

Africa Journal

Cultivating Opportunity

Focusing on resources



Volume 35
September 2022

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In May, the **Kalonda Bible Institute** participated in an ABCD training for a group of students, including graduating pastors. The Assets Based Community Development method uses a community's own assets and resources as the basis of development, empowering people by encouraging them to use what they already have instead of immediately looking to outside sources for assistance. Director Reverend Bercie Mundedi and AIMM brought this training to the Bible Institute so that as graduates begin their pastoral ministries, they will be more able to assess the local resources of their communities and create opportunities for sustainable progress in their churches and for their own livelihoods.

Reverend Bercie says that her dream is "to have more trainings on ABCD in order to change the mindset and help people to understand that you cannot develop a community, but a community develops itself by shifting the mindset and getting rid of mental and psychological and stomach poverty."



The Burkina Faso Evangelical Mennonite Church Sends First Resident Missionary Family to Mali

A Report from Pastor Siaka Traoré

The Bengaly's

We thank God for his faithfulness to the Jalonké people of Mali. Since 2011 we have made a missionary visit nearly every year to Falea in Mali in collaboration with the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches, our partner in the Jalonké mission. Thanks be to God that when he starts something he sees it through to perfection. Our shorter visits have culminated in the sending of a missionary from among us. He has answered the call by saying, "Here I am; send me and my family to serve among the Jalonké." Hence, our yearly mission trip to Mali this May was not just a visit but an opportunity to accompany Pastor Yaya

Bengaly, his wife Madina, and his two youngest children, four-year-old Joseph and eighteen-month-old Ephraim to their new ministry site. We were a larger group of six delegates from the church this time in support of the Bengaly family and their new ministry.

The road to Falea from Burkina Faso is long. Before departing there was time for prayers of consecration for the Bengaly family and for packing the belongings they were taking to set up their new household. After two days of travel over roads in disrepair and a delay of a flat tire, we arrived to Kenieba, Mali, at midnight. The following day we learned that the delegation from the Fellowship of

Evangelical Churches was not able to get permission to cross into Mali from Senegal to join us as we had planned. We traveled the rest of the way disappointed that our North American brothers could not be with us, but glad for a safe arrival to our destination.

Our time in Falea was full of activities. The first day we paid visits to the local authorities to explain the reason we had come to Falea and to inform them of work that Pastor Yaya would be doing as a missionary-pastor in the region.



Pastor Yaya and Madina

Pastor Siaka (top left) and Pastor Mamadou Barry (top right) give a prayer of dedication for Pastor Yaya (bottom left) and Madina (bottom right)



Afterwards we met with members of the small community of believers in the village for a time of teaching and fellowship, which continued

the next day. I taught on the theme *Being a Disciple to Make More Disciples*. We also had a very helpful exchange with the local believers to define the role of the Bengaly family in Falea. They will not just live among the Jalonké but

will work with them, also. Pastor Yaya will involve the Jalonké in mission work, and he will be a disciple who makes more disciples. While the Bengaly's will live in Falea, Pastor Yaya will also provide pastoral assistance in other villages that may need it. He will be accountable in this work to the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso and the partners who have commissioned him to this mission. The Bengaly's will serve for eighteen months, when an evaluation will be made to decide how to proceed. We left a motorcycle at the site to help Pastor Yaya do his work well.

Once again, we thank God for his goodness and faithfulness. Our mission trip allowed us to share together, fellowship, and encourage Pastor Yaya and his family. Those of us who participated saw and now understand better the context and challenges that they will face. This knowledge will help the Burkina church to know to pray for and support our missionaries in the Jalonké ministry.

To God be the glory!



Reverend Jean Felix Cimbanga at ceremony of admission of new members of the Fidelity congregation

God is Faithful:

Praising God and Building for the Future

Good news from Reverend Jean Felix Cimbanga, legal representative CEM

The Spirit of God has been moving among the brothers and sisters of the Evangelical Mennonite Community (CEM) of the Congo over the past year. The annual worship celebration gathered God's children as per custom for five days during the last month of 2021 at the Ciayima Tshibombo congregation in Kazaba District. The gathering brought together the faithful from the several missionary districts that form our community and was an expression of the unity and communion that reigns in our church.

Pastors, church leaders, and lay preachers

from across the different districts made the pilgrimage to the annual celebration and expounded on this year's them: *Whoever trusts in the Lord will be enriched*, from Proverbs 28:25. Periods of worship, thanksgiving prayers, intercessory prayers, and the study of the word of God marked this meeting of the gathered disciples of Jesus, who braved remaining health restrictions imposed by the authorities due to Covid-19.

