

January 2011

Dear Friends,

The Université Presbyterienne au Congo (Presbyterian University of Congo) or UPRECO, has suffered a crippling blow. Just before Christmas, thieves broke into the accountant's office and stole all of the money being held there. In addition to money for salaries and other operating funds for the University, Booth Center project money was also taken. (The Booth Vocational Center trains pastors, evangelists, and theology students in agriculture and animal husbandry skills so that they can better support their families, congregations and communities.) The University lost \$51,200 and the Booth Center lost \$45,600. These are large amounts of money in any context but are devastating losses to the University and the Booth Center. The University lives from term to term and has no reserves to fall back on. Booth Center projects are largely dependent on the funds received from outside of Congo. A few nights after the theft, the stunned and wounded University community was further shocked by an attempted attack on Dr. Mulumba, the University President and General Secretary of the Congolese Presbyterian Church (CPC). Thankfully, night guards and courageous students were able to frighten the thugs off and no one was injured. The campus remains tense, rumors of intended attacks regularly circulate and the stressed faculty, staff and students are doing their best to carry on with no funds and a shattered sense of security.



Why was such a large amount of money being kept in an office instead of a bank? In the mid 90's during the turbulent final years of Mobutu's dictatorship, all of Congo's banks collapsed and the CPC lost everything it had banked. There is no such thing as federal deposit insurance in Congo. If the bank goes under depositors lose everything. In recent years, banks have started operating again (though one of the largest ones went under in early Jan 2011) and there is strong pressure, especially from western partners, for the CPC to open an account again. As is so often the case in Congo, there are no easy solutions and every choice has risks. Please pray for the CPC leadership as they struggle to be faithful stewards of gifts and donations in circumstances where whichever way they move they could imperil the financial future of their church.

In spite of the setbacks and uncertainties, the CPC has made clear that they may be bloodied but they are unbowed. They join with King David in saying, "The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid? (Ps 27: 1) Two weeks ago the CPC called on its members to pray for God's guidance, protection and comfort for the University. They organized concurrent prayer vigils in Kananga, Mbuji Mayi, Lubumbashi and Kinshasa where participants prayed



from 9 pm to 6 am. At the vigil in Kananga, held on the University campus, *between 500 and 600 people* showed up to pray for their church and its university – all night! In a culture where theft, corruption and violence are daily unchallenged occurrences, the Congolese Presbyterian Church is a steadfast witness to the power of God’s love and grace. A Chinese proverb tells us, “It is better to light one candle than curse the darkness.” And so, in spite of the challenges, the frustrations, the struggles to survive, the CPC continues to light candles in Congo. We urge you to join us in supporting UPRECO, the Booth Center and the CPC through prayer and contributions so they can continue to shine light in the darkness.

With our gratitude for your partnership in God’s work in the Congo,

John & Gwenda Fletcher
Mission Co-workers, Congo

If you would like to donate:

To UPRECO:

Online at : <http://gamc.pcusa.org/donate/E583002>

By check:

- Make the check out to 'Presbyterian Church (USA)'
- Put 'E583002 - UPRECO/Kananga, DR Congo' in the check's memo area.
- If you wish designate funds more specifically, please include a cover letter with the details.
- **Individuals** please mail the check to:
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Individual Remittance Processing
P.O. Box 643700
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700
- **Churches** please mail the check to:
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Church Remittance Processing
P.O. Box 643678
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To the Booth Vocational Center:

<http://www.theoutreachfoundation.org>

Select “Give” from the menu bar at the top of the homepage and follow the prompts for your preferred method of giving.