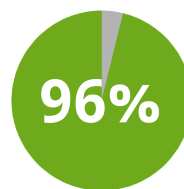


**JOURNALS** POSTED ON OCTOBER 23, 2015

## New University



GLEN & RITA CHAPMAN



SUPPORT PLEDGED



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Dear Friends,

A new day has dawned at Kikongo! For those of you who have followed our lives during the past three years, you know that this has been our most difficult term as missionaries in the Congo. We have been tormented by much conflict. Conflict with the state officials, the local chiefs, witchcraft, the youth, syncretistic movements in the church, illness, division, departure of key people, etc., etc. During this time, we have also seen the enrollment in the pastoral school declining. This past week, we have become aware that the voices of discord and opposition have been silenced.

On Friday, we had the inauguration of the “Baptist University in Congo” (UNIBAC). The newly elected general secretary of our Baptist denomination was here, along with other academic leaders. What was just a seemingly unreachable dream has become a reality. A reality that everyone has bought in to and which people are happy to claim ownership of. Kikongo, which had a reputation during the past couple of years as a place of conflict and division, has come together to give birth to something very special.

In the pastoral training program, although we have had a good program to train rural pastors, the number of new students continued to dwindle. Being a village pastor is considered volunteer work. It is very difficult to raise a family and send your children to school on a village pastor’s salary. The certificate that we offered did not permit our graduates to teach even in high school level. Those who had a calling to ministry ended up going to the city to study in the Protestant seminary.

In order to avoid falling into irrelevancy, we are adapting our program. We are moving the pastoral training up to University level. Our graduates will be trained to be either rural or urban pastors, and will be able to teach in the high schools as well. Many of the pastors in this country earn their income as a teacher, but are by profession pastors. In addition to theology training, we are adding agriculture, and teacher training. These three majors are the building blocks of rural society. At the last count, we have enrolled over 60 young men and women. Compare this to our last enrollment of only six.

We have some really incredible people who are working together to help raise up this brand new University. The Rev. Dr. Nkwim, my childhood friend, is the Rector of the University. He has other responsibilities in Kinshasa, so I am his vice rector here at Kikongo. Dr. Nkwim has just returned from a few months as an associate professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena. The man giving the first classes on “How to be good citizens” is a former minister in the Congo National government. He held a post similar to the secretary of defense. We hope to have visiting professors from all over, including the U.S.

Our vision here is to train men and women of integrity who will be able to build the nation in a rural environment. So much of the land is falling into chaos and deeper poverty because of ignorance and sorcery. As I see the excitement of our new students and their thirst for knowledge, I know that ignorance and sorcery are losing out. People want the alternative. They are hungry for a firm Biblical foundation. They seek skills that will lead to employment, values that will be foundational for good management of the community, and environmental morals of managing the land in a responsible and sustainable way.

Pastor Mafwanikisa, who is the associate general secretary, reminded us of Kikongo’s heritage. It is here at Kikongo that he attended his first Sunday School classes. Pastor Mafwanikisa’s father was in the very first graduating class of village pastors when this school was first founded. Several of those who went on to be general Secretary of the denomination had their pastoral training foundation here at Kikongo.

Our theme verse for the year is taken from Philippians 3:16: "However, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained". NASB

This school has such a good track record in proving godly rural church leadership. The challenge will be to work on keeping that same focus for the graduates in the University level. We have put up with a lot of conflict during the past years. It seemed like so much was deteriorating around us. By God's grace we stuck it out, and finally, it is good to be witness to positive change.

Sincerely, Glen and Rita