

Dear Friends,

The first phase of a massive hydroelectric project in the Democratic Republic of Congo is set to begin in October of this year. If completed, this six-phase project would be the world's largest hydro development project and would produce 40% of the African continent's energy needs. DR Congo's hydroelectric potential is staggering. But in spite of this potential, World Bank 2014 estimates indicate that only 16.4% of the Congolese population has access to electricity.

Due to the foresight of early Presbyterian missionaries, the Christian Medical Institute of the Kasai (IMCK) is among the lucky 16.4%. It receives electricity and water 24/7 from its own small hydroelectric facility which first came online in September 1986. The electricity this plant produces and the water it pumps are two of the things that set Good Shepherd Hospital apart from all of the other hospitals in the area, and enable it to provide a level of medical care not found anywhere else in Central Congo.

While the hydro plant has been functioning well for over 30 years, all



machinery has a limited lifespan and a couple years back the Medical Benevolence Foundation (MBF), in cooperation with IMCK, began an overall renovation project in order to assure another 30 years of reliable service. Many of you have contributed generously to make this project a reality and the whole IMCK family is grateful. John was

asked to assist with the project as the project manager and has been splitting his time between surgery at the hospital and engineering at the hydro plant – putting in long hours at both places. The hydro work has been challenging but satisfying and, since there are always a lot of snakes at the facility, it has provided John with some hairy and scary snake stories!

Because parts are no longer available for some of the original hydro equipment, new regulators are being built in Germany. The major part

of the renovation project – the installation of the new regulators is scheduled to take place in the summer of 2016. At the same time, new equipment is also being made by our German friends for a renovation of the hydro plant at the Congolese Presbyterian Church’s Bibanga Hospital in East Kasai – another project John is overseeing.

Many of you have been asking us when we will next be back in the States on Interpretation Assignment (IA) and we finally have a definitive answer for you. In order to enable John to be in Congo for the installations in Tshikaji and Bibanga, our IA schedule has been set for January, February, March and April 2016 followed by our return to Congo in May 2016.



As is always the case during IA, we have no budget for travel expenses and it is the responsibility of the inviting body to cover travel, lodging and meals. Since it can be expensive for a single church to pay for our travel from our home base, it usually works best to coordinate with several churches in the same area that may be interested in splitting costs. To facilitate that, we decided it would be best to divide our time among 4 major regions - West, Central, Southeast and Northeast.

We anticipate being in the West and Central regions in January and April and in the East (both South and North) in February and March. The region designations are very broad and flexible so if there is a particular date you’d like us to visit that doesn’t necessarily fit into the “right” region, don’t hesitate to let us know. We will do our best to accommodate any invitation. We are ready to start putting dates on the calendar immediately - just let us know, the sooner the better.

Neither of us feels able to give a sermon, but apart from that, we are open and willing to meet with any group or give any kind of presentation you want - minute for mission, Sunday School class, men’s or Presbyterian Women group, visiting in retirement centers, meeting with sessions, mission committees, prayer groups, etc., etc.

On our last IA we found that our favorites were speaking to adult Sunday School classes or following an all-church potluck.

PC(USA) has a helpful website that answers frequently asked questions about hosting mission coworker speakers at:
<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/finding-mission-speaker/>

The same site also includes information about possible scholarships available to churches that would like to invite a mission coworker speaker but don't have the funds to do so.

We are looking forward to visiting with as many of you as possible during IA so we can thank you for your partnership and share with you about what God is doing in the DR Congo – and John can tell you some of his snake stories, too!



Blessings,
John & Gwenda

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