



Congo Centennial, The Second Fifty Years

by
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Dedicated to

Two Johnson newborns who remain
a part of Congo soil; and to the many
children of missionaries whose lives
were changed, for better or worse,
because of the decision of their parents
to be part of striving for a better life for
the people of Central Africa.

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I particularly appreciate the help of my wife, Sue, who read the manuscript numerous times as it progressed, and constantly insisted that it could be improved.

Much of the background for the book comes from our years of living in Congo, made possible by the support of the Division of Overseas Ministries, and the many Christians whose financial contributions sustained our work. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to share in the exciting events documented here. It is my hope that this book may help Americans realize the important relationship we have with the Church in Congo and stimulate a desire to continue sharing in this important part of the Kingdom of God.

INTRODUCTION

In 1949 Mr. Herbert Smith wrote a book entitled *Fifty Years in Congo* recording the history of the first fifty years of missionary work in Congo carried on by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). That book, published by the United Christian Missionary Society, pictures all the missionaries who served, along with brief biographical comments. The text describes the events and developments of the mission work by decade.

The present volume follows this general format. The introductory chapter pictures all those missionaries whose service began in the first fifty years but continued on after 1949. The brief summary intends to give a background to those who have not had the opportunity to know Mr. Smith's book.

The following chapters list the missionaries who went out in each decade and recount the important activities and changes in the mission work. Following the missionary's name is the African name given by the Congo church when this could be learned by the author. The common custom of giving an African name to the missionaries became less practiced in later years when Congolese became more familiar with European names. Therefore many of the missionaries in later years were known only by their European name.

This book is intended to be a history of missionaries and their work, and not a history of the Congo church. It is felt that a proper history of the church should be written by an African. The stories and events described in the book are those in which missionaries and mission funds were significantly involved.

The author is aware that this record is incomplete. Current addresses were not available for many of the missionaries making it impossible to verify the biographical information. There were no doubt significant activities unknown to the author, and not documented in the records available for research. Judgements concerning what should be included and what should be left out are always subject to criticism, and the author bears the responsibility for these decisions.

Having spent three terms working in Congo, the author has continued to be interested in the church there. Two additional short visits were also made in later years. A six year term of service as a member of the Board of Directors of the Division of Overseas Ministries helped to maintain close contact with missionary activity.

PLACE NAMES

During the period covered in this book the names of several important cities were changed. An effort has been made to use the name appropriate to the time discussed, but there are probably errors in this and overlap of the usage of the names. The following are the places important to Disciples whose names changed:

Coquilhatville (Coq).....Mbandaka
Leopoldville (Leo).....Kinshasa
Stanleyville.....Kisangani
Elizabethville.....Lumumbashi
Belgian Congo.....(Democratic) Republic of the Congo.....Zaire

Chairmen of Division of World Mission, Presidents of Division of Overseas Ministries

Virgil Sly --- 1950 to 1964

Mae Yoho Ward --- 1964 to 1967

T. J. Liggett --- 1967 to 1969

Robert Thomas --- 1969 to 1984

William Nottingham --- 1984 to 1994

Patricia Tucker Spier --- 1994 to present

Executives Responsible for Africa

Virgil Sly --- 1945 to 1956

Robert Nelson --- 1956 to 1981

Daniel Hoffman --- 1982 to present

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Foreword

“We welcome you not because of what you can do for us, but because we are bound together by the blood of Christ.” These words of Dr. Efele Elonda when he was General Secretary of the Disciples of Christ Community of the *Eglise du Christ au Congo*, challenge our theology of the Church. Relationships over the last fifty years between North American Disciples and God’s people of Equator Province in central Africa began as one-way mission and have become mutual sharing between churches of about equal size. This book shows how God caused that to happen through the lives of African Christians and the people who served among them in day-to-day friendship and solidarity in the name of Jesus.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada will be enriched by the account given here. We can be extremely grateful to Gene and Sue Johnson and all who helped compile this record. The Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville proved to be a repository of inestimable archival value and spiritual heritage. This missionary history shows on every page that Jesus Christ is not divided. The awareness of being one family with brothers and sisters in the Congo is important to all our congregations and signals the communion with churches in Asia, Latin America and elsewhere, as well. The Holy Spirit makes differences of culture and geography instruments of blessing rather than barriers of strangeness and indifference. In this book, we are reminded of God’s universal mission, which gives the world loving communities, the hope for peace and justice, and the message of salvation for every generation. We sincerely thank God for the missionaries and their families represented here and for the Christian Women’s Fellowship groups and many congregations that made their work possible.

