

Tenth Decade

1989-1999



The tenth decade again saw security problems leading to missionary evacuation twice. The government was subjected to another rebellion, this time resulting in the ouster of Mobutu. Evangelistic opportunities in the neighboring Congo, Brazzaville, led to the naming of a Congolese as an associate missionary. In the absence of American missionaries on the field the Africa office continued to make visits to the church, to provide financial support, and to be active in justice issues.



Hirsch, Amy (1989-1992)

Amy Hirsch earned a BA degree in French at Arizona State University and an MA degree in Christian Education at Northwest Christian College. She was first assigned to ICZ where she taught math and English. She then worked at the Bolenge Hospital where she oversaw the nutrition center and managed the dispensing of eye glasses.



Bompaka, Nestor (1995-)

The Rev. Nestor Bompaka is a pastor of the Disciples of Christ Community of Zaïre currently working as missionary pastor-developer of the Disciples of Christ Church of the People's Republic of Congo (Brazzaville). He was sent as a missionary of the Church of Christ in Zaïre with financial support from Global Ministries (CGMB). He is a graduate of Sacred Heart High School, Kinshasa, the Superior Institute of Theology in Bolenge, and the Protestant University of Zaïre. He was ordained in 1995.

Missionary Life in the '90s

Although they now worked under the direction of the leaders of the Zaïrian church, missionaries continued to have positions of responsibility. The high status in which they were held by the population, and the resulting strain, is well described in a letter from Lorenza and Pixi Phillips dated October, 1989:¹

One of my jobs is that of Village Chief. This is one demanding job. The Bolenge Center is composed of the Zaïre Christian Institute, Secondary School, 2 primary schools (800 to 900 students and teachers), theological seminary, one pre-school, a church and a hospital. Bolenge Village is comprised of students, teachers, and families connected to the Center and has a population of approximately 3,000. The Village Chief is considered the papa. And it is considered that the papa must take care of his village. I am tired and so is Pixi.

As Village Chief I have been asked to: collect monthly electricity and water bills; supervise the harvesting and selling of palm nuts; support the local choirs; prevent passenger boats from docking on our river bank; repair and renovate dilapidated buildings; insure maintenance of grounds, keep grass cut and trees trimmed; employ and supervise night watchmen who are necessary to prevent theft of such things as electrical lines and distribution boxes and school desks; give people money who ask for it for whatever reason they give (and all their reasons are usually good and justifiably heart wrenching ones). I counsel missionaries who find themselves far away from home living in a stressful environment. We settle family disputes and keep politics out of the school. We provide emergency ambulance service. We chase off unwelcome prowlers.”

Missionary Amy Hirsch, teaching English at ICZ, joked about the electrical service. Since it was supplied by a local generator, requiring expensive fuel oil, the lights were on only when needed most. Miss Hirsch wrote:

Electricity here is always good for a laugh. Will it work today? If we are lucky maybe the stove will work from 2 to 4 p.m. and the lights from 3 to 8 p.m., or any combination of outlets for various hours. And what about February's bill: Will it

finally arrive by July? Will it be 1,000 zaires (the local currency) or 7,000? One has to stay tuned for the continuing saga of ‘As the Power Surges.’

Evangelism in People’s Republic of Congo

In the spring of 1989 leaders of the Disciples community made visits to rural areas of the People’s Republic of the Congo. This is described in the previous chapter at the close of the ninth decade.

There had been several requests for Zairian Disciples to work in Brazzaville. The DOM supported this work with a financial grant recognizing that responsibility for future work would lie with the Zairian Disciples church.

In 1995 Rev. Nestor Bompaka was named by the Africa Department of CGMB as an associate missionary, the first Congolese to be thus designated. He was recognized for his apostolic ministry in Congo. He is part of a new wave of African evangelists and missionaries that are witnessing to the love and justice of Jesus Christ as they cross national borders.

By the close of this decade there were at least two thousand total members in 14 Disciple congregations extending from Pointe Noire to Impfondo, and the church had been recognized officially by the national government. Construction was underway for a church building to house the primary congregation in Brazzaville. Financed through DOM, this construction project was being done by the architectural office of the ECZ.

Zaire Christian Institute (ICZ)

Activities at Zaire Christian Institute, one of the most important educational institutions of the Disciples, are described in a letter from Lorenza and Pixi Phillips in October, 1989:²

I am principal of a secondary school named Zaire Christian Institute. This 60 year old school is one of the most reputable secondary schools in Zaire in that its graduates have gone on to occupy important positions all across Zaire as well as in other countries. Zaire Christian Institute has six grades, equivalent to the U.S. 7th through 12th grades. We have enrolled 600 students all of whom must wear blue and white uniforms. The girls must wear short haircuts in order that they won’t arrive tardy to school from having taken too much time to arrange long hair. This is mandated by the state. I find this rule and others quite amusing. All classes are taught in French. There are English classes which are taught in English. We also speak Lingala which is more of a national language than French and is used more in daily communication in public. Many of our first year students arrive not knowing very much French.

We have two areas of study, one of which must be chosen by students entering the 4th year. These are science (biology and chemistry) and teaching (pedagogy). Students finishing their 6th year are required to take a state examination, and receive their diploma only if they pass this exam. If they fail they may take the 6th year over again, but not a third time. However, they may take the state exam a third time.

We have a boys’ dormitory which will have the capability to house 124 youngsters when renovations are completed. I have required that all 6th year students live in the dorm. There is a beautiful old house which once served as the girls’ dorm. It is in such need of repair that I’ve condemned it as unsafe for occupation. However we hope to restore it eventually. It will house 50 students.

We have 28 teachers from three countries: Zaire, Germany and the USA. Teacher housing is provided here at the center. Not all the teachers are able to live here for

various reasons. A number of them live in Mbandaka and walk 18 kilometers (about 11 miles) to and from school daily. The only obstacle is rain. If it rains until 7:00 a.m. there is no school. Teachers and many students walk considerable distances to get here. We don't have to make up lost days. Teacher housing is in pretty sad shape by our standards. Teacher salaries are low. They earn an equivalent of (average) \$25 to \$30 monthly. The Zaïre economy has long since rendered teacher salaries insufficient. They have space for gardens and some are industrious and find other means to earn money during the off season (July to Sept.).

This school has been supported by the Disciples for all of its existence. Some of the past principals were Zaïrians. However the church leaders here requested (strongly) that Americans be put in this position. It is one tough job!

