From Curse to Blessing

Disciples Information Bulletin

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Editorial

The Church of Christ in Congo, 10 - Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo, has a vision accepted at its General Assembly in 2007, that of becoming, by 2015, a church united, strong spiritually and materially.

Now that we are on the eve of this target year, it is time that everyone within its jurisdiction take stock of the situation.

It is time that the parishes, posts and projects come to the table to discuss what has been achieved so far.

Indeed, we have traveled throughout the Community to explain the essence of the vision and the importance of understanding that the period of missionaries during which everything came from our donors is over, and we have entered the period of partnership in which we realize our projects with the assistance of friends who want to lend us a hand when needed.

This is the period during which we must not idly wait for others to find solutions to our problems, but a period in which we seek to solve our problems by ourselves, meet our own needs, build our church by ourselves.

The year 2014 is the year in which everyone in his parish, in his Post and at the General Secretariat shall make an assessment to make the necessary adjustments before the coming assessment year.

May everyone get to work and the merciful Lord God will bless you richly, as one who builds with God, God will bless his work.

Rev. Eliki Bonanga, Community President and Legal Representative

When we read the book of Genesis, chapter 17, we find the covenant God made with Abraham his servant (v.11). A covenant that will require the circumcision of all males of his household (v.26). But although Abraham acted on the covenant, he remained incredulous and believed that the promise that accompanied the covenant related to his son Ishmael. Yet it is through Isaac, son of Sarah, that the promise is fulfilled because it is from him that were born 12 princes (v.20).

Today, the New Covenant is Baptism and Holy Communion. And the promise is eternal life (John 6: 54). However, there are still unbelievers who rely on the wealth of this world and the pleasures they provide, just like Abraham. This world is Ishmael, eternal life is Isaac.
From 27 to 29, the parish of Bolenge Center in the Post of Bolenge vibrated with the atmosphere of the great evangelistic campaign organized by the Department of Evangelization, Church Life and Mission. Indeed, for the spiritual strengthening of its members, the Management Committee after the retreat earlier this year, recommended that the head of the Department of Evangelization, Church Life and Mission organize activities like campaigns, concerts, etc., to revive the faith of the members of the CDCC and ensure their loyalty.

Accompanied by worship groups of Mbandaka III and Bolenge Center, the keynote speaker was Rev. Clement Mputu Yonganga, head of the Department of Evangelization, Church Life and Mission who preached on the Theme "From a curse to a blessing". He discussed the different kinds of curses and their causes. Then he showed how these curses can be abandoned to go to a life full of blessing. Finally, he and five other pastors prayed for the people who had recognized their guiltiness and wanted to change in order to enjoy the divine blessings.

The campaign started with about a thousand participants mainly from Bolenge center, and closed with more than 3,000 people, many from the surrounding parishes, including Inganda, Iyonda, Wendji - Seleli, etc.

The climax of this campaign was the Sunday worship on March 30 where it was noted, for many years, a packed church. Many people who had left the Disciples church for other denominations have returned to their first love: Bolenge Center. There were even eight Muslims who have received the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior and who have committed to be baptized and even sing in the parish choir.

Note that before this great meeting, Reverend Clement Mputu Yonganga had sent two of his intercessor trainers to Bolenge Center to prepare the way for this great campaign.

The 28 trained intercessors with their senior pastor Reverend Lokwa Molos were able to experience the power of prayer during the campaign, but also the feeling of being so close to God in the times of prayer, and that God is attentive to our requests and would like to answer favorably.

This campaign in Bolenge is not the last, but the first of a crusade that the Department of Evangelism, Church Life and Mission of the CDCC has planned for later this year in the context of strengthening the spiritual life of its members.

Reverend Mputu’s strategy is very simple: build capacity in the centers of church Posts so that intercessors and other spiritual guides can train others in the parishes of the interior so that any member of the CDCC enjoys a strong leadership that can sustain him in his faith.

With this program and planning, the CDCC as a whole will pass from curse to blessing by the grace of God. E. Boango

E. Boango
A Visit Unlike Others

From 4 to 8 February 2014, the staff of the General Secretariat of the Church of Christ in Congo, 10 - Community of Disciples of Christ found themselves at a retreat to try to assess the level of implementation of decisions relative to the vision adopted in 2007.

This is indeed the right time for general bodies to meet to modify programs as necessary to make the final adjustments before the final evaluation which will take place at the next General Assembly.

The main points addressed were: increasing the faithfulness of Christians, revenue maximization, administrative organization, management and visibility of the CDCC.

