

Week of Prayer for Democratic Republic of the Congo

Kawartha Highlands Presbytery

Given the historic relationship between the Congo and Lindsay Presbytery, and given the presentation at the Kawartha Highlands Presbytery meeting at Minden on Nov. 22, 2013, from Amelia Torrie and Sister Mary-Ellen Francoeur, members of the recent Kairos “Women of Courage” delegation:

Kawartha Highlands Presbytery (through the Mission Circle) proposed and encourages each congregation to honour

a week of prayer for the Democratic Republic of Congo: that peace will come again to this ravaged country, that there will be an end to gender-based sexual violence particularly in the eastern regions and that Canadian-based mining companies operate in a responsible, transparent fashion, showing respect for the environment and sharing the profits of the industry with the local inhabitants.

We pray this will be a blessed educational opportunity for you and your congregation, and work to bring about changes of heart and circumstance in the world.

Background (good places to begin study for sermon prep)

History—colonized by Belgium and considered his personal fiefdom by King Leopold II. The country was stripped of its ivory and rubber resources in brutal fashion leading to a Black American lawyer to use for the first time the term “Crimes against Humanity.” For further information about the exploitation of the people, read *King Leopold’s Ghost* by Adam Hochschild. Other resources: [BBC Congo Timeline](#)
For other organizations raising awareness about current issues see:

www.enoughproject.org
www.friendsofthecongo.org

or Learn about KAIROS partner Héritiers de la Justice—a local human rights organization based in Bukavu, eastern DR Congo. It was founded in 1991. Its mandate is to work non-violently to support human rights in the South Kivu, in the eastern region of DR Congo, and also in the larger Great Lakes region of Africa. They support legal clinics for women, women’s educational opportunities and women’s shelters. For further information visit www.heritiersdelajustice.org

Also consider the mining sector—the DRC is rich in minerals in particular gold, titanium, tantalum and tin. Tantalum, also known as coltan, is a necessary component in the manufacture of electronics (especially cell phones! Regrettably the Congolese people are not sharing in the profits.) The United Church is actively supportive in pressing for responsible mining see www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/takeaction/131127. This is a United Church campaign around mining justice and presents great opportunity for action. You may want to print resources for congregants from this site.

Prayer to Be Shared in Worship

(courtesy of Sister Mary-Ellen Francoeur)

God of Justice,

You are present in our midst, in a world which is broken and in need of healing. Hear our longing for peace and justice in all places where there is war, conflict, and lack of compassion for the most vulnerable. Today, we especially ask for your compassion towards the women of the Democratic Republic of Congo who suffer the cruelty of sexual violence and its consequences in a society which disrespects their human rights. We ask also for justice in the extraction of natural resources with the Congo and a respect for the environment in which these resources are found.

Help us, your people, in this interconnected global community to be inspired and guided by your vision of Justice, Peace, and Unity. May we be empowered by your Spirit to build bonds of solidarity, collaboration and love. We ask all of this through Jesus, the Christ.

Amen

Congolese Song Suggestions for Worship

MV 104, Know That God Is Good

MV 140, As Long As We Follow

Personal Stories for Personal Prayer

(We suggest these stories be copied and shared with congregants as a discipline to practice over the week.)

Day 1: Eliza told the KAIROS delegation her story of seeing her husband and children murdered, of being raped and left for dead. She was found by workers from Héritiers de la Justice taken for medical attention at Panzi Hospital. Today she works with other women survivors of sexual violence. *In your prayers today, include women like Eliza whose faith has not wavered in the face of adversity.*

Advocacy: Contact your MP to encourage the Canadian government to take action to ensure the implementation of Canada's international commitments on women, peace, and security.

Day 2: Imagine carrying heavy loads of rock on your back up a steep slope under a blazing sun receiving no remuneration. Then imagine how grateful you would be when workers from Héritiers de la Justice showed you how to advocate for your rights. Now you still haul rock, but you are paid and your family can eat. *Pray for the continued work of small groups like Héritiers de la Justice.*

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Day 3: Pascal Kabungulu, head of Héritiers de la Justice was murdered in front of his wife and children. His murderers have never been brought to justice. Human rights defenders are frequently targeted in the DR Congo. Impunity is widespread. His widow now lives in Canada and efforts are being made to have Canadian officials attempt to bring the perpetrators to justice. *Pray for the safety of human rights workers in countries like the Congo and an end to impunity for those committing such crimes.*

Day 4: Panzi Hospital in Bukavu was established in 1999 and is currently under the leadership of its founder and medical director Dr. Denis Mukwege. It specializes in treating women with gynaecological conditions, specifically those due to reproductive trauma and trauma from sexual violence. In the past couple of years, Dr. Mukwege has seen younger and younger women being admitted for treatment, some are children as young as two years old. Dr. Mukwege has been threatened with death and a nurse at the Hospital was recently kidnapped. *Pray for those working to help survivors of sexual violence.*

Day 5: Not all mining activity is carried on by large companies with large pieces of equipment. In Mybuji-Mayi families sponsored by Mennonite communities break up and crush stone with simple picks and then send the rock down a cliff to a pond where women pan for diamonds standing in ponds in water up to their knees. Working conditions are deplorable. *Pray for better working conditions for such families and that the mineral wealth of the Congo be shared with all the citizens.*

Advocacy: Urge the Canadian government to renew funding for the establishment of mineral certification systems in the DR Congo and neighbouring countries to curb illegal mineral exports and improve conditions for women and men in the artisanal mining sector.

Day 6: We are certainly familiar with street signs—"Stop," "Yield," "No Parking," etc. But in Goma, a city in the Northeastern section of the DR Congo, we witnessed a couple we had never seen before: a terrified woman fleeing from a man with his belt undone clinging to his pants which were pictured sagging below his hips. The message...STAY OUT of this area because of the threat of rape. No wonder Stephen Lewis calls the DR Congo the worst place in the world to be a woman! A vicious rape takes place in that country every 30 seconds. *Pray for those who cope with the trauma caused by these violent actions.*

Day 7: The simple building was neat and clean, the sheets were glistening white and pulled taut on the dozen or so metal cots. Everything looked great as we toured the new, much-needed maternity hospital. However it couldn't yet be opened for use. Why not? Because there was no *soap*. It is hard for North Americans to wrap our heads around such a situation, we who rarely give a thought to soap of all things! Since I returned to Canada, I am aware of the luxury it is to stand in a warm shower with soap in two dishes and plenty more in the cupboard if needed. *Pray for the Congo when you use soap today and give thanks.*