

Africa Journal



Gathering Around the Table
for Mission

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Food Security for At-Risk Children Addressed by Kodení Church

By Pastor Joseph Sinou

Pastor Samuel Traoré of the Kodení congregation in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, has been working with the Center for the Rehabilitation of Minors. The Kodení church is one of the more recent EMC-BF congregations and has grown out of work with children in the Kodení neighborhood over the past decade. Pastor Samuel and North American missionaries from the center have developed a program of teaching and edification for the children and youth of the church and of the neighborhood.

The Kodení congregation is partnering with the center to provide food security support for disadvantaged children in the neighborhood. Pastor Samuel and center personnel conducted a census of the neighborhoods around the church and found a significant population of displaced people who have fled to the greater Bobo-Dioulasso area because of the violence in their villages west of the city. In response the center provided a 50 kilogram bag of rice and 5 liters of oil to families with at-risk children. A first distribution was made to one hundred and twenty households and a second distribution to one hundred and forty families.





Gathering Around the Table for Mission

By Bruce Yoder, AIMM Co-Executive Coordinator

As I sat around the table with international partners and Burkina Mennonites at the Burkina Faso AIMM Partnership Council gathering in October, I was encouraged by what the AIMM family is doing to embody the Gospel. The Burkina church and partners from the United States are collaborating to support Burkina missionary Benjamin (Yaya) Bengaly and his family in southern Mali. He teaches primary school students and has initiated regular worship with a new group of believers. Canadian Mennonites are working with Burkina brothers and sisters to increase

agricultural micro-enterprise opportunities for pastors who earn their living through farming. Burkina Mennonites are implementing three Bible translation initiatives. In support of their efforts, a Mennonite worker from France is training a Burkina colleague to become an accredited translator.

After the Burkina Partnership Council a similar gathering of AIMM's International Council took place in South Africa. Again we had time to worship together, to sit around the table and witness to what God is doing among us, and to envision what the future might hold. At this gathering we came

from nine African churches and several North American partners. There is much for which to be thankful. Our collective efforts are producing good fruit. The Christ Salvation Mennonite Church in Sierra Leone and a Canadian partner are working together to increase food security. Last year Congolese churches collaborated with a US partner to start nine village savings and loan associations, which have generated the equivalent of over \$10,000 USD in local savings for their small business initiatives. The Anabaptist Network in South Africa is drawing on the expertise of partners in Europe and North America to discern how the Anabaptist heritage might be an asset to Christians there.

Communing around the table together is a way to witness to what God is doing and envision what God might do in the year to come. When experiences and ideas are shared freely, they inspire and inform new ways of engaging the world in missionary endeavors. I was encouraged that between our gathering times the conversations

continued as participants networked and made plans with each other. The task is bigger than any one of us. We share the responsibility and privilege to advance God's mission in the world.

The way we do mission has changed quite a bit since the first AIMM missionaries traveled to the Congo over one hundred years ago. The goal then was to build an indigenous church, one that was self-propagating, self-administering, and self-financing. That accomplished, the pioneering missionary, typically from Europe or North America, was to leave for unevangelized fields, leaving an indigenous church in place. This was a helpful model for the colonial era when churches in the Global South and colonized nations were moving towards independence. During the post-colonial period, churches that missionaries started grew at a fast pace and the partnership paradigm replaced the focus on indigenous or independent churches. There was growing recognition that the growth of the Christian movement around the world was due as much to the

ministries of local Christians as to the work of foreign missionaries. There was also acknowledgment that the evangelization of the world was not a prerogative of western Christians and their missionaries but was a collective privilege of the whole body of Christ, the global church. With the partnership paradigm, the advancement of God's reign on earth was to be through the creation of new partners and the subsequent collaborative ministry



through which together they could contribute to what God was doing in the world. It was no longer a matter of getting something started and moving on but about being the global church in mission together.

Nearly twenty years ago AIMM changed from a focus on sending missionaries to cultivating relationships and engaging in mission through partnership councils in each of the African countries in which we work. This was in recognition that the advancement of God's mission is a task of the global church and that the gifts of partners from around the world are required. Partners from different continents seek to learn from each other, share gifts, and move towards equity in our common endeavors. Together we envision, plan, and collaborate on initiatives that further the reign of God. For us, these initiatives are not simply stand-alone events. We trust that our collaborative endeavors will also create and leave in place an ever more diverse and wider web of relationships that embody the gospel of Jesus Christ. Being an ever-expanding and diverse church together is inseparable from being in mission, from participating in what God is doing in the world.