Night and day the children of God of our communion, who come from diverse regions, were filled with joy at the opportunity to be together in fellowship, each sharing his or

her particular gifts with each other. Signs and wonders were the order of the day thanks to the Holy Spirit's guidance: deliverance, miraculous healing, God's provision of good weather, and appeasement of the spirits.

Over these last months the church has been busy with projects to reinforce the infrastructure of several congregations. Reverend Jean Felix Cimbanga has overseen the completion of roofs for a number of church buildings, a project supported by AIMM Congo partners. We praise God for durable church structures that will provide places of worship and centers from which mission activity can radiate into the surrounding communities.



Rev. Cimbanga (second from left) and other church elders inspect the progress on the CEM's Matendo Church in May

The Matendo Church as progress on the roof continues in June



Participants of the Village Savings & Loan Association at Bandundu

Opportunity Knocks: Village Savings & Loan Associations

The Mennonite Brethren Church of the Congo (CEFMC)'s Village Savings and Loan Associations continue to grow. The VSLA project was launched in the December of 2021 through funding provided by AIMM in order to provide microfinance investments for people who have need of more funding for their small-scale market activities or agricultural projects. The Congolese church partners are focusing on women and women with families as potential beneficiaries of the VSLAs. Members of the VSLAs are pleased with how being a part of the project allows them to save money and obtain micro-loans that increase their economic activities. In turn, this affects their access to healthcare and schooling opportunities. Below are stories from some of our VSLA members.

CARINE MPWO

I am a married mother of six children, and I

used to work as a maid for a family. There I earned U\$7.50 per month. For the last three months, I have participated in the VSLA to create my own small business and not have to work in other people's homes for an



Carine Mpwo selling cassava flour

inadequate salary. The VSLA loaned me money to start my initiative. Today, I sell cassava flour and corn which brings a good profit of more than U\$50 per month. This profit allows me to support my family.

The VSLA is good because it values underprivileged people like me. I am proud today because I feel valued and I know where to get another small loan if I should need it. My plan is to use the savings in my fund to buy a half plot of land.

Before the VSLA started, I attended Brother Branham's End Time Message Church. Today, my family and I have decided to pray at the CEFMC because I understand that it is a good church that wants to provide space for the development of all humans. So now we belong to the CEFMC Bandundu.

MWEMBA MAKABU

I am a married mother of seven children: three girls and four boys. I live in the city of Kenge and am a member of the VSLA set up by our community, the CEFMC. The way it works is we have savings we make to the VSLA that allows us to take out loans to finance my business of selling food.



Mwemba Makabu at her food stall

My business ensures we have enough money to buy food for our family and what my husband earns helps us to pay the school fees for our children and other things.

KINZUNDU KIMBANGU

I am responsible for a family of nine people.



Kinzungu Kimbangu (middle) butchering meat

After the training and awareness on the VSLA project, I found it interesting and I joined the group.

Before I joined the VSLA, I didn't know how to save my money. I used to spend my money without a plan. Today I have understood the usefulness of saving and I am happy about it. Every week I save the money from my sales. In the past, if I needed money, I borrowed from traders at a very high rate of 50%, which is like working for them. Today if I need extra money, I borrow from the VSLA at a rate of 10% and this interest still comes back to me at the end of the year at the time of sharing.

Now, my butchering business is doing very well, and at the church where I am a member I am able to give offerings and make other contributions.

Also, at our CEFMC church, we have received other faithful in the church thanks to the movement of the VLSA. So it is also a very important tool of evangelization.

ANGEL

I already had my small business before the VSLA was introduced. I have seen progress and change since I joined the VSLA. I got a loan that helped me increase my business and my capital.



Angel in her shop

Now I am making more income than I used to and this has enabled me to have savings and meet my household needs. The quantity of commodities in my shop has increased because I am able to buy more inventory.

The VSLA is a good thing. We all need to work hard and keep going with this VSLA initiative. I am thankful to church leaders who brought this VSLA initiative to Bandundu City. I am

also asking them to help us continue to move forward in this VSLA initiative.

ALI

I got a loan from the VSLA I joined in Bandundu City where I live. Although it was not a big amount of money, it has helped me to start my business of selling gas, and I am seeing progress. Things are going well.

This initiative encourages us to work and make steps forward. I wish I could get more funds than what I received to develop my business. My recommendation is to increase the amount of the loan so that those of us just starting out have access to more money.

I am very thankful to the church leaders of CEFMC and AIMM who made this VSLA initiative possible, and I ask that they continue to support us.



