

**PRESBYTERY OF EASTERN VIRGINIA
INTERNATIONAL CONGO
PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE**



**GUIDELINES FOR THE PARTNERSHIP
AND
SISTER CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS**

**PRESBYTERY OF EASTERN VIRGINIA (PCUSA)
INTERNATIONAL CONGO PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE
GUIDELINES FOR THE PARTNERSHIP AND SISTER CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS**

For the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (II Corinthians 9:12-15, NRSV)

Mission Statement

The mission of the International Congo Partnership is to cultivate and sustain relationships and mutual support of Presbyterian churches in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia.

Structure and Purpose

The partner relationship between the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia (PEVA) and the Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa (CPK) is set forth in the Articles of Agreement of 1990. Sister church relationships between congregations in the two governing bodies are part of this partnership and should be conducted in accordance with the Articles of Agreement and these guidelines. Such pairings are to be supervised by the International Partnership Committees of both PEVA and CPK working through the office of the PEVA Congo Mission Facilitator and the Office of the CPK General Assembly in Kinshasa. The International Congo Partnership Committee (IPC) of PEVA reports to the Division of Justice, Mercy, and Mission. Much of the work of the IPC is carried out by the Advocacy, Church Pairing, Feeding, and Finance Subcommittees. The Congo Mission Facilitator works under the supervision of the Associate Presbyter as part of the PEVA staff in collaboration with the IPC and the Office of the CPK General Assembly.

The primary purpose of these relationships is the establishment of spiritual bonds so that both governing bodies and their congregations may walk together as disciples of Jesus Christ.

CPK and PEVA, let us walk together

CPK et PEVA, cheminons ensemble

CPK na PEVA totambola elongo.

These words in English, French, and Lingala are the motto of the Partnership and express our spiritual bond and unity of ministry. (Psalm 133:1) Our first priority is strong prayer support with and for each other.

Historical Background

The International Congo Partnership of PEVA and CPK is founded upon the pioneer missionary work of two ministers –the Rev. William H. Sheppard and the Rev. Samuel Lapsley -- who were sent to the Congo Free State in 1891 by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (now PCUSA). Despite the misleading name, Congo was at that time a personal colony of Belgian King Leopold II. Presbyterians

in Congo trace their spiritual roots to the work of these men, who began the continuing ministries of evangelism, education, and health care in the Kasai region.

The Presbyterian churches, CPC and CPK, of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have more than two million members, many of whom are third or fourth generation Christians. Most of them have received primary, secondary, and even university education in church schools. They typically own and read both the Bible and the Book of Order. Their faith is deep, and they are eager to share it with us.

The Partnership is the flowering of the medical ministry of Dr. Alice Z. Welch and her mother, Alice Brown Welch, who led the women of Norfolk Presbytery in establishing Good Shepherd Hospital in the Kasai region in 1975, and also of the efforts of Bayside Presbyterian Church in building a healthcare clinic in Kinshasa in the 1980's. The visit of six members from PEVA to Kinshasa in 1989 led to a return visit by CPK delegates to PEVA in 1990 and the establishment of the Partnership later that year. By 1991, five primary healthcare clinics had been opened in Kinshasa through the financial support of PEVA, and Etienne Bote-Tshiek had arrived to serve as Mission Facilitator.

The 1997 alliance among PEVA, CPK, and International Cooperating Ministries (ICM) has produced the construction of facilities for fifteen CPK congregations by ICM. Sister church pairings began in 1998 and now involve twenty-five PEVA congregations. The experience of visiting and worshiping with CPK delegations to PEVA in 2001 and 2002 led to planning for a delegation from PEVA to CPK in 2003, but this had to be postponed because of the unsettled situation in Congo. A delegation of twenty-four persons did visit CPK in July 2004.