Today AIMM looks different than it did a century ago. We are a network of church conferences, congregations, groups, and individuals who are part of a global family under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We are led by an International Central Council (ICC), whose members include nine African churches and their international partners. To

ensure the agenda is formed bottom-up, partnership councils in each country decide on their own project priorities. The ICC establishes AIMM's budget, deciding which initiatives to raise funds for. On-the-ground partners implement the programs. We prioritize projects that emerge within communities and have grass-roots energy behind them. AIMM invites donations to strategically extend the capacity of African leaders and projects.

AIMM initiatives correspond with Anabaptist biblical and theological values and with the ministry of Jesus. They are meant to embody the diversity of God's creation and move participants toward worshipping God. Through them we seek to increase empathy, trust, mutual respect, and equity in interpersonal and intergroup relationships. Our initiatives strengthen the spiritual vitality of individuals, congregations, and other groups who participate in them.

AIMM has evolved over time as each generation has sought to participate faithfully in God's mission in a changing world. We do not know what tomorrow will look like. At present, we start by sitting together around the table, worshipping, testifying to what God is doing in our midst, and as we move forward envisioning what God is calling us to. Then we stand up and engage together in diverse ministries, drawing on gifts, talents, and resources from across different continents in anticipation that God has good things in store as we move forward.

Connecting Globally: Bringing Everyone to the Table



Those who live in places with internet access often take for granted the ease with which they can join meetings taking place across the world, take a virtual class, or simply stay in touch with friends and family living in other countries. For many of our African partners, however, reliable internet access and information technology (IT) development is non-existent.

During the covid-19 pandemic, Mennonite Mission Network (MMN) solicited and received funding from the Schowalter Foundation for IT development among international partners. MMN provided some of that funding as grants administered by AIMM to churches in Africa, including the Mennonite Church in Burkina Faso and the

Mennonite Brethren Church in the DRC. With their new capacity and equipment, EEM-BF delegates gathered at the church's center in Orodara, Burkina Faso, from July 5-11 to virtually attend the MWC international gathering. All but a few of those present had never been to a MWC gathering; indeed, they are not likely to ever be able to participate in such an event in person. But they virtually attended those parts of the of the Indonesia gathering that were available online. For the first time, they were able to participate in this global Anabaptist family gathering in a meaningful way!

The Mennonite Brethren Church (CEFMC) in the DRC has continued to use their equipment for virtual training and meetings with Mennonite Central

Committee (MCC) and other international partners. In February the Center for Peace and Justice Training did an online training about culture, ethnicity and conflict organized for internally displaced people. The trainer, Fidèle Lumeya, of Congolese descent but who now resides in Texas, was surprised to find participants from Kikwit, DRC, participating. He was especially pleased to see 15 women who have been displaced due to the Kamwina Nsapu violence in the Kasai Province attending and connecting with the IT equipment provided by MNN and AIMM. The leadership for the

Center for Peace and Justice Training program is provided by Matthew and Toni Krabill, missionaries with MMN and co-directors of the Paris Mennonite Center. The Center for Peace and Justice Training is lodged at the Christian Alliance University in Abidjan, a long-time partner of MMN.

This story is just one of the many examples of how AIMM works with partners on local and international levels to try to bring everyone to the table, both physically and virtually. IT development can be the difference-maker in order to make sure all of us are heard.

CEFMC's Women's Situation Room, a women's organization for the promotion of peace, took part in the conference "Culture, Ethnicity and Conflict," organized by the Paris Mennonite Center and the Francophone Mennonite Network, in January 2023.



Partnership at Kalonda Bible Institute Lays Ground for Paradigm Shift

By John Fumana, AIMM Co-Executive Coordinator

The Kalonda Bible Institute was created in 1952 by American and Canadian missionaries to train prospective pastors to help others in their knowledge of the word of God. To date, the school has trained 342 pastors and is presently under the management of the Mennonite Community Church of the Congo (CMCo).

