

Ninth Decade

1979-1989



The ninth decade showed a continued reduction in the number of missionaries in the country. The decline in government services and general infrastructure were continuing problems. One new factor for the Congo church was the relationship with the German missionary society, VEM, which provided significant financial aid.



Allen, Michael (1987-1993)

Mr. Michael Allen was trained in the U.S. Army as a medical corpsman. He worked as an ER technician and nursing assistant. He then obtained a Master of Public Health degree from the University of Pittsburgh and was a Peace Corps volunteer in Zaïre from 1981-83 where he married Ekanga Mondonga. He was assigned as hospital administrator to the Bolenge hospital.



Brown, David

Brown, Rebecca (Zahller) (1985-86)

Mr. David Brown graduated from Wittenberg University, Springfield, Ohio and Lexington Theological Seminary. Mrs. Rebecca Brown attended college in Omaha, and at Phillips University. She then went to Lexington Theological Seminary where she met and married David. They studied French in France then went to Bolenge to teach at the Institut *Supérieur de Théologie*. Illness forced an end to their anticipated service and a quick return to the States.



Cavanaugh, Martine (Lihoreau) (1981-83)

Martine Lihoreau graduated with a BA degree from Catholic University of the West, Angers, France. She won a scholarship from Rotary International to Georgia Southwestern College in Americus, Georgia. While there she met Millard and Linda Fuller and became interested in the Habitat for Humanity program. In Congo she taught French, typing, French business practices, and English at the girls' school in Mbandaka where she met and married Jerry Cavanaugh.



Coles, Sherry (1986-88)

Sherry Coles was assigned to teach English at the Zaïre Christian Institute in Bolenge. She was married to Dr. Alela Lilombwe in November, 1987, in Bolenge.



Crisler, Teresa (1986-90)

After graduating with a degree in mathematics from Hiram College Teresa Crisler was certified to teach at secondary level. She studied French in le Chambon, France. She was assigned to teach mathematics at ICC in Bolenge.



Falcon, Saul (1986-93)

Falcon, Marie (Martinez) (1980-93)

Mr. Saul Falcon was born and educated in Paraguay with degrees in theology and philosophy at the Catholic University of Asuncion where he graduated in 1984. He studied French in Quebec and France. He directed the Mbandaka girl's school and taught philosophy, ethics, and history. He also directed the Zaïre Christian Institute. They were evacuated on Sept. 30, 1991, and again on Feb. 4, 1993. Mrs. Maria Falcon was born and educated in Paraguay where she received degrees in physical education in Asuncion. She studied French in France in 1980. In Zaïre she taught physical education at the Mbandaka girl's school from 1980-83. After she was married in 1984 and after further French study she returned to Zaïre in 1987 to work with her husband teaching physical education and directing the girl's school. She also stimulated interest in physical education in other schools

in the city, and organized sports activities in the general community. She started teaching basketball by attaching hoops to palm trees. The Falcons were widely applauded by Mbandaka civic and religious leaders for their key roles in promoting a city-wide youth Olympic event at the end of December, 1988.



Goodall, Harrison Jr. Nkoi

Goodall, Luann Bekai (1980-82)

Harry Goodall Jr. grew up in Congo, the son of Dr. and Mrs. Harry Goodall. He attended The American School of Kinshasa and then went to the University of Alabama and the University of Idaho where he received a BA degree in 1978 with major in wildlife biology and French. Luann Goodall attended the University of Idaho and the University of Northern Colorado with a major in recreation and a minor in business. Mr. Goodall worked in Mbandaka with Habitat building houses. Mrs. Goodall worked with women to help improve their lives. She taught them how to build a stove using a Guatemalan design. She also established a low-cost food store, a cooperative, with the prices the same as those at the market but lower than those downtown. She established a clinic with funding from several sources. Curative programs were offered in the mornings and preventive programs in the afternoon. Health and nutrition classes for women and children and a vaccination program were offered. Garden plots were available to the women who attended the clinic.



Janz, Mark

Janz, Charlene (1981-88)

Mr. Mark Janz was born and grew up in Zaïre where his parents were missionaries. He received a BA degree in history at Indiana University and studied French in Belgium. He was Church World Service representative for the Mennonite Central Committee in Zaïre as a Technical Assistant. His responsibilities included supervision of the network of Church Development Offices throughout Zaïre. He also was the Supervisor of the Lutendele Agricultural Resource Centre. Mrs. Charlene Janz grew up in Latin America where her parents were missionaries. She received a BS degree in nursing from Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana and studied French in Belgium. She worked in a nutrition program for children under 5 years old at an ECZ dispensary in Kinshasa.



Jones-Burk, Rebecca (1981-84)

Miss Rebecca Jones received a BA degree at the University of Chicago in anthropology with emphasis in African civilization. She had language training in France. She was secretary to Dr. Elonda, translating his French into English, and doing basic office work. She also taught a class in English for adults for 1 1/2 years. She married Christoph Burk who was working as a technical counselor from the German Protestant Churches to the Equator Region,



Müller, Robert

Müller, Gertrud (1987-93)

Mr. Robert Müller was born in Germany, the son of a master carpenter. He was apprenticed in his father's enterprise. He graduated from the University in Stuttgart with a Diploma in

Constructional engineering. He worked 1 year in a private office of Architecture. In Zaïre he was involved in numerous construction projects including the Protestant Centenary Cathedral, the Theological School, extensions on the General Secretariat, residences, Salvation Army medical building, and Mt. Ngafula church in Kinshasa. In the Mbandaka area he did work on the girls school, the Bolenge hospital, and numerous other buildings. Mrs. Gertrud Muller worked with the Women's School of the Protestant Theological Seminary of Zaïre. They were evacuated from Kinshasa to Brazzaville in February, '93 by the German embassy because of violence.



Nunnelee, Randolph (1980-83)

Randolph Nunnelee received a BA degree from Northwest Christian College. He followed an African Area Studies graduate program at UCLA, majoring in Anthropology and Linguistics and spent 4 years in East Africa doing research in communications. He taught two years at the theological school at Bolenge in the areas of anthropology and research methods.



Phillips, Lorenza

Phillips, Esther (Pixi) (1981-84, 89-90)

Mr. Lorenza Phillips received a BS degree from Prairie View A&M University. He also studied at Georgia State University, and at Le Chambon, France. His wife, Esther (Pixi), had BA degree from TCU and studied at St. Edwards University, the University of Texas, and in Le Chambon, France. During their first term he was assigned to Gemena with Habitat for Humanity in charge of construction of low income dwellings and community development. In their second term he and his wife served as co-directors of ICZ.



Toomey, Hannah (1980-83)

Hannah Toomey received a BA degree from California State University in sociology and an MDiv degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary. She also attended the Missouri School of Religion. Her first assignment was in the office of the General Secretary, Dr. Elonda. She was then given the responsibility of director for the girls' dormitory of the secondary school.



Weeks, Julia (1987-91)

Mrs. Julia Weeks was the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Harry Goodall and had spent much of her childhood in Congo. She studied tropical medicine at Antwerp, Belgium, and arrived in Zaïre in 1988 to serve at the Bolenge hospital.

Seminary

As noted earlier, training church leaders had always been a priority from the early days of the mission. Now, with the number of missionaries significantly reduced, it was often impossible to find the personnel needed to staff the training programs. The effort of the church to confront this problem is dealt with in the following note dated Sept. 30, 1979 from Bolenge, which tells of a decision of the church regarding their seminary:

We are informing our sister religious associations that the Bolenge Superior Institute of Theology is being revived within the Disciples of Christ community in Zaïre. This institution, which is at the same academic level as those of Kinshasa, Mulunguishi, Ndesha and Bunia, already existed in Bolenge. But there was a time when the school closed its doors because of lack of funds and qualified professors. This institution was thus replaced by an *École Biblique* at a very elementary level.

