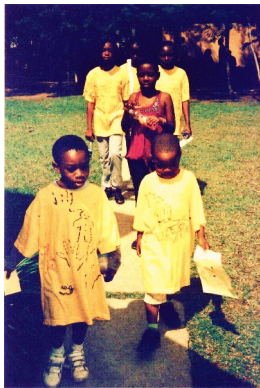


Hoover Happenings, March 2011

Please don't faint from astonishment at hearing from us again only a month after our last e-mailed letter; we really do intend to communicate more frequently this year than the past two. We are adjusting some priorities, and barring unexpected crises, we will attempt to send a note of some sort relatively often for all those who have e-mail addresses. Unfortunately, we cannot write more than three times a year for those with only postal addresses because of the mailing costs.

TESOL News :

As you know, this is the year of the big push for The English-speaking School of Lubumbashi to build its own classrooms adequate for its current needs but with a site plan for future developments. We had 17 years of grace during difficult times in Congo when the school could easily have died, but being able to use classrooms belonging to the former French School with permission from the French Embassy made survival possible when student numbers were very low and when parents lacked funds because of war. Now a French school has reopened since September 2010.



The first news is that the purchase has been finalized this week with Tenke-Fungurume Mining (TFM) for approximately 50 acres on the northern edge of Lubumbashi for our own campus, and the contract is with the lawyers at the moment for provisional registration of the deed. Final registration of deeds in Congo comes only after we have built on the land. TFM generously allowed the school to make token payments in 2011 and 2012 so we can concentrate on construction, and there will be three major payments due in 2013, 2014, and 2015.

Secondly, even before we had a signed purchase contract, our staff and students had their first major fund-raiser for construction. They decided to do a sponsored walk in February, something unknown in Lubumbashi but familiar to generations of CROP walkers, etc. The students decorated T-shirts for the occasion (we couldn't find children's sizes in the same colors, so they're more like Old Testament robes for some of the primary and kindergarten kids!). It took place on Saturday, February 26, since the school organizes extra-curricular sports activities on Saturday mornings. The goal was for all students to walk ten laps around the school campus and the soccer field, and they looked for sponsors for individual laps. It was good physical exercise for those less interested in/endowed for soccer and basketball. Every time they passed "Go", they got two more stamps on their paper (those of you with good eyes may see yellow sheets of paper in their hands as well as the decorated yellow shirts!) A good number of students walked 25 laps. Afterwards there were drinks and refreshments available on sale for the kids and for family members who came to watch or walk along. The school received \$470 in lap sponsorships from outside the student community, which allowed every student participating to earn another paid lap. TESOL netted about \$4000 for the construction fund, and our new construction account at Trust Merchant Bank was opened just in time! There has been lots of good feedback from parents, so the students enjoyed the event as well as making a substantial contribution to the building fund and gaining a feeling of ownership in the project. We'll share some photos to give you a taste of the fun.



The company of two of our TESOL families has made an oral promise of a significant gift that should pay for several classrooms. So, while we are still working with the architects on proposed site plans and proposals, not yet having awarded our architectural contract, we have some of that "Big M" for "momentum". May the Lord bless us and keep the M going; we're still a loooong way from our objective...



Students come and go, and the same is true for staff members. An example is one of our Congolese students who transferred to TESOL, took the year of intensive English and has been doing well in regular classes this year. Her father was a former national director of World Vision, but it was the daughter herself who wanted to study in English. He now has a new position in Johannesburg as social programs manager for an international mining company, and she is well-prepared for the family move to South Africa. A Lutheran missionary, whose husband is the director of their seminary in Lubumbashi, has been a wonderful support to TESOL, being a trained teacher in Germany with fluent English; they are leaving for a new position in Basle on the French/Swiss/German border, and Angelika will be sorely missed at TESOL next year.

