



A detailed map of Africa, showing various countries, cities, and geographical features. The map includes labels for countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, and Namibia. Major cities like Cairo, Khartoum, Lagos, Accra, Abidjan, Kinshasa, Luanda, and Walvis Bay are marked. Geographical features include the Red Sea, Gulf of Guinea, Lake Chad, Lake Nasser, and Mount Kilimanjaro. The map also shows major rivers like the Nile, Niger, Benue, and Congo. A large black circle is overlaid on the left side of the map, partially obscuring it. The background is orange.

Worship Resources for Congo Week, October 19-24

Call to Worship

One: God of all creation, we come to worship you.

All: Creator of every adult, youth, and child, we come to rejoice in you.

One: Maker of the heavens and the earth, please open us to your transforming grace.

All: God of liberation and life, may our acts of worship be a witness of your peace. As we lift our voices in praise, may our hearts and our hands be united in partnership with You and with our brothers and sisters in Congo.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful and mighty God, we thank you for allowing us to come before with honesty and humility. Please forgive us when our actions lead to the oppression of others. Please forgive us when we ignore the pains and the joys of our neighbors near and far. When we feel like we can make no difference in the face of injustice and suffering, please redeem us and set us free with the good news that you are a God through whom all things are possible. When despair threatens to overwhelm, please fill us with your Spirit of hope and lead us forth with your saving love which knows no bounds. Amen.

Litany of Dedication

One: Giver of every breath, with gratitude that reaches beyond our words, we desire to offer you our best.

All: God of abundant blessings, we dedicate our lives to you. We seek to live out your purposes. We thank you for inviting us to be part of your mission in the world.

One: We thank you for designing each of your children with unique gifts, personalities, and experiences to be used for your glory.

All: We thank you for the generosity you shower upon us. We desire to return your blessings of time, talents, and treasures with cheerful hearts. Please make them one with the gifts of our partners that all may live together in your community of compassion, justice, peace, and love. Amen.

(By the Rev. Sarah Haas, Associate Pastor, Friedens United Church of Christ, Indianapolis, IN)

Litany

Nzambe (God), Transform our Compassion into Action

For the Congolese man caught up in war and mistrust and the power of the elite, who feels trapped by circumstance and has no easy solutions, who searches for a way to survive and find a livelihood,

Nzambe, transform our compassion into action.

For the Congolese widow whose husband died in a war over rocks in the ground, who sells fish or makes soap or sews in hopes of providing enough food or shelter from the night, who is afraid to walk alone through the tropical fields, and who wants their children to have a better life.

Nzambe, transform our compassion into action.

For the Congolese children who ache to learn to read or write but don't have schools or teachers or books or money. For those without enough to eat, or wear, or safe water to drink, who gaze with frightened eyes because life is not safe or carefree or guaranteed.

Nzambe, transform our compassion into action.

For the Congolese doctors who agonize over the children they can't reach or treat because the distance is too far, the medicines are not available, and the needs are too great, who watch little ones die of cholera for lack of access to what they need.

Nzambe, transform our compassion into action.

For the Congolese church that seeks to heal the wounds, whose spiritual wealth outweighs its material means, yet speaks hope to the suffering, provides opportunities and schools, builds wells and hospitals, that leads in ways of peace and praise, that gives heart and soul to serving God.

Nzambe, transform our compassion into action.

(By Mrs. Cheryl Sybrant, First Christian Church, Fayetteville, AR, Traveler to Congo August 2012)

Song from the Congo Nzambe

Osungaka Afrika. (God Help

Africa)

One sings this song to the tune of Nkosi Sikelele Afrika (God Bless Africa), which is used in many African nations as a National Anthem.