After several years of existence and operations with the support of North American partners, there is the need of a new approach to build the capacity of KBI's graduating students to actively engage in and shift the mindset of communities in which they will be serving. Many of these communities are living in poverty and misery simply because they are operating from a needs-based approach, depending outside aid, and ignoring their own local abilities, gifts, and resources that are keys assets for sustainable development.

Inspired the Jesus' example of feeding the crowd and her attendance at the Assets-Based Community Development

(ABCD) training, Bercie Mundedi, the director of Kalonda Bible Institute, resolved to drive the school community in a direction that will contribute to sustainability and self-reliance, both for the graduating pastors themselves—and for the communities in which they will serve.

Bercie says when reading Jesus' words to his disciples—"feed them yourself"—she felt the desire and motivation to participate in the ABCD training held in Kandale in order to acquire knowledge and in return contribute to building the awareness of the Kalonda Bible Institute community and students on com-





KBI students making bricks to build a conference hall

munity development and self-care.

Before the ABCD training, each time the school director initiated a project the school staff and students were neither interested, nor motivated, and not willing to engage and commit themselves. Because of this way of thinking, all the residential houses and classrooms at Kalonda Bible Institute are very decayed, they do not have enough tables and chairs, there are cracks on wall, no painting, and people are waiting for funds to come from AIMM and North American donors. The school does not have enough houses for students and staff, and not enough office equipment and lacks a means of transportation (vehicle or motorcycle).

To contribute to shift the mindset and build the resilience, community development and self-reliance capacity, AIMM has provided support for the Kalonda Bible School Director to attend ABCD trainings in Kandale and has funded training sessions for students held in Kalonda.

The Kalonda Bible Institute is grateful to AIMM donor partners for this support and seeks additional accompaniment to continue the ABCD process at the school.

Bercie says that “We take this opportunity to thank AIMM. We hope with God’s help things can change at the Kalonda Bible Institute and at the level of the national church (CMCo).

(Continued on page 13)



The message from church president Pastor Calixte Bananzaro started with a note of gratitude. “We are thankful to God who has heard our prayers. We held the church’s General Assembly in peace on the date that we had planned,” he wrote.

Six weeks earlier, as the Christmas holidays were approaching, he had called to ask us to pray for the security situation in the province of Kénédougou, where most of the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso’s (EMC-BF) congregations are located. Security in the country has been tenuous for some time with roughly 40% of its territory no longer under the control of the government. The year’s end brought the violence closer to home in

10 Kénédougou when armed militants from

Mali targeted community leaders and public servants in the N’Dorola region. The authorities asked community leaders to leave the area for their own safety, including EMC-BF Pastor Madou Traoré. They also asked that public gatherings such as church events be scaled down or postponed. Bananzaro requested prayer for the church: that God would intervene to decrease the violence, that EMC-BF congregations would be able to celebrate Christmas in peace, and that the church would be able to year General Assembly meeting in January as planned.

So the message in mid-January expressed gratitude. The Christmas season was peaceful, Pkastor Madou was able to return to N’Dorola, the General Assembly took place without incident, and the militants retreated west

towards the Mali border. We need to continue to pray for a durable peace in Burkina Faso, that the militants' hearts would soften and that they would lay down their weapons.

Even in the face of attacks by militants, there is much more to be thankful for in Burkina Faso. The church's Bible translation teams are making progress in the Siamou and Nanerigue

languages. Pastor Siaka Traoré reported that in the village of Siri, he and believers were able to celebrate the coming of Jesus all night Christmas Eve and on Christmas day. We thank God for the blessings of a peaceful Christmas and the promise of a new year!