Ali selling gas

Angola's Semente Menonita Grows



rebuild.

Semente Menonita is a grassroots project that helps families pool their knowledge and support each other, which increases production on their land. Many hands make lighter work!

In recent months, Semente Menonita has completed a successful bean harvest and is working to construct a storage depot. The storage depot is a cement building that will be used as a place to keep harvested crops out of the weather until they can be sold or used. If there is no place to store harvested crops, farmers can lose their crops to spoilage.

Additionally, Semente Menonita's farmers have recently completed a seminar in

The farming cooperative Semente Menonita, or "Mennonite Seed", is filling both economic and spiritual needs. This project springs from the desire of church members of the Mennonite Community of Churches in Angola to work together to cultivate their land to combat the significant displacement and diminished agricultural production caused by civil war. During the time of war, many Angolans were forced to flee to the DR Congo. There, some were introduced to the Mennonite faith and then took it back to Angola with them when they returned to resettle and



sustainable agricultural practices. By incorporating farming practices that focus on sustainability, this cooperative should have a bright future!



Bottom left: Workshop on sustainable agricultural practices

Above: Bean harvest

Reasons to Celebrate in Sierra Leone

by **Pastor Solomon Bandor**

Christ Salvation Mennonite Academy of Aberdeen, Sierra Leone, celebrated the graduation of their nursery and 6th grade classes on July 12.

The school was established in 2012 by the Christ Salvation Mennonite Church to provide quality education for children of the Aberdeen community, especially the less privileged. It began with 10 pupils and 2 teachers, and currently, the school serves 134 students. Christ Salvation Mennonite Academy has classes for boys and girls between the ages of 3 to 13 years old and provides scholarships to less privileged children in the Aberdeen community. The school's management consists of elders, deacon and deaconess, members and pastors from the church.

Christ Salvation Mennonite Church is pleased to report good community involvement and growth in this school!

In July, the **Christ Salvation Mennonite Women's Association** celebrated their annual thanksgiving and camp.

The Mennonite Women's Association was founded in 2012 to support other women in making their livelihoods better according to the word of God that we must be each other's keepers. Since that time the organization has been working with the church and other women on the verge of life transitions.



From top to bottom: 6th grade graduate, nursery graduate, and the Mennonite Women's Association in thanksgiving ceremony



Memorials

Helen Toews



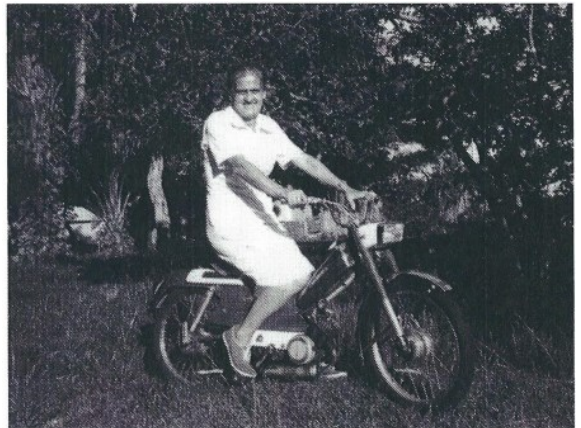
HELEN TOEWS, of Coaldale, passed away peacefully at Sunny South Lodge, on Saturday, April 30, 2022 at the age of 95 years.

Helen was the daughter of Abraham and Helena Toews who, as refugees from the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, arrived in Winnipeg, Manitoba just before her birth on October 6, 1926. Not long after, the family moved to Coaldale, Alberta, where they settle on an irrigation farm. Helen received her public and high school education in Coaldale, and then entered nurses training at the Galt Hospital in Lethbridge. Subsequent studies took her to the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba. She spent a year in French language studies in Sherbrooke, Quebec. For the next two years she studied midwifery at the University of Brussels in Belgium and medicine at the Tropical Medical Institute in Antwerp.

In the 1960s she was scheduled to leave as a medical missionary to the Democratic Republic of Congo but due to civil unrest in that country was sent to Brazil. Here she and another missionary worked for 3 1/2 years at the Evangelical Christian hospital in the city of Curitiba. Eventually she was able to travel to southern Congo where she worked as director of the maternity ward and a midwife at the Kajiji Hospital for many years. She was especially interested in improving rural healthcare among the various tribes in the region.

Upon returning to Canada, Helen retired in Coaldale, Alberta, and spent some years caring for her mother. Following her mother's death in 1993, Helen devoted a great deal of time and energy to the Gem of the West Museum in Coaldale. Together with others she helped to establish it as one of the major small-town museums in Southern Alberta.

