



AMSF Newsletter

AMSF 2006 Annual General Meeting Addressed by Angolan Guest Speaker



*Rev. Luis Nguimbi &
Luis Samacumbi
AMSF AGM, Toronto, 2006
Photo by Rev. Joyce Meyers Brown*

Luis Samacumbi, national director of the Department of Social Affairs, Studies and Projects-Evangelical Congregational Church of Angola (IECA) was the inspiring and informative guest speaker at the AMSF annual general meeting held June 23-24, 2006 in Toronto. We were also delighted with the unexpected visit of another Angolan, Rev. Luis Nguimbi, General Secretary of the Council of Christian Churches of Angola (CICA). Rev. Nguimbi, in the city on other business, was able to attend the first day of the AGM and contributed useful comments and perspectives.

Extracts of Address *by Luis Samacumbi*

You can't imagine how honoured and humble I feel to be here with you today. **We are opening a new chapter in our fellowship relations, making a great connection between two generations: I mean yours, many of whom are former missionaries, and my mine, who grew up during the war.** This meeting is like those in our village meeting house, the onjango, where the people sit down and take turns to speak of everything that is important for them and their village. The discussions are facilitated by the oldest and the conclusions call on the community to be bound by what is decided; here is built the solidarity, the commitment of all, for the community's good.

The Church in Angola is challenged by a huge work of reconstruction - physical reconstruction of the infrastructures destroyed by the war and also reconstructing lives. Another challenge is peace-building. For the Church to have a prophetic voice the leaders of all the denominations need to come together more and more to concentrate on concerns beyond those of their particular denominations.

The sustainability of the IECA Church, in a post war context, depends on 4 fundamental factors: 1) The value that IECA members attribute to sustainability; 2) The transparency in the administration of funds. The world today is a small village where what happens is heard and circulates through the whole village. The money we receive comes from ordinary peoples' hands and often they are seniors; we need to be accountable to them and to each other; 3) The need for leaders to provide constant valorization and motivation to personnel, the best treasure the church has; 4) Income generating projects. The church is presently very dependent on external help; therefore we should sow today what we must pick tomorrow.



*Luis Samacumbi and Rev. Etta
Snow, AMSF AGM, Toronto
2006
Photo by Richard Choe*

Which is the way forward? We need to come together and create a larger analysis, understanding and vision for the future. **We need to move from being inhabitants to being citizens.** We need to become aware of our rights and responsibilities as citizens, including ensuring the use of our natural resources for the benefit of all.

All of us are part of a group of leaders that have the responsibility of writing the name and history of the Church in Letters of Gold. This will be possible if we learn that **“we can only together make things happen . . . we can only be safe if we are together . . . we can only be prosperous if we are together . . . we can only survive if we are together and we can only together be human beings”**.

With your prayers and support, Angola will get up, stay firm and move on and people will be able to experience what Jesus talked about, enjoying life in all its fullness. This is my hope and the dream I have for my people.



*Grimbsy, Ontario Trinity United Church
Sunday School Children
Inset: Bev Houselander*

In June 2006 the Social Action Committee of Trinity United Church, Grimbsy, ON designated \$4,000 for the construction of IECA sponsored schools in Huambo, Angola. **On Sept 17 Bev Houselander spoke to the Sunday School children of Trinity about the struggle Angolan children have to achieve an education.** She drew on her recent teaching experience in Lobito, Angola and also read the Mazozo children's story from the spring 2006 AMSF newsletter. After hearing how many children must share pencils and notebooks with other siblings or classmates, due to post war levels of poverty, **all the children wanted to help change this situation. They decided they would bring in extra money each week for the next 3 months, to send to a particular primary school.**

Last year the AMSF donated \$17,000 US for scholarships to the Council of Christian Churches of Angola (CICA). This body (of 20 denominations) distributes AMSF scholarships to local church sponsored students at technical, high school and university levels of study.

Below are letters of appreciation from some of the scholarship recipients:

Judith Ana da Rocha Santana Lemos, Mennonite Community Church, 5th year Medical Studies, Scholarship Recipient since 1999: This scholarship has helped me greatly to buy my school books, public transport and other related fees. **May God bless AMSF, its donors and all the volunteers to continue to support and help the young people of Angola who are anxious to be educated so that they will be able to participate in the reconstruction and development of the country, as well as, the well being of its people.**

Madalena Bapangui Francisco Manuel, member of the Evangelical Reformed Church, Scholarship Student since 2005, grade 11 Pre-University Science Course: With a lot of respect and consideration I thank AMSF; this scholarship came at the right time, it helped me a lot to overcome certain difficulties, and with this support **I hope to finish my course that will benefit the Church and society.**

Avelino Eduardo Avelino, Member of the Anglican Church, Scholarship Recipient since 2000, graduated with a 5 year degree in Economics and Management: My profound thanks for this scholarship support with which I was able to cover 60% of my fees. **I hope to conciliate theory with practice in order to contribute harmoniously to the growth of my country Angola, in particular, Africa, and the world in general.** I hope there comes from the skies favorable winds, and may God bless your work.