Concerning the retention of Christians, the General Secretariat noted that each year new members are baptized and the church seems to grow, but next to the parishes there are sects who do not have much trouble to lead the newly baptized members astray. Strategies have been adopted and recommended to keep new and old members, to avoid their loss in the parishes.

About finances, the CDCC endeavors to be self-sufficient, but every year the treasury notes that the funds required by Posts are not fully covered under the estimates. Thus the strategy of fixed amounts was preferred to that of the percentages payable which was in force.

The administrative organization was also a point that concerned the executives gathered, for although within the General Secretariat there are Departments and Services, in the Posts this is not match. Principal Supervising Pastors work alone, sometimes without even a Secretary who can take care of the administration. Therefore, when the PSP travels, the entire administration of the Post is closed until his return. Executives have lamented this and recommended that Posts have structured offices to ensure continuity of administration.

We note that, finally, the relevant participation of Co-Worker of the United Evangelical Mission, Mr. Désiré Safari, who throughout the retreat, helped with sharing his experiences. The choice of the Management Committee was to place him as main presenter alongside the Chaplain, Rev. Emmanuel Boango Nkolito.

It is important that all Posts and all parishes do the same.
O. Pekombe

Mrs. Sandra Gourdet, Executive Secretary for Africa of Global Ministries, and Mrs. Julia Karimu, Co-President of Global Ministries, arrived Saturday, Feb. 1, 2014 at Mbandaka in the framework of a tour in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in Kinshasa, Mbandaka and Goma.

Because of a setback at the airport, when the airplane arrived exceptionally earlier than expected, the two guests of the CDCC were met and taken to the church of the 10th City Parish. Because of the time disturbance of their arrival, only about 200 people were present for to greet them. Then they benefited in the afternoon for rest and beautiful Congolese style braids.

However, Sunday morning at the church of Mbandaka III more than 900 people attended the service of worship which lasted more than 4 hours during which the choir outdid themselves in interpreting songs and dances. The word of God was preached by Mrs. Julia Karimu.

In the afternoon, the two ladies relaxed with a canoe ride on the river to the Mbandaka Eala Botanical garden.
Ordination of Pastors in the Posts of Bolenge and Bosobele

December 2013 saw the ordination of five pastors in the Post of Bosobele and one pastor in the Post of Bolenge. Thus, under the leadership of Reverend Eliki Bonanga, Community President and Legal Representative of the Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo, a team of 8 people traveled the river parishes of the Post of Bolenge on the Congo River, and the river parishes of the Post of Bosobele on the Ubangi and Ngiri rivers. The first stop was the parish of Djili-Nkamba in the Post of Bolenge, for the ordination of Pastor Iyeli Eboka on Sunday, Dec. 8, 2013. On Monday, Dec. 9, the delegation continued its journey. After a stop in the parishes of Bokwango and Lilanga on the Ubangi river, still in the Post of Bolenge, the delegation went up the Ubangi River to the parish of Bikondo in the Post of Bosobele for the ordination of Pastor Joel Moyowa Mobenge on Thursday, Dec. 12, 2013. On Friday they continued upstream on the Ubangi River to the parish of Buburu to ordain Pastor Job Manyoku on Thursday, Dec. 19, 2013. From Buburu, President Eliki Bonanga and his team continued their trip up the Ubangi to stop at the Parish of Mokolo, Monday, Dec. 16 where there was the ordination of Pastor Emeka Hosana Mbongele Tuesday, Dec. 17.

After Mokolo, the delegation turned back to go down the Ubangi Ngiri and after a stop at the parish center of Bosobele, they reached the parish of Bomongo to order Pastor Ernest Bokando on Sunday, Dec. 22, 2013. Then on Monday the team descended the Ngiri to return to the parish center of Bosobele where they performed the ordination of Pastor Sylvain Munkete on Dec. 25 during the Christmas worship service. Wherever the delegation passed, the Christian population was in great jubilation expressed by loin-cloths spread on the road, palm leaves decorating the roadside from the shore to the parish; songs that attracted people of all persuasions, village or city.

In short, this pastoral visit of the delegation led by the Reverend Eliki Bonanga, produced a spiritual awakening of our Christian populations in the Posts of Bolenge and Bosobele.

About Solar Energy for the General Secretariat

For 4 years now, the General Secretariat functions with solar energy thanks to funding from the United Evangelical Mission (MEU).

Currently, the Secretariat uses 6 Kits that provide 12 KVA distributed to the offices of the General Secretariat.

Before this was installed, the offices had electricity from a 5 KVA diesel generator which, because of the heavy use to which it was subject, often broke down and needed a lot of repairs and maintenance. In addition we had to buy 10 liters of diesel fuel per day, for an annual budget of U.S. $ 3,900.