Communication

Regular communication between the PEVA office and the CPK General Assembly office is the primary responsibility of the Mission Facilitator and is essential to the proper functioning of the partnership. Congregations in sister church relationships are encouraged to communicate directly with each other to share who we are, what we are seeking to do in ministry, and what obstacles we are facing. These exchanges will help bridge our geographical and cultural gaps, support each other's ministries, and strengthen our common faith in Jesus Christ. Communication with sister congregations is primarily by direct e-mail, and copies should be sent to the PEVA Mission Facilitator and the CPK President so that accurate translation may be assured and correspondence may be tracked to make sure it is received. The Mission Facilitator is able to send mail pouches by courier through the PCUSA Congo Mission Network and through other reliable carriers. Any correspondence or items brought to the PEVA office should be marked carefully for his attention.

Financial Support

The Congo Partnership is not a budgeted ministry of PEVA but is supported by restricted funds contributed by congregations and individuals. All congregations of PEVA -- but especially those with sister church relationships in CPK -- are strongly encouraged to help underwrite the budget of the IPC, because this supports the work of our Mission Facilitator. Financial support from PEVA congregations for the ministries of CPK and its congregations is to be encouraged within the partnership arrangement. Contributions from individuals should be channeled through their congregations, and all contributions must be sent to the PEVA office. Checks should be marked as support for the Congo Partnership, a particular ministry of CPK (such as the feeding program), or a particular ministry of a CPK congregation. Small contributions will be forwarded as parts of larger

disbursements (with appropriate designations noted) in order to reduce the percentage lost to banking fees. All designations will be honored by PEVA subject to the other provisions of these guidelines.

Projects of CPK and Its Congregations

One of the foundational principles for the International Congo Partnership is that PEVA and its congregations are not seeking to do ministry in Congo but rather are endeavoring to support the ministry of CPK. Thus, financial support from PEVA and its congregations is appropriate only for projects that have been conceptualized, adopted, and supported by CPK and its congregations -- projects that are already being undertaken and will be pursued regardless of whether PEVA and its congregations offer assistance. Sister church relationships do not imply any obligation to support specific projects of CPK or its congregations, and any such support should be the natural outgrowth of a developing relationship.

Requests for financial support of any projects must indicate that they have been approved by CPK as part of its mission strategy. If multiple projects are proposed by a congregation, these must be listed in order of priority. All requests must be accompanied by detailed proposals that specify the anticipated costs and the monies already expended or available to support the work. It is assumed that CPK members will provide most oversight and labor for projects. PEVA and its congregations will not finance the dreams or wish lists of individuals or congregations of CPK

PEVA congregations and individuals that support CPK projects financially will receive regular progress reports. These reports are a matter of financial accountability, but they also allow us to interpret CPK ministries to our congregations and to celebrate them in our worship services.

Stamps for Mission

This project began in the mid-1980's in the Presbytery of the James with retired missionaries to Congo and then spread to PEVA and other presbyteries. Used postage stamps are collected by congregations, sent to the PEVA office for processing, and sold to companies that package them for collectors. The funds obtained, more than \$5000 in 2004, are sent to Congo to buy Bibles, hymnals, and Bible pictures and to provide continuing education for pastors in rural areas.

Feeding of Congolese Children

This important ministry of the Partnership is a product of the visit of CPK Presbyterian Women to PEVA Presbyterian Women in 2000 and is an ongoing project of the two organizations. The purpose is to alleviate hunger among orphaned, abandoned, and otherwise deprived children in Kinshasa. The feeding ministry is supported by the fundraising of PEVA's PW and by the sale of garments and other items made by young women of CPK at the PW Center in Kinshasa. The ministry has been carried on at the Center but is being expanded to other locales in Kinshasa in order to reach more children. The Center itself may change its focus to education for young mothers (especially widows) and their children.