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|----|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. | Nzambe osungaka Afrika, | help Africa |
| | pesa bato moindo moi na yo, | Give your people your light |
| | ete tolongwaka na mabe, | So that our sins may be removed na |
| | lobiko be na yooo, | Forever with you, |
| | na lobiko be na yo. | Forever with you |
| 2. | Opambola mpe mikolo kwa, | Bless our days (on earth) |
| | bango mpe batata na biso, | Bless our fathers |
| | Yebisa mikonzi mayele, | Give our leaders wisdom |
| | Ete bamemisa yooo, | That they may follow you |
| | Ete bamemisa yo. | That they follow you |
| 3. | Kati na mosala tika ete, | Within our work place, may |
| | tokokisa mpe kobanga te, | We prove capable and fear not |
| | mpe toyekola mayele be, | That we learn wisdom |
| | mpe tolosa solo yooo, | And obey only you |
| | mpe tolosa solo yo. | And obey only you |
| 4. | Kati na ndako na biso, | Within our homes ekokola |
| | bana na biso, | Help our children to grow |
| | osunga bamama na biso, | Help our mothers |
| | pesa mpe bolingo beee, | Give us love |
| | pesa mpe bolingo be. | Give us love |

Réf.: Mobikisi, Klisto Yesu,
na Congo
opambola, obongisa.

Chorus: Healer, Christ Jesus awa
Here in Congo
Bless it and arrange it

Nzambe osungaka Africa



Prayers from the Congo

(By the Rev. Clement Mputu, Vice President of the 10th Community of Disciples of Christ au Congo)

There are many categories of prayers, but we have chosen three categories of persons giving prayer.

- **Children**

Children are first concerned with food, for the expression that always comes from the mouth of at least 99% of children in Congo is "I am hungry." A child even said that one should not have to wait for the Sunday service to repeat the Lord's Prayer, especially the part that says, "Give us today our daily bread," because one is hungry even before going to the service. One should say this prayer the first thing in the morning.

Children also need education to succeed and good health because illness is their daily fate in the Congo.

Children's Prayer:

God, we thank you for having protected us during the night. We ask that you give us enough good food to eat (sufficient in quality and quantity). Give us intelligence so that we may succeed at school. And we pray that you will heal those who are sick (grandmother, grandfather, sister, small brother, young sister, father, mother). We pray that you will protect us throughout the day, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

- **Intellectuals**

They are often concerned with work, decent salaries, the war, politics, and justice.

The Intellectuals' Prayer

God, great and formidable, whose love is immeasurable, we realize that you come to our aid daily despite all the difficulties we face. Thank you for giving us intelligence and people who assist us with our studies. Yet, at the end of our studies, we see that the doors of work opportunities are still closed. We pray that you will open them so that we can have work. We pray that you will help those in power to convert themselves, and in cases to the contrary, that you will give us other leaders who allow themselves to be guided by you so that they lead the country with love and equity. From day to day, we suffer from injustice at all levels. No authority can render true justice in Congo. Even the war that reigns today in our country is the fruit of internal and external justice. God of justice, what are you waiting for to bring justice? We only have you as a true judge. Extend your hand so that one day we can smile, and the world will realize that the God in whom we have confidence is the only true God. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen!

- **The Clergy**

The clergy's reflections are similar to the intellectuals'. Still, they add particular instances, such as peace, social situations with their harmful consequences (such as some traditional practices, delinquents, epidemics, HIV/AIDS, etc.). This social situation compromises marital harmony in many homes. It is also necessary to highlight the heavy burden placed on the church because of this situation; what the state or government should do is being done by the church.

Clergy's Prayer

Loving God, you who never tire of listening to us, here we are again before you; accept our pleas. If the situation in the Congo is the result of our sins and those of our ancestors, we ask that you forgive us and that the Holy Spirit guide us.

We pray to you so that you grant peace to Congo, our nation, and also in the hearts of each Congolese. Before returning to you, your son left us with a peace different from that of the world. Peace is precious, and we want to keep it. We also pray for the social situation in Congo. We live from day to day by miracles, whereas in your plan, humankind must not live by miracles but by the fruit of one's labor. On a regular basis, your children cannot obey the instructions of Christ, prohibiting worrying about food and clothing in Matthew 6:28-30. This uncertainty is so huge

that one cannot help but think about it. Some of your children have chosen the path of delinquency that leads to destruction to find justice. Some children are condemned to live in the street because they have been accused of being sorcerers, whereas God, you know that they are not. AIDS continues its path despite human efforts; if you don't intervene, this will be a lost effort. Look at the epidemics that have become endemic and the couples and families that are regularly in danger.

Your servants that you have chosen feel incapable of giving solutions to problems presented by the multitude of people with their eyes fixed on them, for your servants suffer in the same way that all the Congolese suffer. Grant us everything necessary so that we may continue to serve you in a normal way. In the name of Jesus Christ, our savior and our role model. Amen.