With the installation of solar energy, not only is fuel no longer purchased, repairs are no longer needed, but also the cost of a kit that provides 2 KVA is cheaper than a generator of the same power.

Solar energy also has the advantage of not having polluting emissions by gas or non-decomposable waste, or by noise.

Finally a solar kit weighs less than a generator of the same power, which gives it the advantage not only of being easily transportable and also be very suitable in rural areas because there are fewer technical requirements.

According to the supplier of the solar equipment that the General Secretariat has acquired, the equipment has a 5 year warranty. Which is another advantage for its use in poorer churches.

This is a project that would not only be useful for Church Posts that are in the interior where the energy deficit is striking, but also an opportunity to promote other activities that require electricity.
Department of Evangelization, Church Life and Mission, adopted a new strategy, to train intercessors more effectively with their pastors. And it is in the context of this new vision that training at Bolenge was organized. This is the first in this genre but the same will take place in other Posts. The strategy is to train strong intercessors in central parishes of Posts and disseminate these intercessors into other parishes.

Because of the partnership between the district of Dortmund in Germany and the church Post of Bolenge, a project to build a hospital boat was initiated.

This idea was born in view of the health difficulties experienced by people who live on the river, mostly on the banks of the Ubangi in the church Post of Bolenge.

It was only in the month of June 2013 that the project became, finally, a reality and made available to Dr. Yoursen Bosolo, Medical Coordinator of the CDCC, for its operation.

With a team of another physician, Medical Director of the Bolenge Hospital, Dr. Pepy Mowengo Bokoole, and nurse Mpembe Nkolito, Dr. Bosolo organized 10 trips on the Ubangi River and the service is much appreciated with certainly an impressive number of medical consultations, but especially the surgeries, sometimes complicated.

Also in the context of the partnership, Dr. Jörg Philipps who lived in Bolenge as a volunteer during the '80s, returned as a neurologist to check patients for whom he noted extreme poverty due to low income populations who are resigned to live with their diseases instead of going for treatment.

The situation of accessibility to quality medical care is not peculiar to the river population of the Ubangi but a general case of any region in which the CDCC work.

If the boat arrives, ever so seldom, to support patients in the church Post of Bolenge with support from the German District of Dortmund, the rest of the population owes its salvation to the assistance of Global Ministries.
**Decentralization of Education in the CDCC**

Through the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which provides for the division of the country into 26 provinces, the National Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Professional Education has established 5 educational provinces in Equator Province including Gbado - Lite, Gemena, Boende, Lisala and Mbandaka.

It is in this spirit of decentralization of school administration that the aforementioned Ministry has set a number above which schools should be managed by a Coordination.

By this arrangement, the Coordination of Education of the Church of Christ in Congo, 10 - Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo has today, 4 operational coordinations in Mbandaka, Ingende, Boende and Bo-kungu. Similarly, some offices Councilors were elevated to Office of Resident Advisors, including at Kiri, Ikela and Gemena.

Each of these new structures has more than 100 schools to manage. This requires suitable and accurate computer equipment to be effective and diligent in dealing with staff and school records. That is why the Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo is facing a major problem with the installation of no less than seven new structures.

A Coordination and Resident Advisor Office requires at least 6 tables - desks, 18 chairs, 4 shelves, 2 computers, 1 printer, a solar kit for the supply of electricity, and of course a building to house the office.

Besides the building, the equipment for an office is estimated at U.S. $ 6,000 and this equipment is not available, and the money even less so. This portends a certain problem in the administration of our schools.

In addition, schools in the Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo are still experiencing the problem of decent school buildings that coordinations must build, because currently there are more schools than school buildings. Thus some schools meet in buildings of mud walls or under the trees.

**Women and the Vision of the CDCC**

Reverend Christiane Ikete Engetele convened, in early January, the women leaders of the parishes of Mbandaka and Bo-lenge to talk with them about strategies for the success of the vision of the Church of the CDCC.

There is no need to report the preponderance of women in the life of the church in Congo, but since the inception of the idea of the vision by the General Assembly of the CDCC, it is the impression that women who managed a great success with their micro-credit program, do not seem to join in a consistent manner, their actions to assert themselves effectively in the role they have to play in achieving the vision of their church.

It was to bring order in this situation that the Reverend Christiane Ikete sought the expertise of Mr. Désiré Safari, Co - worker of the United Evangelical Mission, to explain how women should act to make their contribution to the success of the vision of the CDCC.