A typical school day begins with an old man beating a hollowed log drum to awaken the village (4:45 a.m.). At 5:55 one of our workers comes and gets the keys to open the school buildings (those that can be closed) and rings the hand held bell at 6:00. Students begin assembling in front of the main building near the flag pole at 6:30. The Principal arrives and a short 15 minute program begins consisting of songs and chants about Zaïre and President Mobutu and the raising of the flag. From there they file into our chapel for devotions and announcements. We are off and running. Teachers come by for their daily dose of chalk. The director of the boys' dorm reports. The director of students discusses concerns and deadlines. Villagers, students, teachers come and ask for assistance of various and sundry types. Teachers change classes. Students stay put. School is over at 12:00. We do this 6 days a week.

Sportwise, we have a boys' soccer team and girls' and boys' volleyball teams. We play teams from Mbandaka and nearby Catholic Mission teams. We have a standing reputation of being tough to beat in sports and academic contests. Our soccer team was selected to play in the recent annual celebration honoring teachers. I told our team that if they won the semi-finals they could play for the championship in their new uniforms. Earlier that day we numbered 200 for the parade, all in uniform and wearing either a yellow or red scarf tied around the neck. Since our team had won the semi-finals they paraded in front of the Governor and the Tribunal in their new uniforms. Zaïre Christian Institute was happy that day with singing and chanting while waiting for the parade to get started.

That afternoon the final match was played and was pretty even. Zaïre Christian Institute came away with the cup and a cash prize. I was able to record the entire day's events on video cassette. Our students get to see themselves on TV next week.

In 1989 there was a marked improvement in the school's once fine library which had deteriorated over the years. Many books had become outdated, and many were in English and useless to many students. Termites and the humid climate had ruined many publications. Under the dynamic leadership of ICZ math teacher, Teresa Crisler, the old library was reorganized. Useless books were removed and over 350 new French volumes were purchased in Canada, Switzerland, and Zaïre including basic encyclopedias and dictionaries. New maps and a current French globe were made available for student reference. Several French games with educational value such as Scrabble and Trivial Pursuit were accessible to library patrons. All of the new acquisitions were purchased through DOM grants amounting to about \$3,000 in 1988-89. In order to provide ongoing supervision of the library M. Kongo Ememya was sent to the School of Librarianship in Kinshasa with scholarship help from the DOM.

In 1990 a gift from the family of missionaries Martha and Georgia Bateman made it possible to refurbish the facility and to purchase badly needed new acquisitions. A connection was made with the new Lister generator in Bolenge to provide light in the library reading room at night. On April 19 a ceremony was held to name the library after these long term missionaries. During the ceremony, speeches were made by people who remembered them. Martha Bateman was a teacher at Monieka. Georgia Bateman was a nurse and midwife at Bolenge.

Since 1983, at the request of the Zaïre Disciple Church, missionaries had been directors of ICZ. These were Daniel Gourdet (1983-87), Hal Heimer (1987-89), Lorenza Phillips (1989-90), and Saul Falcon (1990-93).

Good News Girls' School

In 1989 a spacious, lighted, multi-purpose athletic court was dedicated on the grounds of the Good News Girls' School (formerly called *Athénée Protestant*). About 1,000 persons attended the event, including many church and government officials. The athletic court was the only one in the urban area that was lighted and that could be used by teams for evening recreation. Basketball, handball, volleyball, soccer and gymnastics competitions were held before a wildly cheering crowd. The sports facilities were entirely funded through small grants, amounting to \$2,600 in 1988-89.

Mt. Ngafula Church Building

In May, 1990, construction was begun on the Disciples church in the district of Mt. Ngafula in Kinshasa. Funds for this had been made possible through a capital campaign in the Central Christian Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. However considerable conflict arose from armed squatters who disputed the property and construction had to be halted. Eventually the funds for this were used to build a church for the French speaking congregation in Mbandaka which had outgrown the chapel in the Secretariat. This was dedicated on April 14, 1991. The church seats about 300 persons and was built at a cost of about \$90,000 by a Kinshasa firm, with DOM staff member Robert Müller serving as architect.

Political Events

Between October and the end of December, 1990, signs of heightened political tension were displayed throughout Zaïre, especially in the major cities. Demonstrations against steep increases in the cost of living broke out in Kinshasa and spread over the next two days to other cities. Security forces fired on the demonstrators, killing four people and wounding five in Kinshasa, and killing two and seriously wounding four in Matadi, according to official reports. Travelers arriving from the affected cities reported that the actual casualties were much higher than the official figures.

The prices of staple foods such as flour, manioc, rice, sugar and cooking oil more than doubled during November. In some cases prices in stores changed several times in one day. The price of fuel oil tripled. These increases created desperation in a population already marginalized by the Mobutu regime's looting of the Zaïrian economy. Wages of Kinshasa's workers had only 6% of the buying power they had at Independence, thirty years earlier. The country's currency, the zaïre, was devalued 300% during the year 1990. The demonstrations began as protests against the price hikes but turned into an attack on stores which were quickly emptied of food. According to one report, people in one Kinshasa suburb shared stolen food with police who not only didn't interfere, but encouraged them.

This situation led to the detailed planning by the DOM for possible emergency situations. Contacts were made with US embassy personnel to confirm news sources. Close relationships were established with other mission boards to coordinate possible evacuation planning. The Disciples church in Zaire was also involved in the planning.

The situation in 1991 is well described by a letter written home from Bolenge by Michael Allen in September:³

Dear Friends:

It is hard to believe that we have been back in Zaïre for a year now. Sometimes it seems more like five years. A lot has happened over the course of the year we have spent here, not only for us but also for Zaïre and Africa in general.

Zaïre, like many African nations, is currently experiencing profound social, political, and economic change. Zaïre is trying to become a multi-party democracy and experimenting with giving the Zaïrian people more freedom. Now instead of a one-party state there are more than one hundred independent political parties. Newspapers are free to criticize the government and often print very inflammatory stories about the government. And one freedom that has perhaps touched the lives of the people most directly is that the women are now permitted to wear pants in public and men are permitted to wear regular business suits and ties (a freedom I personally have been consciously trying to avoid for most of my adult life).

But not all the change is for the good. The economic situation in Zaïre, which has been a continuing crisis, can now only be described as catastrophic. There has been run-away inflation for the last year or so and the government is bankrupt. Things now cost more than ten times what they cost last year. Many basic items like soap, batteries, and fuel are in periodic shortage. The real earning power of the people cannot keep up with the inflation rate. There has been considerable civil unrest in the cities, looting of stores and businesses and just about everybody goes on strike every few months or so.