Prayers for the Congo

Let us pray:

Nzámbé, Heavenly God, Great Physician,

We praise you for the blessing of the Bolenge Hospital. We have seen your hand in its work since it was established many years ago. You were present as community members saved patients from perishing in the fire. You continue to shower your blessings as funds have been made available to rebuild the hospital facilities. Thank you almighty God for showing your love for the people of Congo by sending people and facilities that provide health care.

We ask you to continue to bless the pediatric wing as your children are cared for. Be with the staff and those they care for. You continue to bless your people by providing funds to build the maternity wing, a building dedicated to bringing new life into the world. Fill that structure with life and your light, as it is equipped with beds and equipment. Watch over the dedicated craftsmen beginning the construction of the surgery/general medicine wing. Praise you, great God, for the talents and gifts that make such buildings possible.

This new construction brings renewed hope as the partnership between your people here and abroad continues. This great work reinforces the presence of the Disciples of Christ in the Congo. Be with the people of the DRC and with us as we care for one another physically and spiritually.

Amen

(By Mrs. Stephanie Line, Galesburg Christian Church, Galesburg, IL, Traveler to the Congo August, 2012)

Reflection from the Congo

SOCIAL SITUATION

Drinking Water

Most of the Congolese population uses water that is not fit for consumption, which can carry many diseases. If this situation continues, epidemics will not cease in the Congo.

Insignificant Salaries

Because of the meager salaries that the Congolese receive, the fight against corruption will not succeed. Children start taking care of themselves very early in life and are exposed to different scourges such as rape, early pregnancies, and early parenthood. Some children choose the road to rebellion and are considered sorcerers, consequently living in the streets. Because of a need for money, many teachers no longer do their jobs as they should, and Congo's future is somber. Many people die because of the inadequate health care facilities in certain regions. There are places where people have to walk more than 20 kilometers on foot to reach a health center. Many people die on their way to the health center, which is often the case with women who die during childbirth.

Bad Governance

Bad governance is the basis of all the difficulties that the Congolese people confront internally or within the country. Curiously, some politicians defend themselves by saying that bad governance in the Congo is wanted and supported by the foreign powers. The Congolese people will never see a good manager heading the country because every plan that promotes a good life in the Congo is defeated. This argument is not very much supported, but certain realities make one believe that there is some truth in the argument. For example, the international community speaks of and intervenes quickly in situations in other countries, in contrast to its actions in Congo. Kenya and the Ivory Coast were seen receiving support when there were problems after their elections. However, for Congo, one limits its responses to weak declarations. The solution to the war in the East today will be in the international community's interest, but never for the people of Congo. The Ugandan President, an enemy of the Congo (for he also has been listed as an aggressor of Congo just as the Rwandan president has been), has been chosen to facilitate the formation of a neutral force to be deployed to the East to combat the rebels. No Congolese can believe that such a person will play a role in favor of Congo. Whereas Rwanda attacks the Congo in the knowledge and sight of the international community, all actions taken against Rwanda are proof of a certain sympathy and pity under the pretext that there is not enough space for the Rwandan population and that it is necessary to give them a part of Congo. But we all know that China is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, and China has never attempted to attack its neighbors to find additional space. The genocide, which was supported by the world powers, seemed to be against the Tutsi, whereas there were also attacks against the Hutu. Since that time until today, the number of Rwandese who have died does not reach the number of Congolese who perished because of the invasion of Rwanda into Congo. Despite all that, strong measures have not been taken to force Rwanda to leave East Congo. Had Congo been the attacker, very serious measures would have been taken against Congo. For example, it has been 20 years since an arms embargo was placed on the Congo. Is that not a plan to make the Congo very fragile?

Taking the country's wealth as an inherited right by the international community without considering those against this only impoverishes Congo even more. One takes good care of

Congo and its wealth of forests, minerals, water, chimpanzees, okapi..) without concerning oneself with the Congolese people. Almost every year, the number of Congolese who die is indeed higher than the number of the entire population in certain countries, and that is not known by the population of most people in the Western world, so that they can pressure their governments to bring a change in the situation.

We stop here as we think we have given what is essential. The Congo has many problems and we cannot say everything.

May God bless you!