Joao Lima Lourenco de Oliveira, Member of the United Methodist Church, Scholarship Student since 2001, graduated from law: Thanks to the scholarships I was able to cover the payment of my fees. I need to say that without this help it would have been very difficult to finish my studies. **Your fund has contributed greatly to my development. Currently, I am working in a law office, for Mosaico, a non-governmental service organization.** It is my wish that the AMSF continue to help the needy and less fortunate to enable them to contribute and serve with better fulfillment the Church and Society.

AMSF has been supporting leadership training and education of Angolan girls and women through grants to its Angolan partner the IECA Church; last year AMSF donated \$30,000 US. These funds were distributed among the eleven IECA training centres. Below is a profile provided by one of these centres.



*Canata Creative Arts Program Participants
Photo by Margaret Edwards*

Canata Professional Training Centre in Lobito, Angola

The Canata Centre started during the war in 1999. Mrs. Eva Chipenda offered a half day creative arts program to girls and boys invited informally from the street to gather in one of the classrooms attached to the Canata Church. "In the middle of war and rumors of war these children were able to gain new insights and see new ways of looking at life without knowing that 3 years later peace would come." The creative arts program has now expanded to include typing, keyboarding, basic English conversation and teaching the recorder. There is a great need for increased programming for preschool children whose parents are working all day. IECA is fundraising to build a daycare and kindergarten for one thousand of these children.

In 2000 the Canata Church women asked Mrs. Chipenda "to help school girls without skills to become good housewives in an urban setting". Rev. Ilda and Mrs. Corina Fasto joined Mrs. Chipenda in setting up a basic homemaker program. In 2001 a small house, next to the church, was purchased and renovated for classroom space. The initial plan was to train girls and young women there; boys and young men requested to be included.

From 2002-2006 classes included literacy, embroidery, crocheting, sewing, typing, civic and moral principals, cooking, English levels I & II and computer training. During this period **875 students, between 13-50 years of age, registered for various courses.** With a long waiting list for computer, cooking and English classes the centre hopes to build two extra classrooms. "The reputation of the centre is increasing and a graduation certificate from the Centre is a valuable document". Most of the centres' teachers are from Angola, including one former student.



*Margaret Edwards, Sue Short and
Eva Chipenda, Lobito, Angola, 2005
Photo by Rev. Peter Short*

Two United Church of Canada recently returned volunteers, sponsored by the United Church of Canada, Bev Houselander and Margaret Edwards worked as teachers at the Canata Professional Training Centre. Margaret Edwards shares below the story of one Canata graduate.

Violeta's Story by Margaret Edwards

Violeta grew up in a refugee slum area of Lobito and became a mother at 18. A Bible camp experience inspired her and she formed a church youth group in which 40 some members meet weekly for outings and to discuss a variety of topics-dating, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS. Violeta joined the church choir and often directs it. **Violeta's organizational skills and ability to**

work with children became evident to me when she helped me produce a hugely successful Christmas church nativity pageant and concert. With financial help from a member of the United Church of Canada, **Violeta, at 25, was able to take a computer course at the Canata training centre.** She excelled in her studies and became a good computer operator.

When her training centre needed a new secretary, **Violeta** was hired. She is now studying English and is able to converse.

Violeta is also taking cooking classes and cooks nutritious meals for her family. She is excited about earning her own money and being able to contribute income to the household of herself, her daughter, her parents and siblings. **Violeta is now a happy and confident young woman and I count it a privilege to be her friend.**



*Violeta and daughter, Lobito, Angola
Photo by Margaret Edwards*

Donors, your prayers and donations to the AMSF-sponsored education work in Angola are so very appreciated now and in the future.

AMSF has recently received donations in honour of Etta Snow, President of AMSF, Marion and Malcolm McVeigh for their work with the people of Angola and John and Ruth Shryock on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary. AMSF has also received donations in memory of Rev. Whitney Dalrymple, Dr. George Pap, Edith Radley and Dr. James Van Laan. We give thanks for these members and supporters of AMSF and remember with love and appreciation those of us who have passed.

New AMSF Treasurer by Etta Snow

Ms. Eleanor Ellins has been unanimously affirmed by the board as AMSF Treasurer. As we welcome Eleanor to this responsibility, I would like on your behalf to express our deep appreciation and sincere thanks to Steve and Debbie Gilchrist for the many hours of arduous work they gave in restructuring AMSF accounts, and in setting up the Excel program, and other helpful aids that will facilitate Eleanor's work. I know she will be counting on their support and cooperation as she begins to familiarize herself with the job.



Eleanor Ellins is a member of Humbervale United Church, Toronto, ON. Eleanor's work background, as an employee and as a consultant, is in developing and implementing business systems in office environments of many different categories. This work often involved her with accounting-type operations. She has an honors BA in Modern History and Modern Languages from U of T, followed by a full secretarial course.

Donations may be sent to your AMSF Regional Representative or to the AMSF Treasurer, Ms. Eleanor Ellins, 2016-1333 Bloor Street, Mississauga, Ontario L4Y 3T6.

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