Since the Disciples of Christ community in Zaïre commands a vast range of missionary activity in more than 160 parishes the necessity of a school which can train servants of God capable of confronting the African elite appears urgent and indispensable. Thus the *Institut Supérieur de Théologie* at Bolenge has been reopened for the academic year 1979-80. There will be three full-time and four part-time professors. The director is a graduate of the Protestant Faculty of Theology in Kinshasa.

German Church

The Rev. Mr. Jurgen Kanz, Executive Secretary for Central and Eastern Africa of the United Evangelical Mission of Germany, was a guest at the meeting of the mission board in November, 1979. The Vereinigte Evangelische Mission (VEM) in Wuppertal, is the oldest mission organization in Germany with a very distinguished reputation. It had for many years been putting much money into Namibia. This was stopped after Namibian independence. VEM looked for another area in Africa to use their funds. They wrote to Rev. Bokeleale and identified Zaïre as where they wanted to work. At the encouragement of Rev. Bokeleale they established relations with four groups in Congo, including the Disciples. They also provided funds for the ECZ.

In February, 1980, the Africa executive, Dan Hoffman, met with the Zaïre Committee of VEM in Wuppertal. He was impressed with the reception given him by the committee and the very responsible way in which they gave consideration in their funding to those projects which would not undermine the church's own initiations. Mr. Jurgen Kanz, their agent, wrote the following to document the conclusions reached in that meeting:¹

The United Evangelical Mission agrees on the mutual exchange of information about the sponsoring of personnel and financing of projects concerning the cooperation with ECZ/Communauté des Disciples du Christ au Zaïre. Occasional consultations should be held.

We confirm that United Evangelical Mission will not support the ordinary budget of CDCZ. Support will be granted upon submission of projects within the limits of funds in our annual budget. Scholarships for training in Africa will be granted according to decisions by CDCZ within the limits of funds available. Scholarships for studies in Europe (if no comparative training is available in Africa) should be applied for directly to United Evangelical Mission in accordance with our scholarship regulations. For all transfers in cash a detailed account has to be given. An audited

account (income and expenditure account as well as balance-sheet) should be presented by CDCZ annually.

The finances received from VEM were a great help to the Disciples church particularly with respect to vehicles, building repairs, and special projects. The relationship also resulted in a number of Disciples receiving higher education in Germany. At times there were disagreements, largely because the VEM considered the financial record keeping to be inadequate, and there were accusations of mismanagement of money.

The present Africa secretary of VEM is Kakule Molo, a Congolese, who has a ThD degree from the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. He was initially brought to the US by the DOM and later studies were financed by the VEM.

Zaire Consultation at Christmount, 1980

In the 1960's, after independence, and again after the evacuation of missionaries caused by the rebellion, there were consultations between the Disciples church and the DOM. Those conversations resulted in new policies and understandings. Since then there had been many changes in Zaire and in church relationships. The Disciples Community in Zaire and the Division of Overseas Ministries agreed that another consultation was needed.

In preparation for this consultation, from August 27 to September 14, 1979, board members Dr. Colbert S. Cartwright, Mrs. Jean Tucker, Dr. Charles H. Webb and missionary Ms. Sharon E. Watkins, traveled to Africa. The purpose of the trip was to acquaint the board members with the Disciples of Christ Community in Zaire and the physical, cultural and religious context in which the Zairian church works. In addition, contacts were made with the Church of Christ in Zaire and with the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) to give a broader perspective of Division of Overseas Ministries' relationships with those bodies, and to help understand Protestant church activities in Africa.

The three board members prepared for their visit by reading a wide range of articles about the political, economic, and social situation in Zaire. They also read about the Church in Zaire as seen by both Zairians and expatriates.

The group met with Dr. Robert G. Nelson and Ms. Watkins for an orientation session one month prior to the trip and also met with some of the Africa Committee staff in New York. The visit to Zaire was totally directed by the Church there.

After short stops in Brussels (where they met two Zairian medical students supported by DOM) and in Kinshasa, the group arrived in Mbandaka on August 31 accompanied by Bishops Bokeleale and Boyaka. The first two days were spent in Mbandaka getting acquainted with the DCZ staff, the Urban Council of Parishes, and Bolenge. From there, they went by road into the back-country. This portion of the trip lasted five and a half days. Major stops were Longa, Ingende, Boende, and Wema. Two more days were spent at Mbandaka visiting projects and meeting with the DCZ staff to cover remaining important questions.

A further day and a half followed in Kinshasa where they talked with the ECZ staff and with Bishop Bokeleale. The last stop was a day in Nairobi for a meeting with the AACC staff.

The direct contact between DOM board members and Zairian church leaders on the denominational level was a first of its kind and the encounters without missionary intermediaries made the experience a rewarding one for the participants. This aspect should be emphasized as an important step in cementing trust. It was helpful in facilitating frank exchanges at the time of the consultation.

The DCZ made an impressive show of organization and vitality. Their presentation of concerns and needs was well coordinated all across the community. It was designed to show how seriously the different posts had deteriorated, how willing the Zaïrians were to work, what they have done with DOM money, and therefore, that the DOM-DCZ relationship needs to continue as in the past but with greater funding and sending of personnel. The Zaïrians expressed the desire to be working seriously toward economic autonomy. The community seemed, at this point, to be solidly and joyfully behind the general secretary, Dr. Elonda.

Briefly, other concerns of the community were: 1. Difference in view towards questions of identity and unity as felt by Third World Churches or Churches from highly industrialized countries, 2. Clarification of American Disciples' views regarding Episcopacy.

The DOM delegation was careful to avoid any direct commentary that could indicate decision or administrative authority but rather emphasized its role of listener and learner. Historical and "family of God" ties were stressed but also presented so as to be global in scope, not just bilateral between Indianapolis and Zaïre. The need to look ahead to a new day of relationships was an important theme as was "saying the truth in love."

Other particular concerns of the board members were DCZ structure and DCZ-ECZ-DOM relationships. The trip was completed with positive feelings. It was clear that a considerable distance existed between the initial positions of the DOM and the Zaïrian delegations. However much groundwork was laid in candid exchange of views and in establishing a certain amount of trust in the idea that both sides wanted to understand and hear the other.

To give the African delegates to the consultation an opportunity to explore the culture and churches in North America, they were brought to the US several weeks before the beginning of the meetings. Those delegates were Rev. Dr. Elonda Efele, General Secretary, Disciples Community of Zaïre; Bishop Bokeleale Itofo, President, Church of Christ in Zaïre; Rev. Ilanga Ngoy, Area Minister, Boende, Deputy in Zaïre legislature; Rev. Mbomba Ngole, Director of Evangelism, DCZ; Mr. Njali Bofeloyau, Director of Medical Work, DCZ; Mrs. Efoloko Lokoku, Principal, Junior High school, Bolenge; Mrs. Iyofe Boyenge, Economist, Zaïrian Social Security, insurance; and Mr. Bonkale, President, Mbandaka Laymen's Assoc.

In order to expose the Africans to the life and structures of the American church they were taken for visits to institutions such as NBA homes, schools, church offices, and historical monuments. They came into contact with the local people who make up our church and learned something about the variety of our church members, rich and poor, rural and urban, black and white, of various language groups. In addition they got a feel for the different ways in which we reach out to our community through evangelism, social service projects, and other means.

The Zaïrians traveled as a group to Atlanta, Washington, DC, and Indianapolis. They then divided into three teams and spent a week and a half of concentrated travel. The teams visited the North Carolina and Kentucky Regions, the Southwest Region, and the Michigan Region.

In addition to the three board members who had visited Zaïre, the following persons participated in the consultation: Dr. Robert A. Thomas, President of DOM; Dr. Robert G. Nelson, Executive Secretary for the Department of Africa, DOM; Mrs. Sandra R. Gourdet, returned overseas staff of DOM on furlough in the US; Dr. Angel V. Peiro, consultant to development in Central America, Guatamala City; Dr. Charles T. Hein, General Secretary, Afrolit Society, Nairobi, Kenya; Dr. Bokamba Eyamba, Professor, Dept. of Linguistics, University of Illinois; Dr. Bosuma Bokili, Doctor studying for gynecology specialization in

Brussels; Mr. Garland S. Farmer, Vice President of DOM; Mr. Willis Logan, Africa Committee, National Council of Christian Churches; and Dr. William Nottingham, who gave special help in interpretation.