Elected members of the Common Global Ministries Board for both the Disciples and the United Church of Christ are stewards of this partnership and bond in Christ, with Patricia Tucker Spier current president of the Division of Overseas Ministries and Daniel C. Hoffman executive secretary for Africa. The picture given us in this centennial book is one of accomplishment, warm friendships, and inspiration that anyone who ever went to Congo (or when it was Zaïre 1971 to 1997) has witnessed. Worship services in villages or in the packed houses of the cities leaves a profound impression. On Pentecost Sunday, 1992, the dedication of a new church at Yolo, a neighborhood of the capital Kinshasa, was a joyful service from 9:30 AM until 2:00 PM. There were six singing groups and choirs, an offering service which lasted forty minutes while everyone danced to the front of the sanctuary to place offerings in large baskets, preaching and exhortation for four hundred people crowded in the aisles and hanging in the windows from outside. A meditative communion service was led by both women and men serving as deacons, elders, and presiding clergy.

But the story is tragic, as well. The missionary expansion and exuberance of the years following World War II were shattered by the violent aftermath of colonialism, assassinations and geopolitical Cold War manipulation. The transition from being a mission in Africa to being an African church was interrupted by political instability, civil oppression and social vulnerability not once but time and again. The Survey of Service published by the United Christian Missionary Society in 1928 had said that the aim of the Africa Mission was that the indigenous church would “eventually be self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing; live its own life and work out its own problems as it studies the Word of God and is led of the Spirit.” The time of the church’s autonomy came when the nation and God’s people needed well-trained Congolese leadership the most! While the material progress hoped for

and expected was denied them, as projects were abandoned, and health and education ministries were destroyed and rebuilt again and again, the courage and pastoral care of men and women leaders was exceptional. They did not just replace the missionaries but became their administrators, planned new medical and seminary institutions, led in evangelistic mission, and took responsibility in the national crises, which effected everyone both physically and spiritually. In the midst of many problems, they extended Disciples of Christ ministries to a dozen communities in the neighboring country of Congo-Brazzaville. They look to the future.

The present call to cancel all or part of Congo's external debt is necessary, and there must be assurances that the benefits will accrue to the poor in grassroots social programs and economic development. This would mean help in the on-going story of this book for the life of the church and its ministries among the people. Increasing reciprocity with African friends and colleagues is what we look for on the basis of the decades described here. Our prayers, our offerings, our concern for Africa in the twenty-first century will be our sign of gratitude for this record of the last fifty years. A length of time like this makes the text "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever" particularly fitting.