Katanga Methodist University news (UMK in French word order) :

In addition to his normal teaching (three courses in church history this year) in the college of theology, Jeff has been the point person in obtaining bids from Congolese companies for equipment at UMK for a new distance learning classroom that the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry is providing. Dr. Ken Yamada, who was the GBHEM staff person who managed the drive to establish and develop Africa University in Zimbabwe, is coordinating the effort to connect African United Methodist institutions by these new technologies, and Martin Dwomoh-Tweneboah, a young professor of computer science at an Oregon college, has been the technical coordinator. Martin is currently in Mozambique where they installed a similar distance learning classroom in 2009 or 2010 to allow the students to follow courses in Portuguese from Methodist institutions in Brazil and in English from Africa University in Zimbabwe; he will be here in Katanga from March 15-30 to see what will be installed at Mulungwishi and in Kamina, but clearly we are not going to have the equipment on site in time for him to do the staff training on this visit. In the U.S. we are so accustomed to companies bending over backward to sell you their products, but it has taken two months just to get three bids for the computers themselves, and the network and internet materials are the complex part! The other difficulty is that the equipment is a "one-time" cost of about \$60,000, but the Internet Service Providers are asking about \$3,000 in recurrent monthly charges because we don't have access to high capacity fiber-optic networks, nor even copper ADSL lines; everything must be by satellite at Mulungwishi. Our current KU-band satellite connection drops out with heavy rain, not to speak of technical problems. We receive over 60 inches a rain a year, all in 6 months and during the academic term, so that problem has been a significant one.

The other UMK project with whose development Jeff has been deeply involved in the past few months is a planning for a new university library. We already walled off part of the reading room in the theological school library ten years ago to create more room for book stacks, but there is again no space for new books, and the newer schools of information technology, psychology & education, and agronomy create needs for collections that didn't exist before. Moreover, instead of 50 students in theology plus lesser use by the secondary school and the women's school, we've now passed 500 university students alone, with increasing numbers each year. A work team was scheduled in 2010 that included a film team to produce a publicity film on UMK as part of our conference-to-conference partnership with the New Mexico annual conference, but their flights got scratched because of the Icelandic volcano. (Remember him/her/it?) They are arriving on March 27, knock on wood, and we are trying to have the project well enough developed by the time their film comes out. Since both the librarian and assistant librarian left Mulungwishi between October and December, having independently received scholarships for doctoral studies in theology (one through the North Katanga episcopal area, the other through Southern Congo/Zambia), the new librarian and Jeff have been working to pull enough ideas together for an architect to do realistic-plans. One of the things that has happened in 2010 that makes it much easier to do this now is the audit and site plan done for the university last August with financing from Connexio, the mission board of the Central/Southern Europe episcopal area. That provides an overview for development of new facilities east of "Swiss Hill", including a dorm built last year, the computer science facilities planned for this dry season, and our library project. The Kinshasa architect's concept drawings of a library (along with all the foreseeable other facilities on the campus), along with our reactions and suggestions are now in the hand of a local architect for more detailed proposals and a cost estimate based on Katanga realities. (Kinshasa is 1,200 miles from here on the other side of the country.)

Other things :

Jeff's teaching at the University of Lubumbashi (UNILU) goes on normally. So far, he seems to be running well ahead of last year in most of his courses, although English department seniors refused to start their Anglo-American history course in October/November when Jeff was available, and now he has no free hours. He keeps teasing them that they'll have to come back for another semester.

The UNILU library system has been a big time-consumer. When we returned from India, we discovered that the central government had dispatched a contractor to renovate the College of Social Sciences as part of the five lines of national reconstruction (*cing chantiers*) promised in the 2006 elections. (Elections are slated for late 2011 in Congo...) The dean naturally couldn't give up his limited classrooms for the most intense part of the academic year, so he had the contractor start on the building containing what had become a pitifully small usable library but which 30 years ago had been the largest portion of the library system. We are a university with 25,000-30,000 students without a single truck of any kind, let alone packing boxes and such. It took us almost two months to move the entire collection (mostly old student theses and termite-damaged books from the 1970s) across town to a room at the central library for the duration of the renovations. On mornings where Jeff did not have 8 a.m. classes, he became a regular at the grocery stores to fill his pickup with as many usable empty cartons as possible. It has also taken two months to negotiate that the library system will be able to use the entire larger building that was formerly library, as most of it had been converted to lecture halls. In exchange, the library system and central administration will help the College of Social Sciences renovate another building to provide classrooms and offices. Recovering the extra space will enable the library system to close several other branch libraries housed in inadequate facilities and have a larger staff and potentially longer hours in the renovated facility.

And for us...

Be aware that our current missionary term ends in 2012 and the Hoovers are currently scheduled for iteration in our covenant churches from May through September 2012. With everything happening here, and with new ideas about using missionaries effectively in speaking, this may evolve somewhat in the next twelve months. However, we are reminding you early, as we had great problems in 2008 scheduling church visits in a number of our annual conferences. It was disappointing to have covenant churches ask us to come and visit in 2009 when we were already back in Congo.

Ellen