Reflection from the US

(By Cheryl Sybrant, Fayetteville Christian Church, Fayetteville, AR)

It's hard to answer the question people ask when you return. "How was the trip to Congo?" There are too many emotions and thoughts all tangled together. How do you boil an experience into the expected "sound bite" when so many words define it?

Amazing, exhausting, inspiring, faith-filled, saturated with joy and praise, powerful, culturally challenging, spiritual, uplifting, scary, beautiful, humid, heart-breaking, and heart-mending could each illustrate their own stories.

This trip was mostly a lesson in perspective, a study in contrast, between the material means we often place our trust in and the spiritual wealth I witnessed in Congo. We have so much to learn.

I wish more people could witness offering time in Congo! Rather than quietly waiting for the "tray to be hurriedly passed down the pew," old and young sing and dance forward to the front of the church. They drop what money they have into baskets for various church ministries. The experience is a testament to what stewardship should represent—joy, thanksgiving, and giving back what's already God's.

And God knows there is need. There is a constant struggle: to stay alive, to have enough food, to have safe water, to have medical care, or a school for your child. The list is overwhelming. But the more I listened and observed, the more I learned that the people we met put their trust and faith in God, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church provides, somehow, against all odds.

It builds schools, hospitals, and medical clinics, digs wells for entire villages, and provides doctors with economic opportunities for survival. The church is not contained in a building; it embraces the entire community. And by the grace of God, its servants *"lift up those who are bowed down, uphold the widow and the fatherless, keep the faith, execute justice for the oppressed, give food to the hungry."* I saw the God of Psalm 146 working in the flesh through the 10th Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo (CDCC) and the efforts of Global Ministries. Their faith and dedication provide the means to accomplish great things amid suffering and struggle.

At the CDCC Headquarters in Mbandaka, we met the Christian Women's Fellowship group

from 23 different districts throughout Congo. They are another testament to spiritual wealth. They came for a two-week training session to learn more about the mission and vision of the church so they could apply it back home in their districts.

They used their own money; some traveled for weeks by foot and canoe just to get there. One woman walked 186 miles to attend! In a country with a reputation for being “the most dangerous place to be a woman,” what faith!



In Brazzaville, where we visited the Church of the Disciples of Christ in Congo (EDCC), we got another reminder of what it means to praise the Lord despite the surrounding circumstances. The congregation we visited lost four members during an ammunition depot explosion in March, which took 3,200 lives, destroyed schools and the hospital, and damaged buildings miles across the river into Kinshasa.

Signs are posted not to step on live hand grenades or ammunition. Tents are set up, and people live in what's left of homes. But on a Thursday, the congregation waited hours for our arrival and a chance to worship and show hospitality.

One choir traveled over 600 miles to sing. With heart and soul, they lifted up praise. A young man on guitar played “How Great Thou Art” while the minister prayed. I



felt so unworthy because I could only think, “God, things don’t look so great.” But despite the destruction around them, they spoke with incredible perspective and compassion. The minister gave each of us a small purse with a map of Africa and a selfless directive: *“When you go back home don’t only be ambassadors for Brazzaville; be ambassadors for Africa, because there are places worse off than we are.”*

I pray God empowers us and guides us to fulfill that request.

Reflection from the US

(By the Rev. Eugene James, Regional Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Michigan Region)

A Reflection from Time with the Saints in Congo

There is a saying with which most of us are familiar: “You don’t miss your water until the well runs dry.” How about first having to find water to miss? Coming home to running water I could actually drink made vivid the point of just how blessed I am to live in a community where it is taken for granted. During our time in Mbandaka, we visited two clean water sources developed by the church and witnessed firsthand just how critical they are to the community. There was a steady stream of persons, mostly women and children, coming down the path to the water source with buckets and containers of various sizes to obtain water to carry back to their homes. They filled the containers, balanced them on their heads, and made their way back up the hill and onto the road to their distant homes. I particularly remember one young mother with her three children, probably ranging in age from six to twelve years old, standing tall in her determined dignity, telling us that life for her family was hard, and having a clean water source was very important to them. The image of her youngest child, who turned to watch me walk up the path with a bucket of water almost as tall as she was, balanced on her head, is burned into my memory forever. None of the children whined or complained about it being difficult to walk up the path or the containers of water being too heavy. They simply did what had to be done. What a profound example of shared responsibility for children in our privileged society.