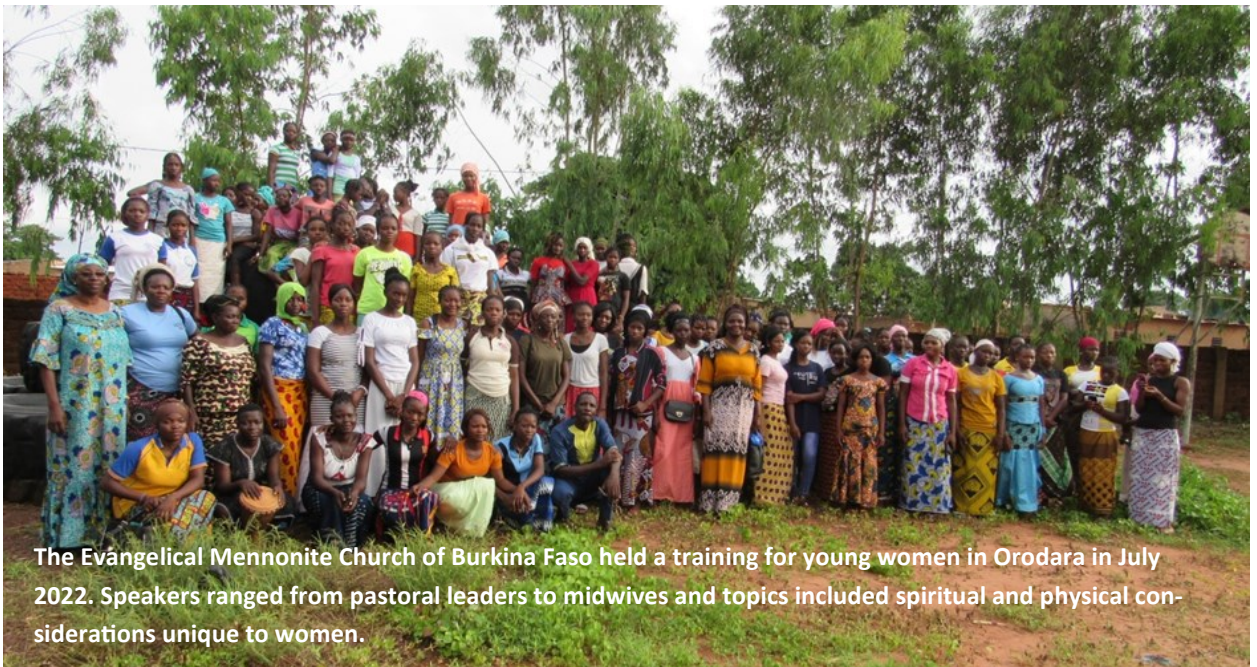
All photos come from Sidi, in the province of Kénédougou, where Pastor Siaka Traoré (pictured above) celebrated Christmas with the Menonite congregation there.

Joining Hands with the Galilee Kalunga Church

Started in May 2013 with 17 people, the Galilee Kalunga Mennonite Brethren Church in Malanje, Angola grew rapidly to 350 members. At first, members of the congregation rented space for their worship services but eventually pooled their resources to buy a plot of land. With a place to meet, they started by meeting in a tent, donated by a benefactor, and slowly built a foundation and the walls of a church building as they were able. The roof presented a challenge, since it required an amount of investment that was too large to gather all at once. Mennonite Men's JoinHands project agreed to provide that investment through AIMM. Pastor Daniel Cangangela, President of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Angola, described the JoinHands assistance as an answer church members' prayers. They have "discovered" that they are part of a global family of faith. Partnership has ceased to be theoretical and become something that feels real. The first worship service under the new roof was held with great joy and gratitude to God on September 11, 2022. Their roof completed, members have been gathering their resources to progressively tile the floor, plaster the walls, and paint their church. Pastor Cangangela asks AIMM and partners everywhere to continue to collaborate with their Angolan brothers and sisters in similar ways. He said, "Please continue to seek to support and serve the most vulnerable local churches." He also issued an invitation for visitors to Angola who would get to know the country and the Anabaptist family of faith serving God there.



Installing the metal roof on the church



The Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso held a training for young women in Orodara in July 2022. Speakers ranged from pastoral leaders to midwives and topics included spiritual and physical considerations unique to women.

(Continued from pg. 9, Partnership at Kalonda Bible Institute Lays Ground for Paradigm Shift)

No one can develop people, but they develop themselves”.

The evidence is that since the Kalonda Bible Institute engaged in the ABCD training and process, the school management team, teachers, and students have developed their own plan of action. They started making bricks for the construction of a multi-purpose conference hall with two guest rooms. A classroom and the office are already furnished with paintings, and cracks have been repaired. They have also purchased plastic chairs with voluntary contributions of \$5 per person. Following the plan of action, first year students now have comfortable church seating instead of benches.