The main purpose of the consultation was to provide an occasion for mutual exploration of relationships between the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ in the US and Canada and the Disciples Community of Zaïre. An agenda was prepared and approved by the DOM council and by representatives of the DOM Board and the DCZ. It included discussion of the two churches, both structurally and spiritually; of their respective understandings of the nature of church and mission; of the history of their relationship, with attention given both to what facilitates and what impedes good cooperation between them, discussion of program specifics that enable each church to be both giver and receiver.

The meetings took place April 16-20, 1980, at Christmount Assembly near Black Mountain, North Carolina. They began cordially, but warily. All were aware that the American and Zaïrian delegations, though they had come with equal intentions to discuss relationships, also had separate agendas to be covered.

The meetings ended in a feeling of jubilation and togetherness that surprised the most optimistic. The sense of the participants seemed to be that the purpose of the consultation had been fulfilled. A mutual exploration of relationships had taken place both symbolically through discussion and in actuality by establishing trust that could bear the risk of sharing more openly than ever before.

In addition to the spirit of candor and love that so marked the consultation, there were some specific accomplishments. Some of these were indicated in the declaration of covenant and in the recommendations to the DOM Board of Directors. Others are less easily qualified but nonetheless significant. DOM assumptions that when the DCZ says "relationship" it means "money" were shown to be not fully warranted. DCZ assumptions that Zaïrians would never be "taken seriously" as adults by Americans were proven incorrect. Important information was shared indicating substantial divergence of Zaïrian and American views regarding the role and orientation of missionaries.

All participants were reminded that good relationships need good communication. A desire was expressed for intentional communication through a series of consultations over the next difficult years.

Africa Executive Visit, 1981

The president of the DOM, Robert Thomas, joined Robert Nelson and Dan Hoffman in Kinshasa, September 2, 1981. After meeting leaders of the Church of Christ in Zaïre and a number of government leaders involved in development programs, they flew that evening to Mbandaka, headquarters city for the Disciples Community in Equator Region. Dr. Elonda Efele, executive leader of that community, was their host. They were met at the airport with one of those marvelous groups from the church singing, clapping, making them welcome. Because of a long plane delay they had been waiting for hours. Members of DOM staff were there, too, and Maria Martinez, staff member from Paraguay, who had arrived in Mbandaka about the same time after a vacation trip home, shared in the joy of the reunion.

Following is the story told by Robert Thomas describing one day:²

Sunday, the sixth of September, was one of the great days in my life. I was in Mbandaka, Zaïre, to share celebrations of the Community of the Disciples of Christ

in Equator Region timed to coincide with the last field trip of the Executive Secretary of the Department of Africa. As all of you know, Dr. Nelson's twenty-five years of service in this position concludes December 30. He had already been in Africa several weeks, accompanied by his wife, June. So some of the celebration had already taken place by the time Dan Hoffman and I arrived.

And before the Sunday celebrations we had been on a two-day trip into the country—days filled with village celebrations of Dr. Nelson's ministry including dancing, music, story-telling and other entertainment, worship, speeches, gifts, music, and prayer. We were a truckload and a van-load of bureaucrats, fraternal workers, guides and program directors. It was fun, and it was important business.

Sunday morning began with breakfast at the home of Dr. Elonda Efefe, General Secretary of the Disciples Community. Shortly after nine o'clock we arrived at the Parish of Air Zaïre where we were to participate in the dedication of a new building. The parish gets its name from the old airport of Mbandaka, the building being very near the landing strip used by the Sabena planes many years ago.

I remember visiting the place twelve years ago. The concrete block walls were up and part of the floor poured so you could see the outlines of the huge structure. It was clear the builders had been too ambitious and that engineering and constructing the roof beaming was going to be impossibly expensive. And so it proved to be. But somebody worked out an acceptable compromise; two more walls were built inside the original ones and sections roofed, providing for a sanctuary and also for offices and an educational wing. Pews were not yet in place, but benches and chairs were provided for perhaps 1200 people. The place was packed before we arrived and there were nearly as many outside as in. Representatives and pastors from Disciples congregations as far away as Boende were there. There were four choirs. The governor of the province was present. Representatives from the Disciples Fellowship Group in Kinshasa were there. Bishop Bokeleale and other officials of the Church of Christ of Zaïre joined the throng.

It began to rain and that meant more crowding and pushing, until both side aisles had people standing, two deep, and the center aisle was jammed more than half way down. The service was carefully ordered and conducted. All the choirs sang. Dr. Hoffman and Dr. Nelson were introduced for brief greetings. We prayed and sang hymns. I preached, (very unsuccessfully, I may add). Being translated into French and then into Lingala before going to the next sentence is a little discouraging. And it is unbearably time consuming! Dr. Elonda conducted a formal act of consecration. An offering was received to the accompaniment of drums and song by the women. The Lord's Supper was celebrated. Bishop Bokeleale offered a prayer of intercession. The Choirs sang again. It was nearly noon when we finished. What a celebration it had been! How much joy expressed! What generous giving had made it possible.

You would think that was enough for one day! But after a light lunch we were on our way again, this time to the great Temple Mbandaka III for a special ordination service. At three o'clock in the afternoon the church was filled. More than a thousand people came. The governor attended this service, too. The ordained pastors sat on one side of the chancel mostly in Geneva gowns, with the church's leaders participating in the service. Nelson, Hoffman and Thomas, with interpreter, sat on the other side of the chancel with the candidates for ordination and their wives. They were gowned, too.

The choirs sang again. There was prayer and the reading of Scripture and the singing of hymns—mostly in Lingala. Dr. Hoffman preached the sermon (in French, so he only had to be translated once!). He made clear contact with the people and they were with him all the time.

Dr. Elonda conducted the Act of Ordination. He directed questions to the standing candidates. Then he turned to put two kneeling pads in the center of the chancel, directed the pastors to make a semicircle in front of the Communion Table, asked Bishop Bokeleale to stand to one side, invited me to stand in the center spot, facing the congregation, and then presented the candidates two at a time as they kneeled facing the congregation. I placed my hands on their heads and the pastors did the same. And one of them offered a brief prayer. As they moved off to the side they were joined by their wives. Bishop Bokeleale gave each the Embrace of Peace, and presented the wives a Bible. Then they went back to their places and two more came to kneel.

Each candidate and his wife was introduced, place and date of birth given together with the number of their children. As I remember the oldest was 42 years and the largest number of children was nine.

There were eight candidates ordained, one of whom was a son-in-law of Bishop Bokeleale.

It was the most beautiful service of ordination I've ever shared, including my own. And I was deeply moved.

When the Belgians abruptly left what was then the Belgian Congo in 1961 the number of university educated persons in the whole country could be counted on your hands. One of the awful policies aimed at keeping control of the colony was to refuse to let anyone get more than a secondary education. For many years now the Africa Department has been pursuing a program of leadership training, including scholarship help for promising Africans pursuing university degrees. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent that way. And gradually the Disciples Community of the Church of Christ in Zaïre has been raising the level of its leaders and pastors. Some have studied in Belgium, others in France, a very few in the United States. Most now do their work at the Protestant Seminary in Kinshasa. All of the eight men ordained are fully trained seminary graduates, most of their work done in Kinshasa. They are back now, fulfilling the pastoral calling in their home region. It is almost more than one can imagine, and the consequences for the future are beyond our ability to predict.

