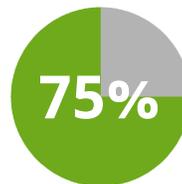


**JOURNALS** POSTED ON JANUARY 27, 2015

## Translating lay pastor training course with Pastor Makwala



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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Some of you know that in June I unexpectedly started rather intense work on the Lingala revision of CBCO's lay pastor training program. Lay pastors are an important part of the organization of rural churches in Congo, given that most pastors are circuit-riders responsible for congregations in multiple villages. Elements of the program are also very useful for pastors and deacons in urban churches.

The Lingala version had been on my agenda ever since Brother Thomas and I finished the program revision in Kituba in early 2012. I had expected to find someone to just do it on their own. That proved harder than expected. In June I met up with Pastor Makwala, an old retired pastor and Bible translator. He explained his situation: in poor health, no pension, grandchildren dependent on him. He asked for help.

In past years I had often visited Pastor Makwala's church. He had planted many churches and he had faithfully pastored difficult congregations. He had worked with my parents on the first versions of the lay pastors' training program. Immediately I thought he might enjoy translating the new Lingala version. And it would give him a reasonable income supplement for a while. I gave Pastor Makwala the materials to work on and showed him what needed to be done. Then Ed and I left for 6 weeks in the U.S. for International Ministries' Bicentennial celebrations.

When I returned, I saw that he had lost sight of the translation task; he had merely proofread what he had in hand. His still has a keen proofreader's eye. His skill at oral translation is undiminished. Still, it was evident that he needed someone to keep him on task to accomplish the translation. It was also plain that walking from his house to mine for work sessions would be too much for his weak heart.

So most afternoons since the middle of August I have been working with Pastor Makwala at his house. It is just a few minutes away by taxi-bus. Together we discuss the text for each lesson, revise and translate into Lingala. The best part of project is wrestling together with the material in each lesson. This week we were contemplating how Christian families and others deal with the birth and raising of congenitally handicapped children. What does the Bible have to say? What does life hold for these children? What are the responsibilities of parents and the church?

Pastor Makwala's comments on the Kituba version have improved and enriched the Lingala version. In 2010-2012 Brother Thomas and I found it difficult to find rural pastors with the critical thinking skills necessary to give the text a serious review. Pastor Makwala has the time and the experience to correct that weakness.

The program is divided into 5 training modules of more or less 40 lessons. We are  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way through the third module: Doctrine and Practice. The work is stimulating. In fact it has been reviving the good pastor. Ill health has kept him from getting to church and participating, let alone contributing. Before June, he was spending a good part of his days in bed, deteriorating. Now he has a reason to get out of bed, a chance to contribute again in a meaningful way, and the work is exercising his mind and using his pastoral experience. His wife, Mama Jeannette, is grateful.

They do need the money. Pastor Makwala and Jeanette are raising 5 orphaned grandchildren and paying for their education. The architect-contractor son who normally supports them has gone through a rough spot recently. Mama Jeannette dyes batik cloth and sells it to support them. She also does some urban farming. I bring them contributions from my garden sometimes. Some of your donations to "the work of Ed and Miriam Noyes"

have been funding this translation effort. Perhaps by the time we have finished the translation, maybe the end of March, their son will be able to take up the level of support for them again that he used to give.

The association has been a positive experience for me too. I didn't know Mama Jeannette well before, but she was one of the founding members of the Baptist Women's organization in the 60s, the first president of the urban women later, then a founder of the pastors' wives association. This year we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the CBCO women's organization. Recording her memories has been an unexpected blessing.

Many people in the Baptist Convention continue to press us to finish the Lingala lay pastor training modules. You may remember that the Twa pygmy evangelist who leads a church in Inongo (planted through our literacy work) has only one week of formal training with Campus Crusade. He needs and is looking forward to learning from this Lingala lay pastor training program, as is the leader of the other pygmy congregation in Inongo. At the Baptist convention meetings in November I was inundated with requests from pastors on the south Bateke plateau and those in the Bayaka people's area. Pastor Makwala keeps remarking on how much the leaders he knows in the Kinshasa churches need it.

The urgency of these demands push us ahead. The task was unexpected. The work is time-consuming, at times frustrating. But it is a rich experience. And we know that the finished training program will help many lay pastors slogging on with minimal guidance to be more effective leaders and disciplers of people trying to follow Christ faithfully.

Pastor Makwala and I thank you for the chance to contribute in this way to the health of the church here in Congo.

*Reminder: for a more printer-friendly version of this journal (with pictures embedded) you may want to look at our blog here: <http://noyescongo.blogspot.com/2015/01/by-miriam-noyes-some-of-you-know-that.html>*