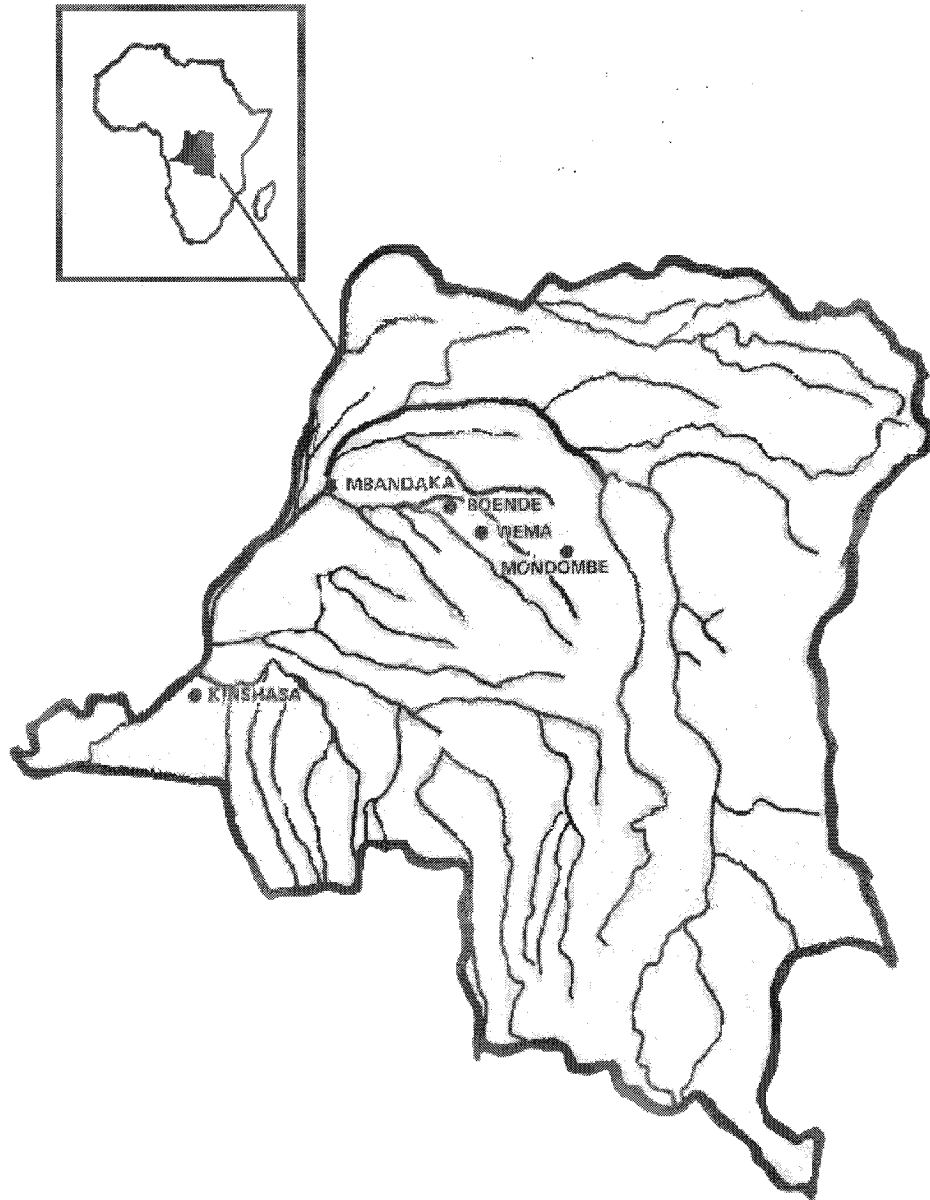
William J. Nottingham
President of the Division of Overseas Ministries 1984-94
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada

Time Line

The following is a list of the events considered to have been among the most important in the second fifty years.

- 1949: April, Golden Jubilee of the beginning of Disciple missionary work in Congo.
- 1950: Sale of the steamship, *Oregon*, which had been in service since 1910.
- 1952: Visit of Dr. A. Dale Fiers, President of the United Christian Missionary Society.
- 1953: Formal opening of the *Institut Médical Évangélique* in Kimpese.
Construction of Dye Memorial Church in Bolenge.
Visit of Rosa Page Welch.
- 1956: April, Death of Robin Cobble at Monieka.
Robert Nelson selected to replace Virgil Sly as executive secretary for Africa.
November, Showing of film, *Monganga*, on national TV depicting Lotumbe medical work.
- 1957: Establishment of Boende as a post.
Protestant bookstore opened in Coquilhatville.
- 1958: August, First Congress of DCCM, replacing the Field Conference of missionaries.
Worlds Fair in Brussels, Belgium.
- 1959: Protestant Theological Faculty opened in Elizabethville.
- 1960: Radios installed at all mission stations.
June 30, Independence Day, transition from Belgian Congo to Republic of the Congo.
July, Evacuation of missionaries from Congo.
- 1961: School for missionary children inaugurated at Monieka.
UCMS adopts new Strategy for World Mission document.
School for girls started in Bolenge.
- 1962: United Theological School started in Ndesha (Luluabourg).
First mission airplane put into use.
Beginning of revision of Lonkundo Bible.
- 1963: Trustee Commission visits Africa.
Opening of first Protestant University in Stanleyville called "Free University of Congo."
- 1964: July, Formal transfer of legal status from mission to church was completed.
August, Evacuation of upriver stations because of "Simba" rebellion.
- 1965: March, Congo Consultation held in Indianapolis.
- 1966: February, Protestant bookstore opened in Coquilhatville.
- 1967: First upriver secondary school opened in Boende.
Girls' school transferred to new buildings in Mbandaka, the first secondary school for girls only.
Opening of *Association Médicale Oecuménique* at Boende hospital.
- 1968: October, Airplane accident fatal for three missionaries.
- 1969: Bible Institutes held by Walter Cardwell.
- 1971: Name of country changed to Zaïre.