AIMM’s support of this paradigm shift process is a valuable contribution, as school leaders, teachers and student now see things and envision the future with different and positive thinking. Following the two ABCD training sessions, the Kalonda Bible Institute has begun to look like a place and community where life is getting better. Unity is being strengthened; hope and the spirit of teamwork is being restored. The Kalonda Bible Institute is beginning to engage in taking ownership and responsibility of its development initiatives.

Building a Place of Worship

by Joining Hands



The new building during construction

A vision for collaboration among different Mennonite denominations and the need for a new place of worship has culminated in a new church building and partnership that extends across continents. Conceived originally as a congregation that would bring together members of Mennonite denominations in Kinshasa, the Colombe de MaCampagne (Dove of MaCampagne) Mennonite Church traversed several years of uncertainty as its founding members moved between temporary locations in the over-

crowded MaCampagne neighborhood of the city. The budding congregation met first in the classroom of a medical school, then in a commercial center, and subsequently in several temporary locations, finally obtaining a small plot of land close to the Christian University of Kinshasa. Chaplaincy for Mennonite student at the university became part of its ministry. In 2018 church members began a building fund, with which they eventually were able to replace their palm branch and sheet metal structure with du-

rable, cement block walls.

AIMM's partnership paradigm entered the scene when the building fund proved insufficient for a roof, and a temporary cover of rusty, repurposed tin sufficient to span half the worship space was all that was left. AIMM introduced the congregation to the Mennonite Men JoinHands initiative, which assists congregations to construct their first church buildings. Mennonite Men Canada approved funding through the JoinHands program to provide a roof, which now covers the entire structure. While finishing

touches are being added progressively, there is finally a space in which to worship and conduct other church activities that is dry, protected from the rains of Kinshasa. Current Colombe de MaCampagne pastor Leonard Falanga reports that members of **two** congregations are praising God for the new roof. Both the Vallée (Valley) Mennonite Brethren Church and the Colombe de MaCampagne Mennonite Church share the building. Thanks be to God for fruitful partnerships among Anabaptists, those close by and those a whole ocean away!

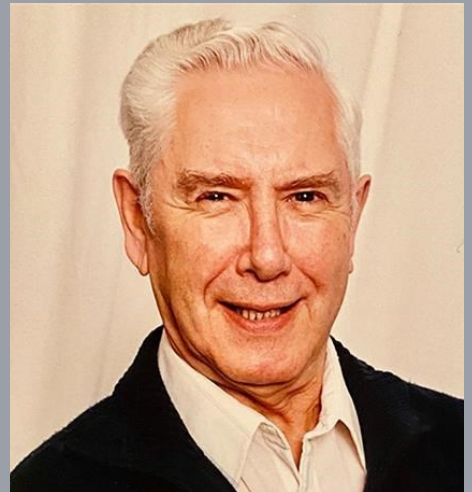
Remembering John Klaassen

John E. Klassen, beloved husband of Ruth Klaassen (nee Dirks), of Calgary, Alberta, passed away at home on September 2, 2022 at the age of 92.

John was born in Rosthern, SK, on October 25, 1929, and grew up on the farm surrounded by family. He met his wife, Olga, at Rosthern Bible School and they married in 1952. John taught in Canada before he and Olga began missionary work with Congo Inland Mission (now Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission) in 1964. They served two terms in the Congo, where John taught math and science. Olga passed away in 1976 after their return to Canada.

In 1977, John married Ruth Dirks and they moved to Hudsons Hope. John had a variety of interests including education, the church, and woodworking. John's faith was the cornerstone of all he did in his life.

John is survived by his wife, Ruth, his children (Ben, John, April, and Miriam), his daughters in-law and his sons-in-law, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.





Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission International Central Council

Phone: +1 (574) 535-0077 ▪ Email: aimm@aimmint.org ▪ Web: aimmint.org

PO Box 744

Goshen, IN 46527

USA

440 Main Street

Steinbach, MB R5G 1Z5

CANADA



Cover image is of Tany Warkentin and Pokie Putu leading communion during the ICC meetings in South Africa, October 2022.