Fuel prices soared during this time and many donor nations have had to make cuts in their assistance programs to pay for their adventures in the Gulf. But many of these problems we are seeing have been building for many years and it's just now that we are beginning to see their real consequences. The continued growth of the population with the continued decline of agricultural production, the relentless degradation of the country's infrastructure - its roads, schools, and health care facilities, the draining of resources from the country by a few incredibly wealthy and corrupt leaders, the massive foreign debt problem, not to mention the burgeoning AIDS crisis which is now decimating nearly all segments of the population.

At the hospital we see the immediate effects of this situation. A disturbingly greater and greater number of children are being brought to the hospital with severe protein-calorie malnutrition. We have been unable to vaccinate children and expectant mothers for the last six months as there has been no kerosene available to operate the vaccine refrigerators at the regional vaccine depot. The US Agency for International Development, a principal supporter of the national immunization program, has cut off nearly all financial assistance because Zaïre is too far behind in its debt repayment. Of course this means that the principal victims of this situation are new-born children, many of whom will die from measles, whooping cough, tetanus, or be seriously crippled for life by polio. Funny how there always seems to be enough petrol to run the president's private jet-liner or fuel the monstrous Presidential riverboat.

All this means that the average Zaïrian who has had to suffer almost unimaginable poverty, recurrent illness and relentless indebtedness now has to suffer even more.

One morning, the Medical director of the hospital, Dr. Bouto, and I were riding into town to drop our kids off at the primary school and do some errands. We were talking about how bad the economic situation was, and how difficult it was to raise children in a place where there are no toys to purchase, no parks or museums to visit, and even maintaining a sufficiently varied diet is difficult. We were just passing the hospital when a woman, nearly crazy with grief, flagged us down.

“Doctor,” she pleaded, “Please come quick, it’s my boy.”

The two year old child had been hospitalized the day before suffering from severe malnutrition and pneumonia. When she brought the child into the doctor’s exam room we could see it was probably already too late.

“Mama, did you feed your child like I told you to yesterday?” the Doctor asked.

“My husband, he’s a soldier, hasn’t been paid in three months, there is nothing.”

The doctor tried to start an IV but before he could insert the needle the child had drawn its last breath. “His spirit is gone Mama,” the doctor said as he wrapped the child’s body in the thin cloth in which it had been swaddled. We left the hospital as the mother and assembled family members began to wail mournfully, the way that Zaïrians express grief for a loved one.

Outside in the car our kids were waiting to be driven to school, playing and goofing around. “What’s the matter, Daddy?” my son asked. “Nothing.” I said, not wanting to tell him what had just happened.

After we dropped the kids off the doctor and I rode in silence. Some things in this inherently sad line of work you never get used to. To ease the silence I flipped on my portable short wave receiver. The Voice of America said there was to be a big homecoming celebration in Washington for those who had participated in the Gulf War. “The celebration is expected to cost twelve million dollars,” the announcer said. ... and Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”

Death of Elonda Efele

Dr. Elonda Efele, who had been the General Secretary and legal representative of the Disciples in Zaïre for many years, died in October 1991. There had been problems within the church for several years, and his death brought matters out in the open. In order to resolve numerous problems a General Assembly was held in March attended not only by the usual delegates but also by several representatives of the ECZ from Kinshasa, including Bishop Bokeleale Itofo. Dr. Bonganjalo Goba, former Africa secretary of the UCBWM, was present as a representative of the DOM. A representative of the United Mission of Germany was also present. The Assembly began with extensive theological discussion and Bible study. Some thorny procedures were helped by the visitors. The result of the sessions was the election of Dr. Mpombo Lokofe as the new General Secretary by a wide margin.

This meeting was followed three months later by a consultation in Kinshasa with Dan Hoffman and Bill Nottingham representing the DOM, two representatives of the United Mission of Germany, and ten delegates from the Disciples Community. Among the topics discussed were the Disciples’ vision of the church in the future, financial arrangements, personnel needs, and how the partners from the North could be helped by the Zaïrian church.

Evacuation of Missionaries

On September 23, 1991, army troops near the Kinshasa international airport mutinied due to non-payment of salaries. The mutiny spread quickly and civilians began rampaging through most of the city's main thoroughfares, destroying property and looting businesses. Troops from Belgium and France were sent in to stabilize the civil disorder and a massive exodus of as many as 8,000 expatriates occurred within the week. The unrest spread to other Zaïrian cities. Mbandaka-Bolenge, where most Disciples staff were located, did not see civil unrest or disruption of services. By the end of the week more than 100 persons across the country had been killed and many more injured.

On the morning of September 28 the entire Disciples missionary staff in the Mbandaka-Bolenge area and their dependents, totaling 15 persons, were airlifted by a Belgian army transport plane to Brazzaville, and then by charter plane to Washington, DC. The Müller family, living in Kinshasa, had been evacuated to Germany earlier in the week. Theirs was the most difficult experience as they had watched looters ransack their home down to the sink and toilet bowl. Communication between the Indianapolis office and the Disciples church in Zaïre was infrequent; however, efforts were made to reassure church leaders that the removal of overseas staff was temporary and that they would be returned to Zaïre at the first opportunity following reestablishment of civil order.

The following communication was distributed as a "Mission Alert" by the Division of Overseas Ministries:

Michael Allen, a missionary of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), will return to Africa in mid-November to establish a base in Brazzaville, Congo. He is the first Disciples missionary, evacuated from Zaïre on September 27-28, to return to the region. He will travel to Zaïre frequently from Congo where other churches and aid agencies have set up "relatively safe points of contact," according to the Rev. Dan C. Hoffman, Africa executive for the Disciples' Division of Overseas Ministries.

"Allen will provide moral support, symbolic presence and a sense of accompaniment to our brothers and sisters in the Church of Christ in Zaïre and to the Disciples community in Zaïre. Further, he will set up logistics systems in radio communications, financial accounting and transportation," said Hoffman.

Allen also will advise the Joint Ministry in Africa of the Division of Overseas Ministries and United Church Board for World Ministries on next steps toward the return of staff to Zaïre.

The decision to send Allen back to the region was made following an emergency meeting October 11. That meeting, chaired by Hoffman, was attended by 25 representatives of the American Baptists, Mennonite Central Committee, National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and United Methodist Church.

