



“So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.” Romans 5:11 (NLT)

God continues to teach us so much about life and our roles as Global Ministries missionaries. Every day it seems as if we are in God’s classroom! In our first 18 months as missionaries, one of the most profound lessons we have learned is about the importance of relationships: with God, with one another, with God’s people, and others who are part of the Body of Christ.

But what truly defines a relationship? Someone at the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship recently polled his friends with this same question. He received responses such as, “Relationships are what you build with people, nature, and creation. It is not a mere attachment with the other but it is a connection you nurture and renew every day because it needs to grow. Just as a rose needs her gardener and the gardener cares for her rose, all must mutually grow and find beauty in the other.” And, “A relationship for me, means an interdependence based on trust between two or more parties.”



The foundation for the new primary school has begun!



Dr. Chantal is just a few months away from the completion of her medical training!

From a missionary perspective, we would include “all of the above” plus a few more synonyms that describe relationship including:

Association
Liaison

Connection **Affiliation**
Bond

Here are just a few examples of how God has been calling us to develop relationships here in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the United States and

all over the world and what happens when those relationships are valued and nurtured!

UMCOR – When a horrible storm ravaged the village of Diengenga in February, we “just happened” to arrive two days later, which was planned for months! Wow! God’s timing is amazing! And so, we were able to reach out to UMCOR and their disaster relief department for possible funding. Jonathan completed the very detailed application and it was approved! Just a few weeks ago, the funding arrived and the construction for the foundation commenced. It was a very, very exciting time for this village whose primary school had been destroyed. The ministry of presence is a huge part of our role as missionaries. It is a “Holy Spirit Moment” when everything comes together as it did with this project and it couldn’t happen without relationships. When the cornerstone was recently laid, Bishop Yemba inserted a Bible & Song Book in their native Otetella dialect and we sang “On Christ the Solid Rock We Stand” and, as we looked around, everyone celebrated that all leadership in this project: committee, architect, contractor, workers, and teachers were all Congolese! While one of our primary roles is to help, it is also to step aside and nurture the incredible leadership that is present just waiting for an opportunity to serve.

UMC Women’s Division – Did you know that no schooling, not even kindergarten is free in Congo? Can you imagine if your monthly salary equaled \$80 and you had six children and tuition was \$6-10 per month per child? And then your children pursue your dream for them to attend college! Wow! The tuition fees mount up exponentially! In the US we certainly can understand that. We recently learned that, through the generosity of donors over many years, the Women’s Division of the United Methodist Church provides scholarship opportunities for youth with goals for their life but do not possess the finances to move forward educationally. What a joy it has been to assist several students

who are currently pursuing their dream but whose family income will not allow the completion. Here's an example: Chantal, a UM pastor's daughter had completed her medical school semesters. However, the family did not have the means to provide the final payment for her internship. Government rules require the internship to begin within twelve months of the medical school completion. Because of relationships, in Congo and in the US, a young woman has been able to complete her medical training with the goal of serving the church in the remote villages where today many medical centers have no doctors! Praise God!

And Chantal's story is legion! Every day many very capable students share their dreams and challenges with us looking for God to help make a way!

Global Health – Some of you may remember the report from the 2014 Cataract Surgery Mission facilitated by the Congo Partnership. Over 4000 patients registered for the mission to be assessed by the three doctors and multiple ophthalmological technicians / nurses! We ran out of medications! So many of the patients presented with conjunctivitis, glaucoma, river parasites in their eyes, and infections, all of which required medications. Therefore, in preparation for the next cataract mission, we applied for a grant through Global Health to purchase medications and it was approved!

Champions for Christ - Recently, while in a remote village, someone introduced us to a young couple from Ohio who had felt called to build an orphanage in a nearby village. Their dream of adopting an orphan from central Congo rapidly evolved into the building of this orphanage when they learned that the existing facility presented a façade for trafficking of young children! The wife, a pediatrician specializing in intensive care, and the husband, an electrical engineer with a specialty in solar engineer became amazing resources for our

ministries! Not only have they become good friends, including their two young precious children, but opportunities for us all to connect and enhance each other's work. Nicole graciously assessed and treated two little babies that had undiagnosable (to the local clinicians) problems. Awesome! And Will has now become a huge asset to multiple clinics who have difficulty with their solar or electricity sources. With screwdriver in hand, Will repaired the refrigeration system so that medications can be stored effectively. A very special aspect of our relationship has been Will's revelation as to his own 'ministry'. With the family's repetitive trips to Congo to oversee the construction of the orphanage and Nicole's research on malaria in children at local hospitals, Will resorted to functioning as the 'stay-at-home Dad' to homeschool the children. Because of our connection and association and affiliation, his engineering skills have taken on new meaning here in Congo. His high level education and experience bring amazing strengths and qualities to so many. And we were also provided an opportunity to be the liaison to them and the Mama Tola Social Program in Diengenga. This program educates young mothers (some as young as 12 or 13 years old) to care properly for their children, as well as vocational skills. Because Will and Nicole's orphanage employs a "family model" and the children will live in small homes with caring women, the staff of the Mama Tola Social Program are training these caring women. What an awesome opportunity for affiliation and bonding!

Relationships! God continues to reveal to us the importance of building relationship in Congo and when we are in the US sharing the story of the amazing things God is doing in Congo. While many projects of the Congo Partnership and Global Health consume our time, it is often in the "unexpected" moments that God's Spirit blows powerfully with opportunities to network and connect with God and others. It reminds us constantly that this is not *our* work, it is the *Lord's* work! Thank you for your prayerful support of us in our mission in

DRC. Your love sustains us, your prayers carry us, and your financial support enables dreams to become realities. May God bless you with such joy knowing you truly are God's vessels through whom God's love flows into the world!

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