

June, 2006

Dear Friends,

Our departure for Congo is coming closer—July 3. Just a few days ago, we received an email from Pastor Mbuku Kaba, outlining plans for evangelism this summer, early fall, and into December. It prompted us to think about some of the prices he has paid to be Dean of Evangelism, and we want to share his story with you.

Pastor Mbuku came to us as a young man from the regional government center of Bulungu to enter Laban Bible Institute back in 1981. Among the female students was a gal by the name of Therese, and after completing their three years at Laban, they were married. Mbuku had an intense desire to reach the lost, and so we sent him on to evangelism school in Kinshasa. After completing their year-long program, he came back to Nkara to head up our outreach ministry there.

One day the cries of death reached our ears at Nkara. You see, the Africans approach grieving much differently from the way we approach it. Their way is loud crying and chanting, many times as if talking to the dead body. In Mbuku and Therese's case, it was the gut wrenching sounds of mourning for their 18-month old baby girl, who, even at that young age, already sang songs she learned in Sunday School. The innocent child's voice was suddenly hushed for time, and Jim caught on video Pastor Mbuku rehearsing some of the lyrics his little girl had memorized as he broke down and wept. Mbuku asked Jim to preach the funeral, and Jim comforted the family by telling them that the Lord wanted their baby girl in heaven to sing His praises; Heaven needed to hear her songs.

As if the loss of one child was not enough, they faced death years later with their little boy, who suffered with a leg malady and, after exhausting the very limited medical resources to no avail in Kinshasa and Vanga, he died at the age of eight. The wounds death inflicted on Therese from the loss of two precious children began surfacing. Her heartbeat became irregular, and it was as if the lights had gone out of her eyes. For years she couldn't find strength to climb the smallest hill. Two beautiful daughters have survived malaria-infested Congo, and just this past year the Lord gave them another little girl who is the delight of the whole family.

Through it all, Mbuku has remained absolutely faithful. Psalm 5:12 reminds us of him, "For you, Lord will bless the uncompromisingly righteous; as with a shield You will surround him with goodwill and favor." Pastor Mbuku wants to take our region of Bandundu by storm. He lives, breathes, and eats evangelism. Look at the schedule he sent us:

June 7 – June 18	Idiofa to Gombe	80 miles round trip
July 5 – July 7	Gungu to Kafumba	400 miles round trip
August 11 – August 13	Fumu Nzoko	30 miles round
August 25 – September 10	Busobe	400 miles round trip
September 28 - October 8	Dibaya Lubwe to Mangai	400 miles round trip
October 15 – December 20	Surrounding villages	125 miles round trip

Keep in mind that these are Congo miles. That means no Interstate highways, no expressways, nopaved roads where we are, only paths and sometimes not even a path. The truck carrying everyone will average the breakneck speed of 12 miles per hour.

Pastor Mbuku has asked for a solo guitar, an amplifier, 15 barrels of diesel fuel, 2 barrels of gas to run the generator, and money for food for each trip for 50 people, as all the students will get hands on experience, including six musicians. The generator they are using is actually the one we use for electricity for our house, so we must take another one. We need a 5,000 watt diesel Honda generator to give to the evangelism department so we can get our old one back. Nancy does not relish sitting in the dark from 6 p.m. on every night, and neither do I. I'm sure you wouldn't. In addition, the leadership has requested we rent the MAF plane to take them to Busobe. So we are looking at a cost for all of the above, excluding the generator, of \$7,320. How can we put a price tag on souls? God has placed eternity in the hearts of men and women (Eccles. 3:11), some of whom will meet up with Mbuku and the team this year. But the team must be sent. Your faithfulness to this work astounds us, and we are confident that because you continue to invest in Laban, many, many souls will come to Christ in each of these evangelism campaigns.

Join us in prayer for this massive undertaking. Pray II Corinthians 2:15 with us, that we may be "the sweet fragrance of Christ which exhales unto God, discernible alike among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." Verse 16 goes on to say, "To the latter it is an aroma wafted from death to death (a fatal odor, the smell of doom); to the former it is an aroma from life to life (a vital fragrance, living and fresh). And who is qualified (fit and sufficient) for these things? Who is able for such a ministry? We?"

What a privilege to go to Congo and work with people who get fired up about the Gospel, whose meat and drink is being occupied with God's Word, whose God is the Lord, who drop whatever they are doing to run to a prayer meeting and think nothing of staying up all night to pray, whose spiritual energy rubs off onto many people they touch, and who are so willing to inconvenience themselves to follow the Lord. The great news is that we are not the only ones going; yes, physically we go, but we are your representatives as are they because without you, how would all of this take place? Missionaries have to pay for fuel, food, generators, film, and flights just like you do, so without your gifts you can imagine where we all would be.

Summer time typically for ministries across the US is slump time. Pray with us that this summer will be the biggest and best yet in every way. Words at times are not good enough to describe our gratitude for each one of you, but someday payday, and the Lord Himself will reward you for interceding for and standing alongside of these awesome ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Congo. Amen and Amen!