A \$1 million appeal will be made from Church World Service to North American churches for money to transport vaccines and to purchase medical kits. Close coordination will be established with the Church of Christ in Zaïre to move the medical supplies. The Disciples' Week of Compassion is granting \$10,000 immediately.

"The violence in Zaïre, initiated by unpaid soldiers, appears to have moved beyond the immediate economic crisis into the festering wounds of dissatisfaction with President Mobutu," Hoffman said. "We may be in for long-term uncertainty and instability as the Mobutu regime loses its grip on the people. No one is willing to predict what to expect in its place."

Michael Allen returned to Zaïre in mid December, and Robert Müller returned the following month. However, the political situation was still not stable and their visits were temporary. Finally, in the summer of 1992, Dr. Mpombo Lokofé, Disciples general secretary, recommended the return to Zaïre of several missionaries. Michael Allen and his family returned to Bolenge to his work as administrator of the hospital. Maria and Saul Falcon and their children resumed their work at the Zaïre Christian Institute. Gertrud and Robert Müller returned to Kinshasa where he served as architect for the ECZ and she directed the Women's Center for the Protestant Theological School. Daniel and Sandra Gourdet delayed their return because of Daniel's pending naturalization in the US.

The most serious events in the history of Disciples mission work in Africa occurred at Bolenge in October of 1992. Soldiers came to the home of Saul Falcon and demanded the money he had received to pay the teachers at ICZ. When Saul hesitated to give them the money, shots were fired into the air.

At about the same time soldiers and civilians came to the hospital trying to get into the pharmacy. They threw Mrs. Allen to the ground and fired their weapons into the ground near her. Word reached her husband, Michael, that she had been shot, fortunately not true. However he was forced to open the pharmacy which was emptied by the looters. They also took all the money at the hospital. The complete lack of security made remaining in Bolenge untenable. An airplane from the Missionary Aviation Fellowship came to Mbandaka and took the missionaries to Kinshasa.

On January 20, 1993, The Müllers wrote to Dan Hoffman by FAX including the following comments:⁴

It's the political situation that worries us the most. Daily life has become much worse than formerly because of its uncertainty and the socio-economic tension that we meet everywhere and always. The events at Mbandaka, followed by similar ones in several other towns and regions, have shown us again how fragile, even dangerous, the situation remains. Since the beginning of December the President continuously shows a strong arm, and the battle for power continues. In spite of the good work of the Council of the Republic the government doesn't function at all, and the people, unable to deal with the catastrophic economical situation, are at the end of their rope. Prices go up uncontrolled. It seems that business men profit from the difficult situation by setting prices that have absolutely no relation to real inflation: in the course of one week the price of 5 kilos of sugar rose from 8,500,000 zaïres to 12,000,000 zaïres (about \$3.50 US to \$5.00) even though the rate of exchange had been pretty stable. A sack of manioc that feeds a family for a month costs the equivalent of \$55, but the watchman at the church office building earns only \$10 a month and a regular soldier about \$7. These crazy prices are for both imported and local products, so that everyone is affected. In fact for several months we have noted with concern that our own salary doesn't meet the increase in cost of living.

As you have certainly learned, there have been numerous demonstrations with wounded and dead, there are murders, there is banditry everywhere in the city, even in broad daylight. There are gun shots at night and general strikes. We are used to seeing soldiers armed to the teeth and ready for ??? Out of concern the schools have from time to time been closed. We have just had a week of school closure. Every morning we ask ourselves whether it is safe to go out. It is never safe to drive at night. Our life is quite restricted, just office or school then home, nothing else.

On January 23, 1993, a wave of violence and pillaging erupted again in Kinshasa. The violence was sparked by the refusal of army personnel to accept new government banknotes which local merchants would not accept as means of payment. The number of deaths reported ranged from sixty to one thousand. The French ambassador was assassinated. French and Belgian troops were deployed to remove their nationals from Zaïre. Most remaining downtown commerce was destroyed either by the army or the presidential guard. For the following week each night was marked by gunshots and systematic looting of homes.

On February 1 Gertrud and Robert Müller sent the following FAX to Dan Hoffman from Brazzaville:³

You are certainly aware of what has happened at Kinshasa since last Thursday. From what we have been through and what we have heard these are the most serious events since September, 1991. As for us, the German embassy evacuated us Saturday to Brazzaville. Robert wanted to stay alone in Kinshasa but Rev. Bokeleale insisted that he leave with the family. The Belgian school has been pillaged again, so again there is nowhere for our children to go to school. So Gertrud and the children must return to Germany. Robert will stay a few days at Brazzaville. The Falcon family is also in Brazzaville

The Müller house had also been pillaged, stripped clean of everything including the plumbing. Fortunately no one was harmed.

Michael Allen, working since October with the ECZ medical office, determined to try to remain in Zaïre with his family until the completion of his term in July. Maria and Saul Falcon who, since the last round of violence in Mbandaka-Bolenge in October, had been waiting in Kinshasa for reassignment, decided to return to Paraguay, their home country.

A letter from Michael Allen dated February 2, 1993, gives a first hand account of the situation:

I had a premonition that this was going to be a difficult year in Zaïre when we found ourselves caught up in a full-scale riot within twenty minutes of leaving the international airport at Ndjili last July. That was kind of scary. In October we had the rather unpleasant experience of a military attack on Mbandaka/Bolenge in which our home was largely destroyed, almost all of our personal possessions were carried off, Henriette was kidnapped and threatened with execution, and the hospital was looted. Well, yes, that was pretty bad. After that one, we decided to retreat to Kinshasa where I began to work as a technical advisor to the Church of Christ in Zaïre's Medical Office.

Things were going fairly well. Maybe these political problems would work themselves out, I optimistically began to think. On January 28th we enrolled Brian in a French-speaking school near our apartment. About three o'clock in the afternoon we began to hear what sounded like the crackling of a large fire. Shortly thereafter the sound of gunfire could be heard within a hundred feet of the ECZ National Office where the weekly staff meeting was in progress. As the staff emerged from the building they became rather quickly aware of the situation and bolted for their vehicles or other means of transportation home. Most were intercepted by bands of soldiers upset about being paid with worthless bank notes. Their vehicles and personal possessions were stolen. Many were threatened with death or beaten by the soldiers.

Those who did make it home had their houses violated, their women raped, some were shot and killed. By early evening various military factions were engaging one another in street battles of a gruesome nature that would have revolted even the most ardent fans of the Rambo genre of cinema. The body count: more than a thousand dead and still rising as of this date, six days later.