Both as a midwife in the Congo and as a retired resident living in Coaldale, Helen believed in practical Christianity. Her warm, gentle presence and loving kindness will be much missed by all those who had the privilege of knowing her. She was a tireless, often inconspicuous worker concerned with the greater good of the community and the advancement of God's Kingdom.



Memorials

Bienvenu Mwamba



Born to Pierre Tshiamala and Esther Mbombo Wa Tshipongo in 1956 immediately after their return to Bakuanga from Bujumbura, Bienvenu Mwamba was one of the first members of the Evangelical Mennonite Community (CEM).

When he reached school age, his mother enrolled Bienvenu in the Congo Inland Mission (now AIMM) primary school in Dilulu II (now Sangilayi-Bipemba) where he studied from 1972 to 1979. He began his secondary education at the CEM Disanka Institute, continued it elsewhere, and graduated with a degree in education in 1986. After working as an educator, he obtained an AIMM scholarship to study at the Protestant University in the Heart of Congo, where he graduated with a degree in theology in 2015.

Bienvenu married his wife Véronique in 1994, and they had eight children, five boys and three girls, including twin girls.

Bienvenu founded the CEM Bwakana congregation where he was pastor from 2009 to 2015. He was ordained in 2012. Having moved to Kinshasa in 2015 as provincial evangelist of the district and CEM missionary, he founded the Elikya congregation in 2016, a growing church at the time of his death. For the past four years, Bienvenu worked for Nsele, a Chinese agricultural business based in Kinshasa. He served as a land register agent in Western Kasai and in Kinshasa.

It pleased the Lord to call Bienvenu home in January 2022.

Annie Falk

Annie (Rempel) Falk, 94, passed away on April 24, 2022 in Napanee, Ontario. Annie was a long-time member of Niagara United Mennonite Church and lived at Ina Grafton Gage for 19 years.

Annie is survived by her children, Leola (Heinz) Becker and Marvin Falk, grandchildren Loren (Catherine) Becker and Corina Becker, and great-grandchildren, Tessa, Liam, and Maya. Annie was

predeceased by her husband, Peter Falk, her parents, Peter G. Rempel and Justina Grunau, and her siblings, George, Jessie, Mary, and Susan.

Her childhood was tough. During the Depression, their mother developed tuberculosis and their father was in two accidents. The girls attended a one-room school and their brother helped with the farm. Annie completed high school through correspondence courses and Morden High School. She was baptized and joined the Morden Bergthaler Mennonite Church.

Annie married Peter Falk in 1947 and joined him in farming and preparing for missionary service in the Congo. They attended CMBC, Bethel College, seminary in Chicago, and French language study in Brussels.

Their first year in Belgium Congo was spent at Mukedi, helping and learning Kipende. The next few years at Kandale Annie taught and administered in the local schools, putting emphasis on educating girls. Her children, Leola and Marvin, were born in 1954 and 1956, respectively.

Political turmoil during Independence allowed Annie to complete her teaching certification at Goshen College before moving to Kajiji. There she instructed ministers' wives, who had limited education, in the local Kituba language. Annie taught literacy, Bible, Christian education, child development, nutrition, sewing, and other leadership skills. From 1968 to 1974, Annie continued her teaching and administrative roles in the new interdenominational theological school at Kimpese and in Kinshasa in the Lingala language.

Peter and Annie were in North America from 1974 through 1982. Annie studied patternmaking, typed Peter's book, helped as a minister's wife, was a substitute in special education, and answered the local crisis line.

They returned to Kinshasa to teach for five years before retiring to St. Catharines. In retirement, Annie volunteered in the church and taught literacy and English as a Second Language.

Annie and Peter celebrated their Golden Wedding on July 6, 1997. After Peter passed away in 1998, Annie's loneliness prompted a move to Ina Grafton Gage Village where she lived for 19 years.

Annie loved children and teaching. She loved her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and each and every child she met. She found great satisfaction teaching women who were motivated to learn in their desire to be better parents. This attitude and her Christian convictions permeated everything that Annie did.





Building supplies used at the Evangelical Mennonite Matendo Church (CEM) construction project, DRC



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Cover images are of students at Lycée Miodi, which is a technicolor/vocational high school for girls that offers education in sewing and dress making. Graduating students receive sewing machines. On the cover, the bottom right picture shows Josef Nkongolo of CMCo (the Mennonite Communion Church of the Congo) giving a sewing machine to a graduate.