

Partner Updates, 4/9/25

3/23 11:11 Partner Update:

- Click [HERE](#) to go to our YouTube channel to watch a recording of the 11:11.
- For meeting handouts, go to the grey resource section found [HERE](#) on our website.

Primera Iglesia (Mary Kay):

Thank you for spending time together – shopping, baking, sorting, bagging, and decorating desserts – in support of Primera. Michelle delivered over 300 homemade items on Thursday, March 27. Primera was overwhelmed with gratitude and joy because of both the quality and quantity of the donations. The proceeds from the bake sale will go toward supporting their community programs.

Primera had more than enough desserts for not one, but two bake sales! They raised \$285, which will be used to support Primera's local programs. They also sent a special thank-you to the mission team.

Please continue to pray for this church community and its leadership as they seek God's guidance. Thank you again for your time and support.

FoodBank (Sandy):

On March 29, 20 LOPC volunteers served at the Food Bank. It was a successful day of service, with positive feedback from both the Food Bank staff and our volunteers. Everyone had a great time working together, and we also got some great photos to remember the day! The time at the Food Bank went so well that the volunteers all requested more dates - and these have been scheduled in August (8/2 and 8/30, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm).

The federal government has recently put food shipments to food banks on hold, and the Food Bank has been impacted by the cancellation of 11 loads of food ordered through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). These shipments, which would have provided over 250,000 meals of proteins and produce, are now uncertain, and the Food Bank does not know when, or if, this vital food will arrive. This follows the cancellation of a federal grant intended to support grocery recovery efforts in Vallejo. With rising food costs and further cuts expected, the Food Bank's ability to provide nutritious food to the community is more dependent than ever on the support of donors and partners. Click [HERE](#) to donate.

Trinity Center (Barb):

Trinity Center recently received a large donation of meal bags, so they won't be able to accept more until the end of summer. Starting in September, they will need about 300 bags per month - and created a sign up genius to help manage the donations.

They would also like us to share the details about their May 23rd fundraiser at Lafayette Park Hotel. Click [HERE](#) for additional information.

Thank you for your continued support!

Kapnek (Phil):

As reported in the Mission Update on Sunday March 23, Kapnek had its funding for its medical services cut by USAID. This was about 75% of Kapnek's total budget. Plans were in the works to furlough 75% of their employees and discussions were being held on how they could keep employed key staff people as they look to the future.

That planning was upended with a letter from the Washington office of USAID, transmitted and received on Monday March 24. This letter notified Kapnek that the terminating letter sent previously was being rescinded for their work with HIV/AIDs with detail to follow. After a few in-country meetings, Kapnek now understands that their work in detection and treatment of TB and Cervical Cancer is terminated, but their work in testing and treatment of HIV/AIDs will be continued to the end of their contract, approximately for 18 more months. This means that roughly only 10% of the staff will be let go. This is great news, but of course we wish that all funding would be restored. With this stopping and restarting, there are many issues (financial) that have to be worked out, so there are still many questions.

Congo (Herb):

Here is the first update for 2025 of the LOPC mission support for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). I apologize for the length but much has been going on. Unfortunately, the news is not good. The DRC is experiencing a "perfect storm" on distressing events.

Firstly, eastern DRC has been invaded by a militia group (M23) from Rwanda after many years of various incursions. This group, with support from the Rwanda government, has taken over the two largest cities in the east. While they say they are there to protect the Tutsi population originally from Rwanda, the real reason is access to DRC minerals. Where they go from here is a concern. The international community's response has been meager. The DRC government's attention is mainly on this very

significant humanitarian crisis and so other needs in this impoverished country are not addressed.

Next, The DRC was USAID's largest recipient in 2023 with \$910million of aid. This aid has stopped due to our government's decision to shut down USAID. Regarding areas we support, one of the impacts will be less Education support from the DRC government as well as from numerous U.S. projects. Also, with less economic aid, more children will be withdrawn from schooling to work for their family.

Congo team members have contacted our Senators and Representatives for the first two items. We asked that the U.S. takes steps to convince Rwanda to withdraw its troops and that U.S. aid to the DRC be restored. If you would like to also make these contacts, let me know and I can send you a link to do so easily.

Finally, PCUSA has been going through a massive reorganization, particularly in World Mission. WM staff has been reduced from 79 to 44, effective March 24. Most of the reduction is in global mission co-workers. While PCUSA describes the need for a new Mission model, the driver has been financial. Just as with many churches, PCUSA has felt the impact of reduced attendance and, therefore, reduced donations. Costs needed to be reduced.

The impact on our support is particularly personnel. The mission co-workers that have been key to helping us support the people of the DRC, Jeff and Christi Boyd, have decided to retire after spending over 30 years in Africa. Only one of them was offered a position in the new mission organization. Their objective has always been to do mission work as a team. This being no longer possible and also being 2-4 years away from retirement anyhow (plus just becoming new grandparents) led them to their decision. They have been a foundation of our work for the Congolese people.

There are many questions we have about the new organization and the mission process going forward. The Congo team will be working to understand and develop how we work with PCUSA going forward. We want to continue helping with education and trauma healing projects as well as with our advocacy and spiritual support efforts. The needs for this 100 million population country are staggering.

One immediate way we can help is to support the LOPC Lenten offering that supports both the Congo and Monument Crisis Center. You will be hearing more about this offering, but here is some background:

The Congolese Presbyterian Church (CPC) in 2021 altered their ministry to “vulnerable children”. These are young children that have lost touch with their families and ended up on the streets. The Presbyterian church switched to a comprehensive congregation-based ministry, placing vulnerable children in Presbyterian foster homes where they attend school while, simultaneously, congregational child protection committees help to reunite the children with their families and promote their rights. The LOPC Congo team supported the kickoff of this new process in its early stage as one of our strategies to support traumatized children. This new process has been very successful as already 379 unhoused children have been accommodated by Presbyterian families, and for 276 of these, relatives have been traced back and reunited with the child.

The advantages of this new approach are:

- Allow children to thrive better in family settings rather than in care centers
- Accommodate boys who were excluded from girls-only care centers
- Helps better meet children’s primary needs (shelter and care) via support of foster care by local congregations
- Accommodate a greater number of children
- Reunite a considerably larger proportion of children with their relatives
- Significantly shorten the average time in transitional care from 3.7 years to 5.5 months.

The foundation for this reuniting process is the training of both foster families and child protection committees for congregations. CPC has 13 synods in Greater Kasai, where this ministry is rolled out, and all but two have had training sessions or finances have been committed. Funding for transportation, training materials, food/lodging, trainer fees is needed for one of the remaining synods. The cost ranges \$12,000 -\$20,000 depending on number of congregations in a synod and therefore the total of attendees. Christ Boyd worked with pastors over the past 4-5 years to put into place all the training required for the Greater Kasai region. As noted, training is in place for all but two synods. CPC is waiting for funding to complete all the training.

And, one final but important event - on April 27 during the worship service, LOPC will recognize Bobbie Dodson-Nielsen and the Congo necklace team for their fundraising for Congo education since 2012. What a team!

If you have questions about any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.