As evening falls here in Kinshasa people head for the relative safety of their homes because it is after dark that the shooting begins, and we can hear the cries of tonight's victims somewhere out in the city. Even in one's own home there is no guarantee that the soldiers won't come and steal all that you have, rape the women, and maybe kill a family member or two.

In the morning those of us who have CB radios exchange news. Last night they looted this shop or killed or injured this person and so on. This morning I listen as a Catholic sister out in one of the parishes in the city describes how the soldiers looted the church, the priests' residence, and the convent the night before. "Here at Notre Dame it is a nightmare," she says. "A true nightmare," she repeats over and over, unable to find more adequate words for the depth of her sorrow and fear."

Coming Together of DOM and UCBWM

The Division of Overseas Ministries of the Disciples of Christ and the United Church Board for World Ministries (UCBWM) of the United Church of Christ had for many years realized they had much in common. In 1967 they had formed a joint Southern Asia Office with shared staff. From 1968 to 1971 there was also a joint office for Latin America. In 1980 a joint office for Middle East was established with both groups sharing the same executive. In 1989 a Common Ministry in Latin America and the Caribbean was established with a single executive and a board comprised of representatives from each of the larger mission boards. In 1989 a joint ministry in Africa was established with each board having its executive.

In the meeting of the DOM board of trustees in June, 1989, one member, Dorothy Gentry Kearney, was present as a representative of the UCBWM. DOM board member Gene Johnson was chosen to become a member of the UCBWM. This was one of the recommendations of a joint committee discussing ways of working together. Another decision was to have a common ministry in Africa with Dan Hoffman as the executive to supervise the African work for both boards. This became effective after the resignation of the UCBWM Africa executive at the end of 1991. A joint long-range planning committee with members from both mission boards was also created and began discussing further ways to work together.

By 1992 it had been decided to form a joint board called the Common Global Ministries Board (CGMB) with an equal number of members from the UCC and from the Disciples, twenty each. These ideas were submitted to both church bodies for approval. Both the DOM and the UCBWM continued to exist for the management of assets and the fulfillment of legal requirements, but the sending of missionaries and the relationships with partner churches were all accomplished through the CGMB. One innovation for this board was the inclusion, as equal board members, of representatives from the partner churches. There were six of these, rotated periodically among the various overseas partners.

After the approval of both mission boards and both parent church bodies the Common Global Ministries Board came into existence formally on January 1, 1996. Some details remained to be worked out so that the board could function smoothly, but the spirit of cooperation and sharing never failed to bring satisfactory resolution of these.

Bolenge Hospital

At the beginning of this decade the Bolenge Hospital had a staff consisting of Dr. Boutu, a pediatrician trained in Belgium, named medical director by the CDCZ; Dr. Julia Weeks, DOM missionary family physician; and Michael Allen, DOM missionary and administrator. Approximately 1,800 patients a month were being seen there. The 50 bed facility was at full occupancy. In addition to treating both hospitalized and out-patients the medical program provided vaccination clinics, prenatal care, a feeding program, and health education.

A German missionary from the United Evangelical Mission undertook the electrical wiring of the building and the installation of a new Lister generator, operating room lights, and an x-ray machine. The hospital at Bolenge shouldered the responsibility of furnishing pharmaceuticals to the up-river facilities at Monieka and Lotumbe.

The Bolenge Hospital became very popular, in part because of the decline of the quality of services in the Mbandaka government hospital. The number of patients far exceeded expectations, putting a great strain on facilities, including sanitary facilities. In 1990 a special grant of \$7,880.94 from Country Club Christian Church in Kansas City made it possible for the hospital to improve sanitary facilities and waste disposal.

The hospital suffered considerably from the disturbances of the early years of the decade. For a time services were largely suspended, and on one occasion the hospital was ransacked by renegade military.

In 1997, in response to requests from Zaïre, a grant was made for the construction of a maternity unit to permit separation of the obstetric activity from the main hospital building. This construction was contracted to Batir, the architecture and construction arm of the Church of Christ in Zaïre. The cost of this was estimated to be \$59,000. Much of the money for the project was provided by Union Avenue Christian Church in St. Louis, MO.

The Bolenge hospital was designated by the government as a reference hospital of the medical zone, separate from Mbandaka. This gave it access to international financing. The organization "Doctors Without Borders" (*Médecins Sans Frontières*) developed a relationship with the Disciples and offered significant assistance to the hospital program.

Rural Evangelism

The trend toward urbanization in Africa caused a corresponding decrease in emphasis of rural programs. It was noted that many of the Christian leaders trained over the years by missionaries were becoming old and that small village congregations often lacked trained leadership. An International School of Evangelism in Kinshasa developed a program of training workers to go to rural areas with the ability to carry out evangelistic efforts and to train others for the same activity. Recognizing the value of this program the DOM provided scholarship funds for M. Boetsa Dijou, a Disciples pastor, to attend this school at the request of the Disciples church.

After his graduation Pastor Dijou organized training institutes called "portable schools" in remote village areas. Nine of these were planned for 1990. The content of the course included an overview of the Bible; preparation of sermons; the role of village evangelists; and understanding of the life of the Disciples of Christ in Zaïre. Several books were used including the commentaries translated by Walter Cardwell. The budget for these seminars was supported by a special grant from the DOM.

Deteriorating Infrastructure

A serious problem confronting the DOM with respect to relationship with missionaries and the Zaïre church was logistical. The delivery of public services taken for granted in most of the world such as banking, postal service, public transportation and shipping, could not be counted upon in Zaïre. Such a simple thing as obtaining a spare part for an automobile could take months. Letters sent to the US from Zaïre had only a 50-50 chance of arriving. In order to overcome these obstacles the DOM utilized the services of an international courier organization to transfer correspondence.

They also contracted with the Presbyterian Church to share the services of their representative, Mr. Bill Simmons, in Kinshasa. This American missionary made daily radio contacts with the missionaries in Mbandaka, met people at the airport, helped with the processing of official government papers such as visas and work permits, and served as purchasing agent. This greatly facilitated the handling of these activities and proved a reliable asset to the work. In a sermon to the Administrative Committee of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada meeting in St. Louis on January 31, 1993, Dr. Nottingham reported the messages sent by Bill Simmons about the destruction and looting of Kinshasa and called upon the leadership of the church for prayers and solidarity with the sister church, the missionary families, and the people of Zaïre.