- 1971: Nationalization of Free University of Congo. Theological Faculty moved to Kinshasa.
- 1972: Airplane ownership by the church discontinued after another accident.
- 1973: Initiation of housing project in Mbandaka.
November, First meeting of board of Division of Overseas Ministries, replacing Division of World Mission after Restructure.
- 1974: *World Call* discontinued and *The Disciple* began publishing.
- 1976: Fraternal visit to Africa by 19 national staff.
- 1978: Fiftieth anniversary of Zaïre Christian Institute.
- 1980: Zaïre consultation at Christmount.
- 1981: Dan Hoffman follows Robert Nelson as executive for Africa for DOM.
- 1983: Construction begun for new Bolenge hospital.
- 1985: Dr. Nottingham, President of DOM, visits Zaïre.
- 1987: New church in Lemba (Kinshasa) dedicated.
New radio installations performed by Dan Owen.
- 1988: Disciples celebration tour with 27 visitors to Zaïre.
- 1989: Beginning of evangelistic work in Congo-Brazzaville.
Joint Ministry in Africa formed, uniting DOM and UCBWM Africa offices.
- 1990: Establishment of the Protestant University of Congo.
- 1991: Dedication of church sanctuary for Secretariat in Mbandaka.
September, Evacuation of missionaries from Mbandaka and Bolenge.
- 1992: October, Final evacuation of missionaries from Mbandaka and Bolenge.
- 1993: February, Departure of missionaries from Zaïre.
- 1995: First Congolese selected as associate missionary.
- 1996: Formal creation of Common Global Ministries Board.
- 1997: May, Government of Mobutu overthrown, replaced by Kabila.
Name of country changed back to Congo
- 1999: April, Congo Centennial celebrated in Indianapolis.



Map of Zaïre (Congo)

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
ABFMS	American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society
AMO	<i>Association Médicale Oecuménique</i> (Boende)
BMS	British Missionary Society (Baptist)
C&MA	Christian and Missionary Alliance
CDCZ	<i>Communauté de Disciples de Christ au Zaïre</i> (Disciples Community in Zaïre)
CGMB	Common Global Ministries Board
CTS	Christian Theological Seminary
CWF	Christian Women's Fellowship
DARF	Disciples Amateur Radio Fellowship
DCC	Disciples of Christ in Congo
DCCM	Disciples of Christ Congo Mission
DCZ	Disciples of Christ in Zaïre
DOM	Division of Overseas Ministries
EBB	Christian Women's Fellowship
ECC	<i>Église du Christ au Congo</i> (Church of Christ in Congo)
ECZ	<i>Église du Christ au Zaïre</i> (Church of Christ in Zaïre)
ICC	<i>Institut Chrétien du Congo</i> (Congo Christian Institute)
ICZ	<i>Institut Chrétien du Zaïre</i> (Zaïre Christian Institute)
IME	<i>Institut Médical Évangélique</i>
LECO	<i>Librairie Évangélique au Congo</i>
SMF	Swedish Baptist Mission
SSB	Single side band
TASOK	The American School of Kinshasa
UCBWM	United Church Board for World Ministries
UCC	United Church of Christ
UCMS	United Christian Missionary Society
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization