

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 24, 2025

Ethical Leadership, Living Well Together Set Tone for 2025 Congo Network Conference

TUSCALOOSA, Ala -- The [Congo Mission Network](https://congopartners.org/register2025/) (CMN) will host its annual conference on Oct. 23-25 at Stillman College and Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Registration is free for online attendees outside the U.S. Otherwise, there is a \$25 fee. Presbyterian (U.S.A.) staff, mission co-workers, Congolese and college students can also register for free. The in-person attendee fee is \$125 before Sept. 1 and \$150 afterward.

To register, visit <https://congopartners.org/register2025/>.

The conference theme, “Ethical Leadership and the Church: Living Together”, echoes and supports church-led initiatives in the Democratic Republic of Congo to bring about peace in war-torn eastern Congo. Goals include enabling peace and “living well together” for all in Congo’s culturally diverse communities, schools and churches. Conference participants include representatives of churches of the Presbyterian Community of Congo (CPC) and the Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa (CPK).

The National Episcopal Conference of Congo [Roman Catholic] and the Church of Christ in Congo [Protestant], of which the CPK and CPC are members, recently launched a blueprint for peace called “Social Pact for Peace and Living Well Together in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Great Lakes Region.” It is a response for churches to rebel warfare that has killed and displaced millions since 1998.

The Rev. Dr. Isaac Kalonji of Kinshasa, the President and Legal Representative of the CPK, will give the conference keynote presentation on ethical leadership.

This conference will recognize the long history between the American and Congolese Presbyterian churches. The relationship began in 1891 when Rev. William Sheppard of Stillman College and the Rev. Samuel Lapsley helped establish the first American Presbyterian mission in the Congo at Luebo. They were supported by the Sheppards and Lapsley Presbytery that now bears their names.

U.S. and Congolese churches remain close, with partnerships around education, healthcare, feeding programs, housing, women’s and youth ministries, more in Congo.

Ellen Sherby, associate director for World Mission’s Global Connections, and Doug Tilton, Global Ecumenical Liaison, will speak on the new role of the PC(USA) regarding world missions. Jimmy Shafe, Board Member, Education Congo, and Director of Congo Hope, and Nate Houghton, co-founder and president of Congo Leadership Initiative, will speak on finding new models for funding missions in Congo.

The Rev. Laurie Loveless, pastor of the Elkton Presbyterian Church, Elkton, MD, will speak about an initiative in New Castle Presbytery to support an Orphans and Vulnerable Children movement in the Kasai region of Congo.

The Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa will lead a session on cultural diversity, focusing on the Bantu and Batwa peoples of Equateur Province. Dr. Serge Makolo, Director of the Eye Clinic and former director of the Christian Medical Institute of the Kasai (IMCK) will speak on education and ethical leadership. The Rev. Dr. Simon Kabue, Rector of the Presbyterian University of the Congo (UPRECO), will address racial and ethnic reconciliation in church and family life.

Jeff Boyd, longtime mission coworker in Congo, will introduce a free, Android phone app that now offers the Misambu ya Kutumbisha [*Songs of Praise*] hymnbook written by Congolese in local languages. The app is already in use in one **of our partner churches in Congo church**.

The conference will highlight renowned figures such as Maria Fearing, ~~a former slave and missionary to Congo~~ **who formerly enslaved became a missionary to Congo**, and contemporary quilter Yvonne Wells of Brown Memorial Presbyterian.

A full conference program will be posted on [the CMN website](#) when finalized.

Contact:

Kelly Norrell
Communications Coordinator
Congo Mission Network
kelly@norrellmedia.com
(865) 806-0132