Overthrow of Mobutu

In September 1996, a revolt against human rights abuses erupted in eastern Zaïre. This rapidly developed into a nationwide rebellion against Zaïrian President Mobutu Sese Seko's 32 year dictatorship. On May 17, 1997, a rebel alliance supported by Rwanda, Uganda, and Angola seized Kinshasa, barely a day after Mobutu fled. It quickly reinstated the country's pre-1971 name, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and appointed a new government.

Recruited by the CIA in the late 1950's when his country was still a Belgian colony, Mobutu helped overthrow Patrice Lumumba, the Congo's first and only democratically elected prime minister. Wary of Lumumba's populism and willingness to accept Soviet aid, the U.S. and other Western powers encouraged Mobutu and others to contrive Lumumba's death. Thousands of Congolese lost their lives in the bitter five-year civil war that followed. In 1965 Mobutu seized power in a coup.

Perfecting a system of rule by theft, Mobutu pillaged the public sector, harassing or jailing those who objected. In some years he and his cronies siphoned off up to 50% of Zaïre's capital budget as well as hundreds of millions in mineral export revenues, foreign aid and loans, and private investment. The effects were catastrophic. Despite vast mineral wealth (diamonds, cobalt, copper), oil deposits, and immense hydroelectric and agricultural potential, Zaïre's per capita income dropped almost two-thirds since independence in 1960 and was listed as the lowest of all 174 countries in the UN's 1996 *Human Development Report*.

Mobutu's impact on people's daily lives was devastating. Extensive corruption crippled public services, from repairing roads to running schools and hospitals. Workers, their salaries stolen, were forced into the system of corruption just to survive. Nurses sometimes demanded payment before giving shots, while soldiers and police routinely extorted bribes from passersby.

In 1994 more than 1 million Hutu refugees, some of them armed, fled to eastern Zaïre following the genocide in Rwanda. Rather than disarming these exiles, Mobutu's military ignored refugee raids back into Rwanda and even sold the Hutus arms. When Mobutu's

forces in eastern Zaïre began seizing property and deporting Zaïrian Tutsis, this ethnic minority rebelled.

In mid-October 1996 the Tutsis joined three other anti-Mobutu rebel groups in an Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Zaïre. The ADFL was headed by Laurent Kabila, a follower of Lumumba who had waged a bush war in eastern Zaïre against Mobutu since the mid-1960's. Many Congolese initially praised the well-disciplined ADFL rebels for forcing rapacious government soldiers to flee and banning most bribe taking and intimidation, all of which improved people's daily security.

The rebel forces were finally able to enter Kinshasa and Mobutu yielded power to Laurent Kabila who replaced him as head of the government. Kabila established a new cabinet mostly from among his supporters and fellow rebels. It was hoped that the change in government would bring about improvement in the life of the population. However it eventually became obvious that the new government was not significantly different from the old, in spite of the propaganda on the new government's television broadcasts which said that the country was in such good hands now that even wild animals that had fled were returning to Zaïre.

In August, 1998, the Executive for Africa, Daniel Hoffman, presented the following evaluation of Congo events on the Disciples web page:

For nearly one hundred years, Global Ministries has been involved in the life and witness of Christians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo through its partner denomination, the Disciples of Christ Community (CDCC) of the Church of Christ in the Congo. These years have spanned all significant developments in modern day Congo (Zaïre) including Belgian colonialism, the growth of nationalism, independence, Cold War dynamics, the rule of Mobutu Sese Seko, and the general breakdown of national structures in the 1990's.

From the time of Belgian colonialism through the regime of Mobutu, the Congo has never been able to achieve stability or justice or adequate living standards or participatory governance for its people. The churches, including the CDCC, have often been the only sites where humane values have been nurtured. Thus, the astounding growth of Congolese religious bodies and the dependence of most Congolese on educational and health institutions connected to religious bodies.

At the time of the fall of dictator Mobutu Sese Seko and the initiation of rule by Laurant Kabila, we felt some hope that at long last the long-suffering Congolese would finally be governed in a wiser and more humane manner. Visitors to the Congo and to Kinshasa tended to speak about how well organized the Kinshasa airport was and how law and order had finally been restored to the Congo under President Kabila. They ignored Kabila's high-handedness with international institutions such as the United Nations and with opposition forces and human rights groups within the Congo. They failed to notice that very quickly following his arrival in Kinshasa Kabila managed to alienate almost all of his allies in neighboring countries. They did not observe the rampant nepotism and corruption in the Kabila government, sometimes rivaling that of Mobutu. And they did not notice that on basic bread and butter survival issues, the Congolese could not demonstrate much of a difference before and after Mobutu.

At the end of May, the area executive for Africa of Global Ministries attended an important conference at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC, titled "One Year In: Where does Congo-Kinshasa Stand?" The

meeting was resourced by Marc Baas, Director for central Africa, US State Department, Ned McMahon, Senior Program Officer and Director for East and Central Africa, National Democratic Institute, Nils Tcheyan, Great Lakes Regional Country Director, the World Bank, and Salih Booker, Senior Fellow and Director, African Studies Program, Council on Foreign Relations. The prediction at this conference was that Congo-Kinshasa was highly vulnerable to additional instability. The question that each panelist answered was “What went wrong so quickly?”

It is the belief that the current crisis in the Congo-Kinshasa is brought about by a complex web of factors including relations with neighboring countries, mainly Uganda and Rwanda; the inability of the government to demonstrate progress in the standard of living of the average Congolese; authoritarian attitudes towards opposition perspectives; and lack of commitment from the top down to justice and peace issues in Congolese life. Whether President Kabila remains in power or not, unless these issues are addressed with the greatest skill and creativity, the Congo Kinshasa will continue to reel under cycles of instability and violence.

The Africa office, speaking on behalf of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), expresses its concern for the Congolese people as they are subjected to new rounds of violence, political and economic instability. In particular, our prayers are with the Disciples of Christ Community as it continues to minister in these most difficult and uncertain times.

During the early '90s missionaries sent by Global Ministries to the Disciples of Christ Community were evacuated two times from the Congo Kinshasa at great emotional and financial cost to themselves and to Global Ministries. Following these removals, frequent inquiries have been received in the Africa office from North American constituents asking when we would be sending missionaries to the Congo again.

In all cases, our answer was that we did not believe the Congo had achieved the stability that would allow us to send new mission staff there with confidence. We observed that even though our partner denomination would like for some missionaries in key sectors to return, that the church has been able to do a remarkable job of continuing medical, church and educational ministries without mission personnel assistance throughout the period following the evacuation of Disciples North American staff. In fact, unlike other denominations that were totally dependent upon North Americans in church, educational and medical ministries, the Disciples in the Congo seemed to have weathered the overall instability with great ability.