You would think that was surely enough for one day! But no, we left that service—several carloads of us—to drive to Bolenge for a beautiful dinner in the dining hall of the Institute, the school that offers the highest level of education in the area. Church leaders from that Parish gathered to celebrate the ministry of Robert Nelson, present gifts and share memories and hopes. There was a naming ceremony and Dan Hoffman was given an African name that means “Voyager.” They will likely bestow another after they know him better. The names of past executives were recalled—both their American and African names: Virgil Sly and before him Cy Yocum. And that goes back a long way.

Bob was asked to speak, and again his love for the African Church was expressed, his joy in his relationship to them. He tried to make sense out of our policy of retirement, since he is still in good health with a sound mind! He congratulated them on their church's development and spoke with confidence of the future. He made the

kindly remarks you would expect in talking about Dan, predicted a warm and loving acceptance for his successor, and promised his continuing concern for their church.

Dan spoke appreciatively of his experience in Zaïre, of his desire to learn from them and share with them and his keen anticipation of the future. I said we were experiencing a parable of the church life and history everywhere. Loved persons retire and others take their place. In birth and death there is continuity in community. We celebrate the past and are thankful for those who have led us; we look forward to the future with faith and hope. I acknowledged our special relationship to their church and our need of each other in the community of Christ.

Think of it, brothers and sisters! Right on the equator, out of that mission begun at Bolenge on the Congo River near the end of the 19th century, a church that is more than 300,000 strong; social clinics, women's programs, development programs, evangelism, health, nurture, world-wide connections and ecumenical commitments, all African led and managed. In terms of the world's way of thinking it is an incredible story. There have been mistakes, and no doubt will be many more. But in personnel, worship, music and theological understanding and all the rest, it is African. I believe with my heart the roots are down to stay.

Retirement of Robert Nelson

Dr. Robert Nelson retired December 31, 1981 from his position as Executive Secretary of the Department of Africa, concluding 25 years in that office. His career as missionary and mission executive began in Jamaica where he served for eight years from 1948 to 1956. He was administrative field secretary for the Christian Churches in Jamaica. During his period of service many of the young men who became leaders in the church were particularly influenced by his leadership of a young men's group, and during that period he helped form what became the United Theological College of the West Indies.

A native of Norman, Oklahoma, Dr. Nelson earned the BA degree from Phillips University. He was licensed to preach in 1934 and served a number of churches in Oklahoma during college days. He was ordained to the Christian ministry in the First Christian Church, Miami, Oklahoma, January 1, 1940. He earned the BD degree from Brite Divinity School, and TCU conferred the DD degree in 1960.

Following the service in Jamaica Dr. Nelson was elected Executive Secretary for the Department of Africa of the UCMS, with responsibility for Belgian Congo and the Union of South Africa. Shortly after his appointment he made a four-month introductory visit to Africa to get acquainted with the personnel, properties and program of the Disciples, returning again in 1957 as evaluation was being made of program and procedures to work out a new strategy to meet changing conditions. Visits to Africa occurred at least every year, often twice a year, varying from one to five months each.

Fully supporting independence for the church, Dr. Nelson helped the transition from mission to church. He was a proponent of the formation of the Church of Christ in Zaïre, the union of most Protestant churches. Because of his strong support of leadership development he actively sought funds to provide higher education for Congolese Disciples. He was given the African name, Bosemboji, (one who arranges things). He was decorated by the government of the Republic of Zaïre as a member of the Distinguished Order of the Leopard for his 25 years of outstanding service to the people of Zaïre.

Following his last visit to Zaïre and in anticipation of his retirement Dr. Nelson wrote: "The staff of the DOM in Indianapolis is well balanced, competent and dedicated. Our colleagues in Africa are exceptional in their spiritual capacity and ability. Those of us who

were recently in Zaïre marveled at the kind of leadership in our churches. The missionary staff is not to be equaled anywhere. There are other churches with more missionaries and fewer qualified national leaders. Our missionaries are well qualified and committed to their task of strengthening the indigenous church. A more diversified group is not to be found. The staff is international, inter-racial, interdenominational and academically inter-disciplined. There is no superfluous staff nor those of uncertain motivation.”

Daniel Hoffman Becomes Executive for Africa

Mr. Daniel (Dan) Hoffman was chosen to assume the responsibility of Executive for Africa in the DOM. After graduating from Phillips University with a BA degree in 1966 he spent two years with the United States Peace Corps in Timbauba, Brazil, involved in teaching and community development. The next two years he served as youth minister at Meadlawn Christian Church, Indianapolis, while attending CTS where he received an Masters degree in 1970.

In 1970 he was sent as a missionary to the Evangelical Congregational Church of Brazil at Ijuí where he was a teacher at the Bible Institute and served as the national Christian education director, in addition to having local church responsibilities. His next term of missionary service was in Pau, France, where he served with the French Reformed Church. He was on the staff of the Search and Encounter Center run by the local parish. In 1981 he went to the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation in Kitwe, Zambia as staff in the research and conference department with teaching responsibilities. He was called from that position to be the Africa executive for the DOM.

With studies between his terms overseas as a missionary Mr. Hoffman had earned an MDiv degree from Iliff School of Theology in 1975, an STM degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1976, and a DMin from CTS in 1981. His language experience, especially his fluency in French, was a major advantage in relating to the work in Zaïre.

Executive Visit to Zaïre, 1982

In March and April, 1982, Mr. Garland Farmer accompanied Mr. Daniel Hoffman on a visit to the Disciples community. Mr. Farmer was then the Treasurer of the DOM, but had previously been a missionary to Congo, having served as Administrative Field Secretary during the transition from mission to church. He had returned again for shorter periods and visits in 1970, 1975 and 1978. His prior experience lends added value to his observations which were reported to the DOM board as follows:³

The hospitality of the Zaïrians is as great as ever, and the courtesies extended by a host of people, beginning with Dr. Elonda Efele, can never be adequately acknowledged. It was especially gratifying to see friends and colleagues with whom one worked some twenty years ago and who still are active in education, medicine and the ministry.

Although on the surface life seems to have changed little, there have been gains and losses. Communications with church centers, or “posts”, of the interior are still difficult, but there is now no airplane for transport and the short-wave radio network is not fully operable since regular maintenance of equipment is impossible. At times there is no gasoline for the vehicles to make trips into the interior. Maintenance of roads, none of which outside of Mbandaka are paved, is not adequate for the needs of the villages. For example, at Boende the group learned that the road between Wema and Mondombe was impassable, and so Wema was the farthest east the group could

go. The executive for Africa will have to visit Bokungu, Mondombe and Ikela on another occasion.

On the positive side, there are now many leaders with university degrees, several with doctorates. The legal representative of the Church of Christ of Zaïre community at Gemena, who was visiting in Mbandaka, told the DOM executives that the Disciples had the reputation of being the intellectuals of Zaïre Protestantism. Whether this view is held by the whole Church of Christ of Zaïre or not, it testifies to the emphasis which the Zaïrian Disciples and Dr. Robert G. Nelson, former Executive Secretary of the Department of Africa, gave to leadership training.

Eighteen years ago there were only two secondary schools in the Disciples Community, Congo Christian Institute and the Girls School, both of which were at Bolenge. The Girls School is now located in Mbandaka. Today all of the "posts" have secondary schools, and so do some of the larger villages which are not "posts." In the village of Budzaileko the school director and his colleagues have constructed as much of the buildings and equipment from materials at hand as possible rather than depend upon imported materials, which are very expensive when available.

The school population in the Disciples Community has grown, and one gets the impression that there are more primary schools now. Probably some of the village schools which had only two or three grades now are complete primary schools.

Another development is the increase in the number of dispensaries operated by the community. Eighteen years ago there were the five hospitals and only two or three dispensaries. Now there are thirty dispensaries in addition to the hospitals. Some of them are poorly equipped, and there is a scarcity of pharmaceuticals.

The inflation rate exceeds 100% per year and is one of the highest in the world. In 1978 the exchange rate was z 0.86/\$1.00. Now it is z 5.60/\$1.00. The parallel market, which almost everyone uses, prices the zaïre at about 50% of the official value. Corruption is widespread and includes some of the top government officials. There is very little money circulating in the villages. Most commerce, except in the cities, is handled by barter.