For two days they reflected and prayed with their facilitator, before making resolutions that will make them now be more active and visible in the path towards a united, materially and spiritually strong church.
A New Impetus at Lotumbe

Bosolo Ekula, the team left Mbandaka Thursday, March 9 at 7 a.m. by motorized canoe and arrived in Lotumbe Friday at 1 a.m..

Despite the late hour of arrival the group was warmly welcomed by a large crowd that came to the beach to greet them.

The NGO Handup Congo has been working with the population of Lotumbe and the Protestant University of Congo for nearly 10 years. At Lotumbe, especially, Handup Congo works in the field of education, health and development in general. Projects have been initiated and executed at Lotumbe and the goal of this trip was to allow Handup Congo to get a feel for local realities in which they are engaged.

Collaboration between Handup Congo and the Lotumbe population has experienced ups and downs in the past. The lesson from the difficulties of the past is that now projects for which Handup Congo will give support are those which have a Community dimension because in the past, only a segment of the population benefited from support from Handup Congo.

It is in this context that community projects such as digging wells, building latrines will be primarily supported so that everyone feels the assistance provided by the partner Handup Congo. Other community projects also supported will include the reconstruction of 3 classrooms destroyed by the hurricane, the water supply at the hospital, etc..

Reconstruction in the Parishes of the Ubangi

The church parishes of the Posts of Bolenge and Bosobele, located on the Ubangi were affected by tribal conflicts in the region. In fact, most people had fled to neighboring Congo and it is only during this year that just ended (2013) that repatriation became effective.

But on their return, the population found houses destroyed and even chapels completely ransacked. They must therefore rebuild and the faithful are truly committed to rebuild their places of worship. In many parishes, the walls are already raised and even completed, but the hard part is how to get the roofing sheets especially since the population is still vulnerable because of not yet having an economic base. The fields do not yet produce and fishing equipment is not able to feed them and allow them to sell the surplus.

We still noted that they are trying to get by with their own means, but we must recognize that it is too much to ask of them, to abandon them to rebuild their chapels alone.

N. Weteto
In 1974, an American, both bold and visionary, Millard Fuller, inaugurated the first house in a new neighborhood, the neighborhood of Bokotola for some, for others Losanganya in Mbandaka. This area now has more than 100 houses in the Habitat for Humanity program.

This program has traveled throughout the world to reach more than 100 countries in Africa, America and Asia. Today, although its founder has died, Habitat for Humanity continues to operate in more than 80 countries.

The objective of this program was to provide decent housing for the poor.

In the city of Mbandaka, the program built over 400 houses ranging in size and quality progressively less because of the dwindling purchasing power of the population. Finally, many beneficiaries were unable to repay the cost of their houses, preventing the program from continuing, and suddenly, the program, which had several sites in the province of Bas - Congo, Kinshasa, in the province of Bandundu and obviously in the Equator Province, finally packed up, crossing off, at the same time, the Democratic Republic of Congo from the list of beneficiary countries of Habitat for Humanity.

This decision, far from suppressing the initial idea of the program in the heads of some friends of Millard Fuller, boosted rather new initiatives for the resumption of the program in DR Congo. It is in this context that a new structure, just as international as Habitat for Humanity, was created: Fuller Center for Housing.

Fuller Center for Housing, headed by no less bold and visionary David Snell. He and his committee have decided for the initial idea of Habitat for Humanity to be reborn from its ashes. Thus, after two trips to the country, David Snell has signed, during his third trip, a partnership agreement with the Community of the Disciples of Christ in Congo and the Maloka Foundation for the construction of decent housing in Mbandaka and Bolomba in Equator Province.

With this contract Fuller Center for Housing will build, in partnership with the beneficiaries and the facilitation of the Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo and the Maloka Foundation, houses whose the desired size is 60 square meters at a cost which will relate to the price of materials used. This cost will be borne during the work by the beneficiaries and Fuller Center for Housing. That's the partnership. N. Weteto.

When Koreans Buy Bicycles for Congolese Pastors

Rev. Bonanga accepts the bicycles

The conditions under which the personnel of the CDCC works are so harsh they can not be expressed in a single article. But only take the case of transportation.

To travel, the Community President, Rev. Eliki Bonanga and his team must use impassable roads with their motorbikes. And when they are forced to travel on the river, then they use motorized canoes and spend days and days in the sun. And sometimes all night they continue in the cold.

If the management team travels with such difficulty, what is it like for other personnel? Take these two examples;

1.To take part in the Congress of Women Disciples held in Mbandaka, the woman President of the women’s work at the Post of Kiri had to walk 300 km and return the same way again.