Having studied reports of the most recent evacuations of expatriates from the Congo we are convinced that not sending mission staff back to the Congo was a wise decision. Of course, we still hope that at some point it will be possible for North Americans to serve in Congo Kinshasa again. As events unfold in the Congo, Kinshasa, we will attempt to share information and perspectives on this www site.

Within a year following Mobutu's ouster organized opposition to the government of Kabila appeared in the form of a new rebellion, again starting in the east and supported by the governments of Rwanda and Uganda. These forces were able to capture large areas of the east and south of the country.

To oppose the rebellion Kabila sought help from other African nations, and became allied with Namibia, Angola, Chad, Central African Republic, and Zimbabwe, all of whom sent troops, military equipment, and/or finances in support of the government of Congo. In

mid-April 1999 when this narrative concludes the situation is still unresolved. Other African nations and the United Nations have called for peace talks, but none have taken place and the final resolution of the conflict remains undecided. Some fear that the result will be a division of Congo into separate countries. Few predict that peace and prosperity will return to the country soon.

Status of the Church After 100 Years

Although no missionaries have returned to Congo since the 1993 evacuation the work of the church continues, often under difficult circumstances. In addition to special funds for buildings and maintenance the Africa office budget contains a block grant which is used primarily to support the central administration of the church. Other special items, such as salaries for physicians, are also funded by CGMB.

Dr. Mpombo Lokofe, Legal Representative of the Disciples of Christ in Zaïre (CDCZ) wrote in June, 1993, giving information about his activities as the leader of the church and expressing his feelings about the place of the church in his country. His letter provides a valuable window into the life of the country and the church and is translated in part:

In the domaine of evangelization, what has been accomplished up to this time is quite encouraging. If the first evangelistic campaign planned for Boende is late in getting started it is due to the unexpected political considerations at this moment in Zaïre and the conditions of communication and transportation in these difficult times. We believe that the political climate in the coming days will permit us to start up these activities.

Nonetheless, the evangelization of tribes that have been unreached or under-reached by the Gospel has been marked by distinct progress. The project titled "All Village Project" during 1992-93 trained a total of 93 catechists. These figures bring the total of catechists trained from November, 1989, through June, 1993, to 622 catechists. During the same period 3,110 New Testaments were distributed.

It is no secret to anyone in Zaïre that the present political, ideological, economical and social ethic is the most perverse that our society has known. The Disciples of Zaïre believe that the Gospel is lifted up publicly in any society and that it changes its form according to changes in forms of public communication. It is out of the question for us to assume "religious oversight" of individuals or of families, administering the religious system of Zaïrian society. Clearly, for us the Gospel that we preach publically will not be reduced to "religious consolation."

On the contrary, the Gospel is preached with critical and liberting force. This is done in Zaïre, to paraphrase the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, when the church finds itself in a situation where it should not only assist those who have been victimized by the wheel but jump in to stop it. We have noted with joy that in spite of the political morass, the economical disaster and the perversion of standards that characterize our society in Zaïre, the Spirit of God has constantly brought about its fruits in the CDCZ. The CDCZ is presently experiencing growth and this takes place to the glory of our Lord. Right now we claim 218 parishes divided among twenty ecclesiastical posts implanted in four regions of Zaïre. New parishes have been planted among the Batswa tribes and the fishing populations along the rivers Ubangi, Ngiri, Tshuapa and Momboyo. New parishes have also been planted among the tribes in the great rain forest of Upper Zaïre and East Kasai.

These parishioners are at the same time rich and poor. They are rich because they live and they receive all that is necessary from nature: fish, meat, rice, corn, manioc, wood, etc. They are poor because they are exposed to violence and injustice without being able to defend themselves; because in their body and in their soul they exist on the edge of death and because they are exploited economically and dominated socially. They can feed their parish pastors and the teachers of their children, but they can't pay salaries because they don't have money.

A report in January, 1998, told of 183 primary schools with 20,604 boys and 14,148 girls and 1,245 teachers. There were also 58 secondary schools with 4,525 boys, 2,153 girls, 505 teachers.

Doctors were being paid directly from the mission board with two at Bolenge and one each at Lotumbe, Monieka, and Bosobele. Medical supplies and medications were usually very difficult to obtain but medical services were much in demand since government medical facilities were almost non-existent.

No accurate figure of church membership in the Disciple area was possible but estimates suggested that the prediction of Mr. Faris in 1949 was not far from the mark for, in looking ahead 50 years, he had said: "The membership of our churches in Congo land should approach a million, which will mean that the great river system which is our field will have become Christian, and the native way of life will have disappeared. In that day all support and all supervision from America will have become unnecessary, for the gifted teachers and preachers now being trained and to be enlisted will carry on their own Christian civilization."⁵

Centennial Celebration

It had been hoped that a group of Americans would visit Congo to celebrate the centennial of the beginning of Disciple missionary work in Congo on April 17, 1999. That was 100 years after the date that Dr. & Mrs. Dye landed at Bolenge with a letter from the mission board approving the purchase of the mission property from the American Baptists. However the war in Congo made that visit impossible. Even in Congo no celebration was held at Bolenge because it was not considered safe for people to travel to such a gathering at this time. Communications from church leaders there suggested that the celebration was not canceled but postponed hoping that perhaps in a year such a gathering might be possible.

Therefore a celebration in the United States was scheduled for Indianapolis. The date coincided with the meeting of the Common Global Missions Board. About ninety people gathered at Southport Christian Church where the entire day of Saturday, April 17, was spent discussing Congo and the work of the Disciples there. More than thirty of those present were former missionaries, including Walter and Sue Cardwell, and Claylon and Helen Weeks, whose service in Congo extended back to the period of the first 50 years. Many of the others present were children or spouses of former missionaries.

The day began with the informal greeting of old friends. Then Paul Williams, the son of missionaries Clarence and Kathryn Williams, spoke from his point of view as one who was born in Congo at Mondombe, and who still felt a strong bond to the people and the church there. He had spent some time there in 1991 doing research for his doctorate in history at the University of Chicago and presented detailed and interesting information about the beginning of Disciple missionary work at Bolenge. The positive feelings he expressed about the dedication of the pioneer missionaries and all those who followed to create the present vital church in Congo set the tone for the whole day's celebration.