The economy of the country has its effect on the church. Although the members are generous, they are not able to contribute enough to support the central structure of the community and meet its capital and programmatic needs. A number of enterprises are operated by the community: a coffee plantation, sand and concrete block operation, several agricultural projects, but these are not producing enough income to pay operating expenses, maintenance and replacement costs of equipment and to produce income for use by the community in other projects. There is much dependency upon financial help from North America and Germany. Sometimes the impression arises that almost all of the finances comes from outside Zaïre. This is erroneous, for the community receives educational and medical subsidies from the government and the offerings of its members.

The program planned by Dr. Elonda for the visit of the DOM executives provided very little time for talking with him about financial matters, and none at all for a conference with Bobuke Mwamba-Moke, Treasurer of the Disciples Community. This was the biggest disappointment for the DOM Treasurer, for indications point to a continuing financial crisis in the community. It is his belief that very little improvement has occurred in the financial administration of the community following the Zaïre Consultation of 1980, which provided for the payment of the community's debts up to that point.

In addition to the fact that the community's commercial enterprises are not supporting themselves, the opening of new classes, while needed and good, has helped create the financial problems. Classes have been started before the government has provided subsidy for the teachers. The community has paid the teachers in hopes of receiving retroactive subsidy, but sometimes the subsidy is late in coming or is never received. This same situation may be true for the new dispensaries which have been opened in the last ten or twenty years.

At the request of the 1980 portion of the Zaïre Consultation and upon approval of the DOM Board of Directors, DOM, paid the community's accumulated obligations up to that point, a total of \$50,500, with 50% being a grant from DOM and the other 50% a loan to the community to be paid off as mutually agreed to. Since then another \$3,000 debt has surfaced and been paid. The amount the community owes DOM is \$26,750. Dr. Elonda's efforts to recover some of the funds believed to have been taken by the former general secretary and the former treasurer have not proved to be successful. In addition, the community has accepted funds from persons and organizations in Zaïre on the basis that it would ask DOM to reimburse those receipts from funds held here. At the current time there are requests from the community for the payment of \$14,225 for which DOM does not have the money.

Control of the community's finances, or at least those from DOM and the Germans, seems to be held tightly by Dr. Elonda, with the Treasurer, Bobuke, participating to a degree. There is evidence that funds sent for a specific purpose may be used for another. Whether there is any misappropriation of funds is not clear, but when moneys are not handled openly there is always suspicion that the person handling the moneys is benefiting personally. Part of the tension existing in the community at this time relates to the secrecy with which funds are handled. It is hoped that the General Assembly of the Disciples Community this July will ask for a more responsible financial administration. The Africa Department is now asking for reports on the use of designated funds sent to the community. The Germans already receive such reports, but their validity is questionable since the amounts given are always in round numbers.

DOM wants to work with the Disciples Community without limiting its autonomy but believes that the community must show that it has a responsible administration in place so that funds can be sent to it in confidence.

Ekeya Pastoral Exchange 1983

In 1983 a pastoral exchange was arranged in which Ekeya, the *Pasteur Surveillant* of the Kinshasa Disciples Community, and *Adjointe* to Dr. Elonda, came to the First Christian Church of Alexandria, VA, for six weeks. The exchange had been arranged by the Africa office of the DOM. Chris Hobgood, who was then chairman of the DOM, was the local pastor. Ekeya worked alongside Mr. Hobgood in all his pastoral duties, and stayed in his home during most of the period. He also spent some time staying with other parishioners and other Disciples in the Capital area. The purpose of the exchange was to help pastor Ekeya understand the church in the USA and to supply him with ideas to take back to his work in Kinshasa. Pastor Ekeya preached and led discussion groups.

Two years later the exchange was completed when Mr. Hobgood went to Zaïre for three weeks. He stayed in the home of pastor Ekeya and shared in his duties in the same manner as Ekeya had done in Virginia with the goal of bringing back information of use in his pastorate.

Supplies

During December and January, 1983, the Africa office was flooded with school supplies, totaling nearly half a ton, that were donated by the CWFs of Oregon and Georgia for shipment to the Zaïre Christian Institute. These supplies were requested by Daniel and Sandra Gourdet to help with their educational ministries. In addition to the school supplies, 10,000 communion cups and 5,000 bible commentaries by Walter Cardwell on James, I and II Peter, and I, II, III John were shipped. The shipment was so voluminous that a packing party comprised of 13 Downey Avenue Christian Church members was organized to get it under way. Another commentary by Walter Cardwell came off the press. This was on Romans, Colossians and I and II Thessalonians.

Ebola Virus

Page One of the New York Times for May 13, 1995, said that the world became aware of the Ebola virus outbreak when Dr. Julia Goodall Weeks in Kinshasa called the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta to let them know what was happening. Dr. Weeks was working at the Zaïre-American Clinic after having spent one term at the Bolenge hospital.

Honors to DOM President Nottingham

Early in June, 1985, DOM president Dr. William J. Nottingham and his son Gregory accompanied Africa Secretary Daniel C. Hoffman on an administrative trip to Zaïre and an inter-board consultation sponsored by the Eglise du Christ au Zaïre, presided by Dr. Itofo Bokeleale. In the course of visits beyond Mbandaka to Ingende, Longa and Lotumbe, African names were given to the visitors: "Bokemisa" to the unit president and "James Bofei" to his son. During a worship service in the Mbandaka III church, 254 people were baptized. At a dinner meeting in Kinshasa, a leopard skin was given to Dr. Nottingham as a traditionally sacred bond between Disciples of Zaïre and those of North America. A permit for limited exportation of leopard skins was obtained in advance from the government of Zaïre, but the precious symbol could not be admitted to the United States because of the prohibition protecting endangered species. Nonetheless, the gift touched the hearts of all who understood its meaning.

Dr. Nottingham reported some of his experiences in a talk at the General Assembly in Des Moines:

On the Saturday before Pentecost, Dan Hoffman and I attended a baptismal service in one of the principal churches of Mbandaka, where there were 254 young people being immersed by three pastors in the same baptistry. It took two and a half hours! On Pentecost there were another 35 or so at Bolenge in the Zaïre river, and about 25 in Lotumbe further on. The growth of the church in Zaïre has been phenomenal under the leadership of African pastors and catechists.

In the same talk he made some comments about "development":

We've got to realize that there isn't going to be any development. For most of the working people that isn't going to happen. Development is not a bad word, it's a non-word. And the new question is simply survival. And that is the church's business because the church is a product of survival and it has that in its heart through faith in the resurrection. The international payments come here; as you know, the refinanced

debts serve our banks. The end result is a benefit to our communities. Great masses of people are suffering because of the way the world harvests its coffee, its pineapples, its minerals and so on. When we were in Africa I felt responsible as we saw schools where there were no books, and when Dan and I visited hospitals or dispensaries where the shelves were literally empty. This is while American and European companies have mined the diamonds, the copper, installed the Inga Shaba 1,100 mile high tension lines for over a billion dollars, which does not benefit the people of Zaïre but the multi-national companies that run the mines and the construction company based in Boise, Idaho. The government mining agency makes \$120 million a month for someone, but it is not the miners or the population in general. When my son Greg and I arrived by SwissAir in Kinshasa I said to him: "Th next time someone refers to Zaïre as a poor country, just remember how many white business men you saw getting off the plane!"

Paul Crow Visit

In March of 1986 Dr. Paul Crow, president of the Council on Christian Unity, visited Zaïre at the request of the Zaïrian Disciples community. In Kinshasa he preached at the Lemba church and visited the seminary of the ECC. In Mbandaka he presented a week of lectures on ecumenical themes, church history, and Disciple polity at the Bolenge Preacher's School. His visit was much appreciated by the students and church leaders alike. He was accompanied by Dr. Gene Johnson, former missionary, who served as interpreter.

