

2026 Congo Pentecost Offering Minute for Mission

When the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley was formed in 1988 it took its new name from mission workers who went to Congo in 1890, William H. Sheppard and Samuel N. Lapsley. Their interracial partnership was a pattern of racial collegiality and friendship that has been the foundation for the remarkable loyalties that have lasted into the present. The Presbyterian Church in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now one of the largest Protestant bodies on the continent of Africa.

After Samuel Lapsley's death, William Sheppard continued their work in the Kasai regions of Congo from 1890 to 1910. Soon he was joined by other Americans. Sheppard became known for exposing abuses committed under Belgian King Leopold's regime, and his efforts helped galvanize global human rights pressure. The gospel message of God's love for all created a Presbyterian community of many African tribes.

The 2026 Congo Pentecost Offering will help our Presbytery continue support for a variety of partnership projects. At some periods of time the Presbyterian churches in the U.S. sent hundreds of mission workers to Congo. Now our efforts are mostly supportive of formal partnerships and shared ministries directed by Congolese Christians.

One of the efforts funded by our Presbytery is a partnership with the Congolese Presbyteries of Nganza and Tshibashi. This partnership was formalized in 2004 when a team from the U.S. met with church leaders in Congo. Our Presbytery has provided scholarships for students training to be nurses and pastors. We have also helped with building schools, leadership development, and health programs.

Churches in our Presbytery send funds to a wide variety of church programs in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A major medical center – IMCK which includes the good Sheppard Hospital, schools for nurses and technicians, a hydro electric plant and medical centers and clinics in the Kasai region and support for church operated schools through Build Congo Schools.

The Presbyterian Church in the Congo has sent many church leaders to us as well. In October of 2025 the Congo Mission Network (a national gathering of people who plan support of work in the Congo) was hosted by Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church and Stillman College. Some of us had personal conversations with African leaders at that meeting. The long partnership between Christians in Alabama and our brothers and sisters in Congo promises a future of friendship and mutual support.

If you would like to learn more about the Presbyterian Church in the Congo, please consider attending meetings of the Congo Team that coordinates our Presbytery's partnership with Congo groups. Information on meetings is available from the Presbytery office. The Congo Pentecost Offering will make it possible for us to continue our Congo partnerships. Thank you for your gifts.