

July 31, 2007

Dear Ministry Partners,

Thank you so much for praying for, caring about, and helping us minister to the wonderful people of Congo. From 1938 to the present, the heart of Laban Ministries has continued to pump out the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the veins of FAITH. Its heartbeat has been steady through the rhythm of evangelism and Bible training. No organization has ever underwritten Laban. Its underwriters are you, God's people, and we say unequivocally that we cannot do what we do without you! We are your voice, fingers, and feet, crying, stretched out, and traveling to a distant land to proclaim the ETERNAL WORD OF GDO, which along with His Name He exults, honors, and continues to preserve at the highest level.

This all began with Dr. and Mrs. Laban Herbert Smith. Their memory is very much alive in our hearts as well as in the hearts of our brothers and sisters at and around Nkara. So much so that, had it been necessary, they would have been willing to fight to the death to preserve Jim's life and the property given to Dr. Smith in the late forties that we wrote about in the last newsletter. Ministry roots are deep, 69 years deep, in the Congo. We eat, sleep, and drink it. It is our heritage, our legacy. They are our people. We are family. Our connection with them and their connection with us is tightly interwoven. That connection intertwined with the Holy Spirit results in a cord that cannot be easily broken. You who pray for and support this work are a vital part of that tapestry as well. We often think of what joy will fill your hearts when you meet the ones who came to our Matchless Savior because you prayed and gave!

As in the past so now also we desperately need you to stand with us. For the past 15 years, there has been a steady tug at our hearts to move our headquarters to Nashville, TN. We have prayed and fasted over this move time and time again. The decision has not been made lightly or carried out impulsively. We have handed it completely over to the Lord so that we would be in line with God's timing. Our desire was to earnestly wait for His plans to develop regarding us, Psalm 106:13. Two of our children and their spouses and families live there. We held our first Laban banquet in Nashville this past January, and the response was gratifying. It appears to be a good location to which to move Laban. Our board is agreeable. The climate is more desirable. Detroit area will still be a hub for us. We will continue to hold our annual banquet here and visit our supporting churches. WE ARE NOT RETIRING! We are just moving to a new location. Ministries do this all the time. Our home was put on the market in the Spring of 2006, and no palpable interest was expressed until April, 2007, when we were in Congo. The potential buyers have just recently shown serious intentions. By the end of September we will know the outcome. Therefore, we want to prepare you for a possible move this fall.

Our big goal for the next year is to build one of the hospital wings. With cement now at \$25 a bag, we are looking at \$30,000 just for enough blocks. That's not to mention the cement mixers we will need and other equipment plus the extra nationals we need to hire to get the job done. All the stones and sand for mixing cement blocks have to be hand dug and purchased from various villages and sites. The trees must be cut and purchased from the forests. Will you pray for wisdom, strength, and God's blessing on this project? Psalm 9:18 says, "For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the expectation and hope of the meek and the poor shall not perish forever." Their cries have been heard in God's heavenly dwelling and have come before Him into His very ears, Psalm 18:6. Therefore, . . . "in You, O Lord, do we hope; You will answer, O Lord my God." Psalm 38:15.

Thank you for continuing to invest in the Kingdom of God in Congo. God loves the poor, referring to them over 200 times in Scripture. He also delights in our generosity to the poor. ". . . He (the benevolent person) scatters abroad; He gives to the poor; His deeds of justice and kindness and benevolence will go on and endure forever." Further, in II Corinthians 9:12 and 13, we are told that our giving "does not only fully supply what is lacking to the saints (God's people), but it also overflows in many cries of thanksgiving to God. Because at your standing of the test of this ministry, they will glorify God for your loyalty and obedience to the Gospel of Christ which you confess, as well as for your generous-hearted liberality to them and to all the other needy ones." Don't you love it? Someday, payday. Until then, let's keep spending and be spent for God.

Jim and Nancy Smith