Bolenge Hospital Construction

Funds from DOM were used to construct a new hospital building at Bolenge. The old buildings had fallen into a state of serious disrepair. The new structure is a simple rectangular building consisting of a long corridor with rooms on each side. It was planned to serve for consultation rooms, patient wards, and surgery. Construction was done by local people under the supervision of men trained by Mr. Spencer. The project was first begun in 1983 and progressed slowly in stages. Professional installation of plumbing and electrical wiring was contracted to the Bidjemini firm of Kinshasa.

In 1985 a consultation was held in Geneva under the sponsorship of the Christian Medical Commission of the World Council of Churches bringing together three Zaïrians representing the CDCZ; Dan Hoffman, the Africa executive; Mr. Richard Hull, a member of the DOM board; and Ruth May Harner, a former nurse missionary to India. Representatives of the German United Mission and the American Leprosy Mission also attended. Discussions focused on the tension between preventive and curative approaches to medical care. The meeting resulted in a better understanding of the goals of the Bolenge medical work. It was felt that a successful Bolenge project could also lead to reviving effective medical work in the former hospitals at Monieka, Lotumbe, Wema, and Mondombe.

It was intended, when the building was ready for use in 1987, to have a Zaïrian doctor assigned to staff it, paid by the DOM. It was also planned to obtain the services of a missionary with a master's degree in public health. This person would administer the hospital, allowing the physician to attend mainly to medical duties. The presence of a missionary would key the hospital into existing medical assistance programs in Zaïre and abroad. It was thought that the public health dimension would provide balance to the conceptual tension between curative and preventive health. With a Zaïrian physician and a North American administrator the basis for attracting long-term and short term additional medical personnel would be laid.

In 1987 the hospital began to function with Dr. Alela Lilombwe, a Zaïrian Disciples surgeon who had completed medical studies at the University of Togo, and Mr. Michael Allen, a former Peace Corps volunteer to Zaïre with a masters degree in public health as administrator. Mr. Allen was responsible for hiring and paying staff, procuring supplies, overseeing installation of new equipment, keeping financial records, and such administrative duties, leaving Dr. Alela free to concentrate on practicing medicine.

There was also a general painting and cleaning up of the old Baily Memorial hospital buildings which were used for out-patient services and a day-care center.

Formal dedication of the new hospital took place during the visit of the "Africa Celebration Tour" in March, 1988. This was shortly before the arrival of Dr. Julia Weeks who was the first missionary doctor to work in Bolenge since the departure of Dr. Keith Fleshman in 1970.

Other Medical Work

Upon the request of the Disciples Community in Zaïre, and with the recommendation of the ECZ Medical office in Kinshasa, the DOM agreed to furnish funds for hiring Zaïrian doctors for some of the other Disciple hospitals. It was intended to have an American doctor in Bolenge, and that it would be a regional model. An abundant supply of Zaïrian trained MDs seemed available and willing to work for about \$250 per month. The hospitals at Lotumbe, Monieka, and Bosobele would be helped by these doctors. It was hoped that their hospitals would become self-supporting so that this subsidy would be temporary.

The government medical facilities in Mbandaka had seriously deteriorated. A note in the November 1986 DOM board meeting docket indicates that steps had been taken to enroll the entire missionary staff and their families at the Zaïre American Clinic in Kinshasa since no reliable quality medical care was available in the Mbandaka-Bolenge area. Also there was no longer any running water or cisterns at the missionary houses at Bolenge. Discussions with Dr. Elonda were aimed at remedying this problem in early 1987.

Lemba Church Construction

Many graduates from ICC found employment in government and commercial offices in Kinshasa. They eventually formed a group which met regularly for fellowship. This student association was the backbone for forming a church in the community of Lemba. The congregation desired to have a relationship with the Disciples in Equator Province, and in 1981 the decision was made to designate Kinshasa as a post of the Disciple community. The congregation grew under competent African leadership. The temporary quarters of their early years were very unsatisfactory and plans were made to construct a suitable church building. This extract from the March, '86 docket of the DOM board records the construction:

The property is in a very desirable location and there was initially a dispute involving certain levels of the local municipal government concerning the title to it. This was finally resolved in favor of the Disciples after an appeal to the Prime Minister's office. Dr. Elonda worked extremely hard advancing this matter. Construction was done by the much-respected Belgian firms Mobimetal and Art and Decor under the supervision of Mr. Müller, the architect of the Church of Christ in Zaïre. A large metal structure with high quality rust-proof roofing was erected covering not only a huge sanctuary but the classroom office annex as well. Cement floor and cement block walls make a minimum maintenance and durable building. The sanctuary seats about 1,200, about the same size as the Mbandaka III church. The cost of the

construction, a bit over \$180,000, was provided by funds from the US through the DOM, but the pews, furniture, and much labor were provided by members of the Lemba parish.

The St. Louis area gave the Lemba parish a stained glass window made in the US but designed by a Zaïrian artist from Kinshasa's Institute of Fine Arts. The window, 6 feet high and 4.5 feet across, pictures a cross, a chalice, and a man beating a drum to call the faithful to worship. This is one of very few stained glass windows in Kinshasa and is the source of much pride on the part of the Lemba congregation. The Disciples in Lemba had the largest congregation in the neighborhood which also contained Baptists, Presbyterians, Adventists, and others.

On April 5, 1987, an overflow crowd at the new Lemba church, including government officials and ecumenical representatives, as well as four Kinshasa choirs, participated in a service during which Bishop Bokeleale Itofo handed over the keys for the building to Pastor Ekeya Enjali, the Kinshasa regional minister. It was a major media event and was widely reported on Zaïrian radio and television evening news.

In 1987 there were six functioning preaching points in Kinshasa with a total of about twenty-four eventually projected. The German mission society, VEM, provided some transportation units and helped with the construction of several very simple structures at the city's periphery.

Central Christian Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, decided in 1988 to raise \$40,000 over a three year period, as part of a local and regional capital campaign, to construct a church building in one of Kinshasa's outlying areas. The Disciples of Zaïre have elaborated a church-growth strategy for the fast growing city, involving small 200 seat chapels around the circumference of the urban area. The architect's office of the Church of Christ in Zaïre estimated that \$40,000 would construct a chapel using a commercial firm selected through competitive bidding.

The attitude of the Disciples toward congregations in Kinshasa is expressed in an interview with Dr. Elonda Efele, General Secretary of the Disciples community, printed in the March 1989 issue of *The Disciple*:⁴

Disciples hesitated before moving into Kinshasa since such a move crossed long-established lines for denominational work. But the development of new congregations is now carefully coordinated through the united church. The need in this vast city is tremendous! Kinshasa is divided into twenty-four geographical areas, and we hope eventually to have a Disciples congregation in each of them. The first congregation near the downtown area in Lemba was dedicated last year. It is already overcrowded and leaders of the congregation are talking about building a balcony in it. We have just purchased a second site on the growing edge of Kinshasa, and a new congregation there will have a building some time this year thanks to the gifts of North American Disciples through the Division of Overseas Ministries. There is a saying that "as Kinshasa goes, so goes Zaïre." We think that the capital city just might become the cradle of Christianity for all of Africa.

The world outreach department of Grant Park Christian Church, Des Moines, IA, packed 100 sets of communion ware including bases, trays and covers for the new Disciples church in Lemba. The communion ware was furnished through the Grant Park church in cooperation

with one of its members. Kinshasa was the fastest growing urban area in Africa, with a population of 3 million people. By 1991 it was expected to increase to 4.1 million people.

Visit of Rev. Bongonda

Pastor Bongonda, the Disciples regional minister of Ifumo, visited the United States as a participant in the people-to-people program. He shared in the ministries of the St. Louis area. From mid-June through mid-July, 1986, he preached, visited area congregations, shared in youth camps and vacation church schools, observed alcoholic counseling techniques, and did a little touring. Former DOM staff Clela and Ron Anderson coordinated Rev. Bongonda's visit.