Advocacy

The Rev. William Sheppard worked in the Bakuba Kingdom of the Kasai region and discovered evidence of human rights abuses by agents of King Leopold. He became an advocate of the

Congolese people and helped persuade the government of Belgium to assume responsibility for the colony. Presbyterians who were privileged to have visited our sisters and brothers in Congo are expected to be advocates for them within our own PEVA congregations and throughout the PCUSA. This is fundamental to developing the awareness and understanding that make our partnership real. Advocacy for the concerns of our Congolese brothers and sisters is a major aspect of the entire partnership because it will strengthen the historical bonds between our Christian communities.

Although advocacy for the welfare of our Congolese brothers and sisters may involve us in a variety of concerns, three areas are our immediate focus because they were emphasized by our hosts on the 2004 mission trip: 1. Establishing governmental control over the areas of fighting in the eastern part of the country and eliminating foreign elements from that region. 2. Holding free, democratic elections in which Congolese may choose their own government. 3. Developing the country so that Congolese may benefit from their abundant natural resources. Such advocacy will require contacts and visits with key members of the U.S. government and the development of a network of organizations and individuals who share our passion for the Congolese people.

Appendix: Procedures for Establishing and Conducting Sister Church Pairings

It is essential that the Pastor and Session be strongly supportive of this ministry and that they lead the congregation into an active relationship.

1. The Session identifies the appropriate committee to conduct this ministry and interpret it to the congregation.
2. The Committee submits a request to the International Partnership Committee through the office of the Mission Facilitator expressing the desire of the congregation to enter a sister church relationship with a congregation of CPK.
3. The IPC arranges a meeting with the Session and/or the committee to provide a detailed briefing on how the partnership and sister church relationships function. The IPC presents at this meeting the name of a CPK congregation seeking a sister congregation of PEVA.
4. The Session votes to establish a sister church relationship with the particular CPK church and communicates this decision to the IPC through the Mission Facilitator.
5. The IPC through the Mission Facilitator confirms the sister church relationship with the CPK General Assembly Office.
6. The Committee organizes a prayer ministry to support the sister church relationship.
7. The Committee initiates communication with the sister church and sends copies to the Mission Facilitator and the CPK President. The committee identifies persons in the congregation who are able and willing to provide translation from English to French and/or French to English. French is the official language and the language of education of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Translation of your letters from English into French can be done by the CPK General Assembly Office in Kinshasa, and translation of letters from your sister church from French into English can be done at the PEVA office if necessary.

8. The Committee and its corresponding committee in the CPK sister church begin to exchange information about the membership, leadership, activities, and ministries of their respective churches. This includes contacts between pastors, Clerks of Session (Secrétaire du Consistoire in a CPK church), men's and women's organizations, choirs, youth groups, Christian educators, and Sunday Schools.
9. The Committee begins regular presentations to the congregation interpreting the partnership and sister church relationship and encouraging members to be involved.
10. The Committee considers requests from the sister church for assistance in funding particular projects -- already approved by CPK -- and recommends participation to the Session.
11. The Session agrees to support a particular project or projects and communicates this to the sister church through the Mission Facilitator.
12. The Committee receives progress reports on projects from the sister church, conveys these to the Session, and communicates them to the congregation in worship and through various media.

Glossary

PC (USA): Presbyterian Church (USA)

PEVA: Presbytery of Eastern Virginia

PW: Presbyterian Women (of the congregation, the presbytery, or the whole church)

JMM: Justice, Mercy, and Mission

IPC: International (Congo) Partnership Committee

Partnership: Relationship between PEVA and CPK

Sister Churches: Relationships between congregations of PEVA and CPK within the Partnership

Mission Facilitator: Etienne Bote-Tshiek: Member of the PEVA staff who makes the Partnership and sister church relationships work

DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo (to be distinguished from the Republic of the Congo, the former French Congo)

ECC: Church of Christ of the Congo: Ecumenical organization of Congolese churches

CPK: Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa: Our partner church

CPC: Presbyterian Community of Congo: The mother church of the CPK; mostly in the Kasai region of DRC

ICM: International Cooperating Ministries: Christian organization that builds churches and other structures in various countries; works in cooperation with PEVA and CPK in Kinshasa