2.To meet the Community President who was on his usual visits, the President of the Post of Mondombe traveled 150 km on foot.

Note that he is about 80 years old.

Such cases are numerous and it has not escaped the observation of Paul Williams Lokula who shared the information with the Korean Presbyterian parish of his city in the United States, and the parishioners were so touched that in 2011 they donated 20 bicycles for staff of the CDCC working under these conditions. This year, the same parish donated other bikes that were taken to remote parishes as needed.

The secretary of Paul Williams, who works with him at the University, also moved by this state of affairs, offered a bike in 2011 and another this year.

It is in suffering that we recognize true friends! N. Weteto,
The fourth son of missionary Clay Hobgood, Efoloko Is’ea Mbunga, Njoji Ben Hobgood was born in Lotumbe, Belgian Congo, in 1928.

He had the chance to accompany his father on his rounds in the region of Lotumbe, especially in the area of Lyonda, Bombomba and then in the region of Kiri in Bandundu Province. His perfect mastery of the local language, Lonkundo, made him a friend to all those who accompanied his father. He learned everything about Mongo culture through the people who accompanied his father on his travels. He ate with them, listened to them and joined in their culture. It is true that he considers himself American with a Congolese culture. It is true that he considers himself American with a Congolese culture.

He tells with humor about crossing swamps on slippery trunks of trees that caused the bearers of his father to fall in the muddy water, and carrying bicycles on their shoulders to cross a swamp.

The Second World War obliged him, his parents and brothers and sisters to return to the United States of America. He graduated in 1946 from the high school in Lexington, Kentucky. Then he immediately entered Transylvania University for his university studies.

But while he was in high school, he met a beautiful young woman who becomes his wife, Betsy and in 1955, he was homesick for his country (Congo), and asks this lovely American girl to accompany him to the Congo where he wanted to make his career. Betsy accepted and soon they were in Mbandaka along with their two daughters, Anne Bolumbu and Lucy Otaenga. Susan Ekila, their third daughter, was born in 1956 in Mbandaka.

Ben wants to go to the back country, wading through swamps as in his youth on trips with his father, but the church decided otherwise and assigns him to Mbandaka to organize the city parish. His disappointment did not prevent his having initiatives.

He worked at first with Pierre Bokomboji, the eloquent preacher, a disciple of his father from Lotumbe who, enfeebled by the weight of age, went into retirement in his village of Lotumbe. Ben took a collection in Mbandaka to build a decent house for Pierre Bokomboji in Lotumbe (the house still exists).

After the departure of Bokomboji, Njoji Ben, whose church in Mbandaka grew rapidly, thanks to his policy of bringing alumni of the Ecole Moyenne in Bolenge, to become leaders in Mbandaka. He enlist the services first of Reverend Joseph Ekofo, a very talented musician from Boende. Then the young Luanzanza Lisange, Jean Inkale y’Onyaa, James Bakumba MOKOBE and Edourd Likiyo Eliya Botamba w’Onene, all finalists from the Preachers School at Bolenge, to reinforce the team that must now deal with a church which had grown from 800 members to 5000, with the need to bring the pastors of the faithful. Thus the parishes of Basolo, Mbandaka 2 and Ikongowasa were added to the parishes of Mbandaka 1 and Mbandaka 3. The latter became the center of gravity thanks to the great church building built by missionary Harry Felkel with the advice of engineer Clarence Williams. The church was built on marshy land granted to the church by the colony.

In 1962 the Congo Protestant Council, forerunner of the Church of Christ in Congo, led by Bishop Shaumba, decided to create a Protestant university in Congo. Ben, present at this meeting and due to go on furlough in the United States, was charged by Monsignor Shaumba to promote it. Instead of a furlough, Ben made a crusade across the United States on behalf of the Church of Congo according to the mandate he had received.

On his return to Congo in 1964 the Congo Protestant Council entrusted him to open a Protestant university in Stanleyville (Kisangani). He started the year with 12 professors made available by the UN and the university he created was called Congo Free University. But the rebellion disrupted things and he decided to move the university to Kinshasa where he worked in collaboration with the University of Lovanium.

In 1966, he returned to Kisangani and restarted the Free University of Congo for good. Unfortunately President Mobutu nationalized universities, merging them into one National University of Zaire (UNAZA) with three campuses in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Kisangani. This decision brought Njoji Ben and his family to move to Kinshasa, and when Mobutu appointed him Rector of the University of Kisangani, Ben declined the offer. He prefers to return to the US to allow his daughters to have university studies in peace. He agreed to work for the Methodist University of Dallas with administrative responsibilities.