Mama Beyeke Chorale

The visit of a Zaïrian musical group to the US is described in an article in *The Disciple*, October 1987.⁵

The Mama Beyeke Chorale from Zaïre sang religious songs at the Saturday and Monday evening sessions of the Disciples General Assembly, Oct. 16-21, 1987, in Louisville, Ky. Among the African folk sounds heard from the ensemble were the rhythm of the *bokwese* and *boyeke*, the tingling of the *isanga*, the beat of a drum made from the *bofeko* tree and the sounds of the *ekuto* and *elofu*. Mama Beyeke writes and composes new African Christian songs for the group rather than translating western hymns. Following the General Assembly the seven member choir toured the United States during October and November visiting the regions of Illinois-Wisconsin, Mid-America, and Oregon. They were accompanied by Daniel and Sandra Gourdet who served as interpreters.

Radios

At the 1987 Disciples General Assembly, during a breakfast meeting of the Disciples Amateur Radio Fellowship, Itofo Bokeleale, head of the unified seven-million-member Church of Christ in Zaïre, brought a message of heartfelt appreciation for the successful completion of a DARF project which had built the radio network for that country. It was a project that took almost four years to complete.⁶

At the 1983 San Antonio Assembly the fellowship had heard an appeal from the head of the Disciples Community of the Church of Christ in Zaïre who presented the need for a communication system. Elonda Efele had explained that in the Equator Province there was no means of communication with the outposts of the church except for week-long trips by canoe or Jeep. Yet the church was attempting to carry on the evangelistic, medical, development and educational work of an entire province that has an area the size of the state of California and a population as large as that of the state of Oklahoma.

At the same meeting, Dan Owen, former Disciples missionary to Zaïre, reported on his recent survey trip there which had discerned that a short-wave radio network was the answer to the needs presented by Dr. Elonda. DARF raised over \$50,000 to purchase eighteen specialized radio transceivers and sent Dan Owen back to Zaïre for almost four months to install the sets and train the operators. Mr. Owen took 2,700 pounds of equipment, in 47 cases, with him as accompanied baggage. The excess baggage fee alone was \$5,100. Mr. Isaac Kalonji, Presbyterian layman and former president of the Congo/Zaïre Senate, helped with customs and offered his home for them to stay in Kinshasa while they purchased additional supplies before going to Mbandaka.

The Disciples Division of Overseas Ministries assisted in the project by making necessary arrangements and travel schedules. They also placed Dan Owen on temporary assignment for the months of the project. The project was made more complex by the tropical conditions and extreme isolation of the outposts that were to receive the radios. A system using special solar panels and large storage batteries had to be specially designed to handle the power requirements. Antennas had to be made and erected on site.

The first radio was set up at the Seminary dormitory in Kinshasa, and the second in the Secretariat at Mbandaka. The first trip into the interior by truck and canoe permitted installation of radios at Bolenge, Boyeka, Kiri, Ingende and Lotumbe. Bosobele required a long canoe trip in the opposite direction. Travel by road was possible to visit Monieka, Boende, Ifumo, Wema, Bokungu, Mondombe and Ikela. The final radio was installed at the Mbandaka III church at the conclusion of the project.

The 2,087 miles traveled by Jeep could only average thirteen miles per hour. The forest roads often had been washed out by rains, and rotting bridges frequently gave way under the weight of the overloaded vehicles. On occasion, the vehicles themselves broke down and repairs had to be made en route. It would take at least a whole day at each site to set up the radio, antenna and solar panels; do all of the wiring; and test the systems. Additional time was taken to make repairs on some of the radios which had ceased to work, or which had been damaged by the static electricity from nearby lightning strikes.

Mr. Owen was accompanied on most of the trip by his wife, Sandy. Some 275 miles of the trip were by dugout canoe up the Zaïre River and through mosquito-infested swamps. At times Mr. Owen became quite ill from exhaustion, but he was always uplifted by the frequent worship services that were held at each location. "In the eyes of the church people in Zaïre, (it) was not just a technical project," he reports. "It was a personal and religious one." He became aware that "Sandy and I were not just two people who had come to do a job. We were representatives of the church in the United States. I was a pastor. We were friends, a brother and sister in Christ."

While Mr. Owen was installing radios, Mrs. Owen was meeting with women's groups or visiting schools. The process of building the radio network became, itself, an act of ministry and intimate sharing, of building deeper bonds within a church that spans two continents. Even before the network was fully in place, it was starting to serve the needs of the church. The first station was set up in Kinshasa, the second in Mbandaka, and the third in Bolenge. While Mr. Owen was on his first trip into the interior, one of the Disciples students attending the seminary in Kinshasa died of hepatitis, leaving his wife and children, who were with him in Kinshasa, over 400 miles from their family. Because of the new radios, information about the student's death could be sent to the Disciples headquarters in Mbandaka, and donations were collected to bring the family back to Mbandaka. In addition, the widow was able to speak with her family in the Bolenge area.

In a lighter way, the very first message which came in for the Bosobele post brought the results of the state secondary school examinations. The results had been posted by the government in Kinshasa, several weeks before, but it would still have been another three to six weeks for the students to learn if they had been admitted to secondary school. This was no small matter for a village - and a church - that had a high priority on education.

When the months in Zaïre were almost over, and the radio network was finally in place, Dan Owen sat down at a transceiver in Kinshasa and heard the first early morning 'roll call' of the distant stations. Although the radio operators had strict instructions to just 'check in' during the first round, saving all business for the second round which would follow immediately, they just could not contain themselves. They could not refrain from expressing

the emotions they felt as they were suddenly in contact with the rest of their church. They insisted on expressing appreciation to the US Disciples who had provided this vital communication link.

For Mr. Owen, those few moments listening to the voices of those who had helped him hang antennas in trees, place solar panels on roofs, and string thousands of feet of wire, made the whole trip worthwhile. Even today, he cannot stop himself from tuning his radio in Austin, Texas, to 6.997 MHz, in the hope of catching a brief static-interrupted communication in Lingala or Lonkundo between church workers deep in an African forest.

Lonkundo hymnals

In 1987, due to special gifts and at the request of the CDCZ, the DOM reprinted the much-loved Lonkundo hymnal that was developed by early Congo missionaries. This was the first reprint in more than twenty years. It was printed in the Missions Building print shop on quality tropicalized paper. Ten thousand copies were shipped to Zaïre.

Staff Retreat

In January of 1987 a retreat for DOM staff and associates in Zaïre was held at the Zaïre Christian Institute in Bolenge. The study, led by the Rev. Robert Brock, Northwest Regional Minister, was on the development of personal and collective spiritual discipline. The text was *Making All Things New* by Henri Nouwen. Dr. Elonda led a lively session on concerns of the Zaïrian church regarding overseas personnel. Because of the heterogeneity of the Zaïre staff the retreat was conducted in French, English and Spanish. Those attending were: Michael and Henriette Allen; Deborah Clugy-Soto, DOM associate with the Presbyterian community, Kananga; Sherry Coles; Dr. Elonda Efele; Maria and Saul Falcon; Daniel and Sandra Gourdet; Charlene and Mark Janz; and the area executive, Mr. Dan Hoffman.

The following week Rev. Brock led a seminar at the CDCZ Secretariat on the theme: "What Kind of Evangelism for What Kind of World?" The seminar was an outgrowth of the consultation held in Indianapolis in 1980 where it was agreed that more than administrative matters should be considered when coming together. Four presentations, including sociological, demographic and theological analysis as well as case studies, were made by the Zaïrians and Rev. Brock and Mr. Hoffman. Participating were all CDCZ department heads and the regional ministers of Bolenge, Boende, Bosobele, Mbandaka, Lotumbe and Ingende, six of the fifteen Disciple regions. Very interesting dialogue took place and it was felt that Rev. Brock's presence was a definite plus in helping the CDCZ understand how the North American church is organized.