The rest of the morning and the afternoon were spent attending various workshops where discussions were held about the present status of things in Congo, the background of the war there, and the status of the church. Opportunity was given for individuals to express their views about such subjects as the effects, good or bad, of missionary work on culture. Many stories were told.

The climax of the day was a slide presentation from photos shared by several of the missionaries. The pictures gave an overview of people, places, events, activities and scenery from Congo that reminded all those present of the days they had spent there.

The following day, Sunday, the group of missionaries and friends gathered with the board members of CGMB for their closing worship service. The theme was "Church of the Congo Celebration". The service was opened by Daniel Hoffman, area executive for Africa, and by Dr. Peter Morgan, President of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society.

The morning message was given by Walter Cardwell. He described how the work in Congo had progressed from the difficulties of the early days, learning the language, facing health problems, etc. Hard work and sacrifice has led to the present vital church estimated to have 800,000 members. He described the Africanization of the present church where taking up the offering is like a joyous dance, and where church music often follows the pattern of African chants. Having begun his missionary service in 1945 he was a living message of the accomplishments of Disciple work in Congo.

The worship service included the commissioning of 16 new missionaries going to many parts of the globe. They stood in a circle while everyone else came forward to lay hands upon them during the prayer of dedication and sending out.

At the communion service the President of the DOM, Patricia Tucker Spier, and the Executive Vice-president of the UCBWM, David Hirano, presided at the table. The service concluded with an invitation for all those present who had served overseas to come forward. Half the audience responded. The session closed with joyous greetings and with the benediction pronounced in Lonkundo.

Looking Back

An evaluation of the results of the efforts of Disciples of Christ in Congo beginning a hundred years ago reveals many positive accomplishments. The church planted there in Equator Province is by far the largest in membership resulting from Disciple missionary work overseas. Though not without difficulty, and at times with the threat of schism, the church has remained united in its organization and its adherence to basic Disciple principles. Having suffered greatly from economic decline, governmental deterioration, and absence of security, the church has continued to be a vital influence in the lives of people both in the cities and the remote rural areas. Within its limited resources it also continues the educational and medical programs that accompany its basic evangelistic purpose.

The plea of Restoration Movement leaders for cooperation among Christians has been evident over the years in the many ways Disciples have shared with others in carrying out important activities. An early example of such cooperation was the translation of the Bible, done jointly with the Congo Balolo Mission (CBM), whose field was just north of the Disciples' area, where the language was basically the same. The first edition of the New Testament was published in 1921. This cooperation continued over the years including the revision of the Bible carried out in the 1960's by another team with representatives from both churches.

An early project of six mission groups was the construction of the Union Mission House in Leopoldville in 1921 to provide lodging for missionaries as they came and went. Besides helping finance the construction, the Disciples provided much of the lumber from their sawmill. For many years before independence this was an important resource for missionaries, but eventually was turned over to African direction and management. It continues to provide lodging for church personnel visiting the city. Disciple missionary son, Ron Weeks, who directed the facility for many years, continues to be active in its functioning.

To facilitate cooperation among the Protestant missions the Congo Protestant Council was formed and for many years Disciple missionary Emory Ross served as its executive. This body was the basis for the movement which led to the formation of the *Église du Christ au Congo* (ECC-ECZ), and again a Disciple, Jean Bokeleale, served for many years as its leader. The united church in Congo includes a wider variety of Protestant groups than the united church of any other country.

The secondary school at Bolenge, Congo Christian Institute, started by Disciples, was open to participation by other nearby missions as their needs demanded. This school has always had a high reputation and has been a major factor in training Congolese not only for church leadership but also for important roles in government and businesses.

Because of the constant need for printed materials and school and paper supplies the major Protestant groups formed *La Librairie Évangélique du Congo* (LECO). The Disciples joined with others in the construction of the building in Leopoldville which housed this organization, and shared in its support. Eventually the printing activities which had begun in Bolenge in the earliest days of the mission were replaced by the functions of LECO.

Another major cooperative venture is the *Institut Médicale Évangélique* at Kimpese, the school that provided training for medical personnel of a level higher than that available in Equator province, and also served as a medical center for the advanced and specialized care of difficult cases. Although its distant location made it more difficult for patients and students, the Disciples participated fully in its staffing and functioning, even though this was sometimes at the expense of having adequate medical personnel in its own hospitals.

During the years following independence, when the country experienced major problems, the Protestant groups formed the Congo Protestant Relief Agency. Disciple missionary Robert Bowers was among those who gave leadership to this agency that served a very useful purpose obtaining and distributing much needed medical supplies and food.

Another outstanding cooperative program was the *Association Médicale Oecuménique* of Boende, which brought Catholic, Protestant and government resources together in a united project. For the four years that Disciple doctors were present on the staff it was a striking example of what can be accomplished through such a combined effort. It also showed the changed relationship between Catholics and Protestants that existed following the Vatican II council. The work of Dr. Keith Fleshman at the Catholic hospital at Lyonda when facilities at Bolenge were in poor repair is another example of this changed spirit.

The Disciple housing project organized through the efforts of Millard Fuller not only created an extensive improvement in the quality of living of those in Mbandaka who obtained better living quarters, but also led to the formation of "Habitat for Humanity", whose outreach worldwide is well known.

When the time came to establish theological education on a university level the Disciples were involved in the planning and leadership. And from its inception the Protestant University and its predecessors were always strongly supported by Disciples, who are well represented in the present administration and faculty.

Disciples in Congo exemplified this ecumenical spirit by joining the World Council of Churches in the early 1960's and by participating in the All Africa Conference of Churches, and relating directly for decades to the United Evangelical Mission of Wuppertal, Germany. Now through the Common Global Ministries Board it is a partner church to both North American Disciples and the United Church of Christ.

There is no possible way to count the number of people whose lives have been improved, or to measure the "abundance of life" brought to the population of Equator Province resulting from the efforts of missionaries sent by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada, but it is easy to know that the numbers and the positive influence are both very great. Disciples have every reason to be proud of the record of the past, and to look forward to the future in partnership with the Disciples Community of the Church of Christ in Congo.

Notes

1. Mr. & Mrs. Lorenzo Phillips, Newsletter, October, 1989.
2. Mr. & Mrs. Lorenzo Phillips, Newsletter, October, 1989.
3. Michael Allen, Newsletter, September, 1991.
4. Mr. & Mrs. Robert Muller, FAX, February 1, 1993.
5. Ellsworth Faris, "Fifty Years--Ago and Hence", *World Call*, March 1949, p. 31

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