envision establishing stores in villages outside of Orodara. He asked two of the young men he had trained whether they would be willing to relocate to another village to run a bookstore. They agreed, moved, and continued their work.



Josué Traoré

Before long, a church was organizing in the village. As people came to the bookstore, the young men shared their faith in Jesus, and villagers responded to the message. In the

course of Siaka's business career, this cycle has happened several times, and he has shared with others how God has used business expansion to grow the church.

Mennonite Church Canada Executive Minister, Doug Klassen, visited Burkina Faso several years ago and heard this story. Doug then shared it with a potential ministry partner who was looking for a project that would encourage church growth. As a result, Mennonite Church Canada, in collaboration with AIMM, is encouraging the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso to use this pattern as a deliberate mission strategy.

Prayer and conversations have taken place in the Evangelical Mennonite Church over the last

year, seeking wisdom as to how best to move forward. In that process, a young electrician from the Kotoura church, Josué Traoré, together with his wife, Mariam Bengaly, were identified as a couple who could be sent as a businesspersons/church planters. The village of Mahon was chosen, as there are some nearby villages which already have Mennonite churches whose leadership could provide support to this new initiative. Funds from the Mennonite Church Canada ministry partner will be used to begin a hardware store in Mahon, which will be the Traoré's point of entry into the village. At a meeting on December 28, 2020, the regional support network gathered in Kotoura, and affirmed this ministry. This group will help to guide the work going forward.

Meeting in Kotoura, the group pictured in the photo decided to collectively support the sending of Josué Traoré and his wife to Mahon to start a hardware store, exercise his profession as an electrician, and plant a Mennonite church.

From left to right: Moussa Traoré (Kotoura church member); Josué Traoré (the young missionary); Daouda Traoré (Kotoura pastor); Sidi Traoré (Kangala pastor); Hamidou Traoré (Sarakandiala pastor); Siaka Traoré (organizer); Seydou Traoré (Kotoura church elder); Karim Traoré (Kotoura church elder)

Remembering Earl Roth

Earl William Roth, 93, of Goshen died October 30, 2020 at Green House Village of Goshen.

He was born June 26, 1927 to the late Philip and Amelia (Steckley) Roth in Albany, Oregon and grew up on a farm there.

After serving as a non-combatant in the U.S. Navy during WWII, Earl married Ruth Esther Jantzen on August 21, 1948. She preceded him in death on December 27, 2004. Also preceding Earl in death are a beloved son, Loren Dale Roth, and two brothers, Loren and Clayton Roth.

Earl was a graduate of Albany High School, Multnomah School of the Bible, and Lewis and Clark College. He received his M.A. in Ed. from the Oregon College of Education. He was ordained as a minister with the Mennonite Church USA.

Earl and Ruth left to be missionaries in Congo in 1954. Earl served there as an evangelist, director of a high school and industrial school, and Missionary Representative for Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission. He and Ruth served in Africa for 32 years and raised their children there. Returning stateside, Earl became

General Secretary of AIMM for 7 years. Earl was a faithful presence at Silverwood Mennonite Church. He sat on the Elder Board and was a congregational chairperson. He also served on the resident advisory board at Hubbard Hill.

Earl is perhaps known best for his sweet spirit and his unceasing kindness to everyone.

Left to cherish Earl's memory are a daughter, Yvonne (Virgil) Smith; a son, Marc (Judy) Roth; daughter-in-law, Nancy Roth; four grandsons that he was so proud of, Brendan (Laura) Roth, Corey Roth, Philip (McKalyn) Roth, and Alex (Hannah) Roth; three great grandchildren, Taylor, Riley, and Abe; a brother, Leonard (Donna) Roth; and a sister, Rosalie Roth.

A private graveside service will take place at Prairie Street Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, PO Box 744, Goshen, IN 46527.

Arrangements are with Hartzler-Gutermuth-Inman Funeral Home.

A Celebration of Life will

be held at Silverwood Mennonite Church at a later date.

To leave the family an online condolence, please visit the funeral home website. <https://www.hartzlergutertermuthinman.com/obituary/Earl-Roth>



The Gift of Letting Go

Celebrating the leadership of Pastor Rod

Zac Bowman Cooke

When I began working as the office assistant for AIMM, I knew something was different from other workplaces and ministries in which I had served. As a person who thrives on reform and new ideas, I am accustomed to pushback from those who have invested so much of themselves and their time in an organization or a project. I was surprised to find my ideas valued and even welcomed by Rod who had already been serving as AIMM's executive coordinator for twelve years. Brené Brown writes, "Daring leaders work to make sure people can be themselves and feel a sense of belonging." I experienced this sense of belonging in Rod's openness, trust, and gentle guidance in the office, but even more deeply when I had the privilege to travel with him to DR Congo in 2018 to visit with our partners.

Pastor Rod, as he is known by many of our African brothers and sisters, has been a sought after source of counsel, mediation, guidance, and inspiration for so many. Drawing from his mission experience with Mennonite Mission Network in Benin and a tranquility cultivated through spiritual practice, I have watched Rod minister across cultural boundaries with patience, curiosity, righteous anger at times, and great compassion, desiring to discover and illuminate the *imago dei* in each person he encounters. It was no doubt for this reason that he was called to this role: to awaken new possibilities for AIMM and participate in what God was already doing through our African church partners.

"Rod is such a peaceful man and a Barnabas

kind of leader who believes in others and is always eager to build up others, providing wisdom, accompaniment, encouragement, and accountability," write Antoinette and Leonard Kiswangi, AIMM partners who have worked closely with Rod in DR Congo.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of leadership is knowing when to let go, but Rod has continued to bless AIMM with his prayerful discernment regarding the future. Following the expression of his intention to retire, he has yielded to the process outlined by the search committee. Philippians 2:4-7b says, "*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself.*" In his departure as executive coordinator, Pastor Rod continues to be a vital part of the AIMM family as he demonstrates Christ-like leadership through the gift of letting go.

Leonard & Antoinette Kiswangi with
Lynda & Rod Hollinger-Janzen



*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself.*

Philippians 2:4-7b



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PLEASE NOTE: The domain for our website and emails is aimmint.org. The old domain (aimmintl.org) is no longer active.

The Africa Journal is designed and edited by Zac Bowman Cooke.

Cover artwork: “Joli Sourire (Pretty Smile)” by Mark Janz, son of former AIMM missionary, Martini Janz. You can see more of his work at <https://www.etsy.com/shop/GoofBallWatercolor>.