Disciples Celebration Tour

From February 19 to March 11, 1988, twenty-seven persons from North America participated in a Disciples Celebration Tour of Africa. They went to be with our partner churches in Zaïre, Lesotho and South Africa. In Zaïre they celebrated three very special events with the Disciples Community of the Church of Christ in Zaïre: the inauguration of the Lemba Church building in Kinshasa, the new Bolenge Hospital, and the 60th anniversary of the Zaïre Christian Institute.

The events at Bolenge are described in a letter from Hal Heimer:⁷

The celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Zaïre Christian Institute, commonly noted as ICZ, was held March 1 with our 27 guests from the United States, many Zaïrians, a few Germans and 4 from Paraguay. Along with speeches, receptions and

tours, there was a long parade of present and former students of ICZ, the oldest being from the first graduating class, a man of 84 years. Joining to celebrate were the Kimbanguist band, kindergarten pupils wearing school pinafores and waving balloons from Nebraska, students from both the primary schools and the Theological School and the Church Women's organization.

The day before was the inauguration of the new hospital building at Bolenge, near the first hospital built under Dr. Barger.

We just received good news from the Regional Department of Education in regard to the results of the government orientation tests of second year secondary school students. Of the 96 ICZ students, 89 passed and are promoted to the third year. This was the highest percentage of all the Protestant schools in this area.

One of the problems our schools face is that there are no summer or evening classes whereby teachers can continue their education. This would not only make them better qualified but would also make them eligible for better salaries. This can discourage capable persons from entering the teaching profession, as most of them cannot then afford to further their education, especially if they have families to support.

We are very happy that the government doubled teachers' pay last May. Even so, with the constant rising cost of living they often cannot adequately provide for their families. The buying power of the zaïre (local currency) falls constantly. Today it takes twice as many zaïres to buy the same items as a year ago. Teachers and others often do a little commerce on the side such as baking bread; selling salt, rice, sardines, matches, etc.; doing gardening, fishing and odd jobs.

We never have enough well-educated and conscientious teachers for ICZ.

60th Anniversary of Zaïre Christian Institute

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the beginning of ICZ, Daniel and Sandra Gourdet wrote a history of the school. They described its beginning on October 15, 1928 when 18 men were registered. Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Smith came from Lotumbe to direct the school. Students were required to pay a small fee and to pass an admissions examination. Land was obtained from the government next to the Bolenge station, and buildings were constructed with local labor. Each student was assigned a plot of land for a garden. The wives of the students were able to grow enough food not only for their own family, but they had enough tomatoes, onions, salad, cabbage, etc. to sell to the foreigners in town.

The history states: "ICC was without a doubt the most advanced unit in the educational system of the Congo Mission. Its 3 year program included subject matters such as mathematics, science, Old and New Testament, church history, history of the Belgian Congo, the indigenous church, music, and French."

The school changed over the years with changes in the country. The beginning of government subsidies in 1948 brought government regulation, and a change to make the school a teacher's school, adding a year to make a 4 year cycle. Also in 1948 an application school for teacher training was begun under the leadership of Virginia Clark. That same year the Evangelical Mission of Ubangi (MEU) began working in collaboration with the DCCM and ICC became a united school. In 1950 the Swedish Baptist Mission began participating in the school, and in 1954 the Congo Balolo Mission became the fourth to share in the school. Over the next decade these missions withdrew one by one leaving the Disciples again the only ones responsible for the school.

In 1974 the government took over all schools in Congo and the name was changed to Institute of Bolenge. But when the administration was returned to the church in 1977 the

name was also returned to ICZ. Another setback occurred in 1984 when a decision of the International Monetary Fund caused 17 of the 41 staff to be told they no longer had a job the next day, and would not be paid for the previous month they had worked. It was difficult running a school the size of ICZ without a secretary, a registrar, a librarian, a typist, maintenance crew, nightwatchmen or dormitory workers. But with a lot of prayers, hard work and help from North American Christians the school was able to get back on the right road again and function normally.

The influence of graduates of this school has reached far beyond the Disciples church. Many were employed by commercial firms in Mbandaka and Kinshasa and rose to positions of importance. Many entered government work and had considerable influence in high places. And of course most of the leaders in Disciples church and educational work were graduates of this school. It has a reputation as one of the best in the country.

Women's School at Kinshasa Seminary

Mrs. Gertrud Müller worked with the Women's School at the Protestant Seminary in Kinshasa, for the wives of seminary students. This school was first started in 1981. It included study courses in the role of women, home economics, health and hygiene, nutrition, French, cooking, sewing and knitting.

The objectives of the school were: to help a woman accompany her husband in his future ministry with all its many duties in the parish; to help a woman act in other social fields, such as nutrition and health teaching; to improve a woman's general education and knowledge; to develop a woman's capability to practice household and domestic economy.

Since women usually had much less education than their husbands, training like this was extremely important to help make the wife more of a partner. It not only helped in his work but also strengthened the marriage relationship.

Work in Congo Brazzaville

One important development in the Disciples church work involved extending Disciple influence into the neighboring country, the People's Republic of Congo, Brazzaville. Although this didn't involve missionaries, the effort did receive funds from the DOM. And the maturity of the Disciple church in Zaïre demonstrated by this is the fulfillment of the dream of the missionaries. This activity is described by Mr. Dan Hoffman in an article appearing in the July, 1989, issue of the *Disciple*:⁸

The time is March 1989, ninety-one years after the first North American missionaries arrived at Bolenge. The place is still Bolenge, a thriving village with schools, a hospital, and a church presently comprised of third and fourth generation Disciples. The main actor is not an American but a Zaïrian. Pastor Bombele is the young regional minister of Disciples in and around Bolenge. The congregations he supervises stretch westward over sixty miles of swamp, rain forests and intricately woven water ways to the Ubangi River. This river marks the international boundary between the Republic of Zaïre and the People's Republic of the Congo.

Early in 1989 Pastor Bombele received an unusual request. A group of Christians in the Congolese river village of Nzondo asked him to visit them and to hold services. For more than a year, a local lay leader had been struggling desperately to maintain congregational morale, while waiting for the visit of an ordained minister. As a number of the congregation's members are Zaïrian, they suggested that the Disciples in Zaïre might be willing to send over a pastor now and then to preach, visit and

administer the sacraments. Pastor Bombele determined at once to answer this Macedonian call.

The trip to Nzondo, Congo, was by canoe powered by an outboard motor. Pastor Bombele left Mbandaka (the nearest river port city to Bolenge) in darkness in early March and arrived the next afternoon. At Nzondo, Pastor Bombele was warmly received by the congregation. More than 230 persons attended the preaching services. Before he completed his preaching mission, thirty-two persons requested baptism. A collective baptismal service was celebrated in the waters of the Ubangi River. Everyone, including local government officials, insisted that he return as soon as possible.

Disciples are back in the Congo again, this time in the People's Republic of Congo. But the mission is *by Africans to Africans*.

The story does not end at Nzondo. Another group of Christians living in Congo's capital city, Brazzaville, requested assistance from Zaïrian Disciples. In June, Elonda Efele, head of Zaïre's 650,000-strong Disciples community, traveled to Brazzaville with several other church officials to explore future opportunities for Disciples. He met with government and church leaders.

Dr. Elonda summed up his church's feelings: "Zaïre's Disciples have a vocation to proclaim God's Word not only in our own country, but elsewhere, to all nations. As a mature church, we take this vocation very seriously."

Notes

1. VEM meeting.
2. DOM Board Docket, November, 1981, Robt. Thomas visit.
3. Garland Farmer, Report to DOM Board, June, 1982.
4. Elonda, *The Disciple*, March, 1989.
5. Beyeke, *The Disciple*, October, 1987.
6. Fred Erickson, *The Disciple*, September, 1988, pp. 22-23.
7. Hal Heimer, Missionary Letter, August, 1988.
8. Dan Hoffman, "Back in the Congo!", *The Disciple*, July, 1989.