

You add.
God multiplies.

From One Broadcast to a 14,600-Member Denomination

One seed planted through a radio broadcast nearly 40 years ago has grown into a 14,600-member denomination in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Rev. Kalala Kabongo, president of the United Reformed Church in the Congo, represented his denomination as a fraternal delegate to Synod 2017.

As he drove into Palos Heights, Ill., to address the synod held at Trinity Christian College, he said his eyes lit up as he saw the name on the Chicago offices of Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI). He said, "In Africa we always think of our parents, where we are from. Our church started from a Back to God radio program produced in this place."



While in Chicago as a fraternal delegate to Synod 2017, Rev. Kabongo visited the Back to God Ministries International offices in Palos Heights, Ill.

Kabongo contacted Rev. Kayayan and received additional study materials. That led to a 1980 visit by Kayayan to the fledgling group in the DRC.

When Kayayan made a second visit in 1984, "he encouraged us to start a church," noted Kabongo.

Kabongo enrolled in seminary and, after receiving his Th.M., returned to the DRC to serve in the newly established Reformed Church.

"This church in Congo is a miracle for us," he added. "Did you ever think that from one radio program you would get 14,000 people together who call themselves Christ's church?"

"There were no missionaries in Congo to plant churches, but through radio messages and the Holy Spirit's work in their hearts, we are now part of the big family of Christian Reformed churches."

The denomination now includes 181 local churches across the DRC. "But we only have 34 trained pastors," noted Kabongo. "We need prayer. We need pastors." ■

Kabongo said that in 1979, while searching for the news on shortwave radio, he happened upon *Perspectives Réformées*, a radio program with biblical messages by Rev. Aaron Kayayan, BTGMI French broadcaster at that time.

"I grew up in a Roman Catholic home. What caught my attention was his teaching of salvation by grace through faith and the centrality of God's Word alone. I realized that beyond ritual there is a Savior with whom I can be in relationship."

Kabongo invited friends to listen and started a group Bible study based on the teachings in the broadcast. "As we continued to listen, we wanted to learn more about the Reformed faith," said Kabongo.

—Nancy VanderMeer,
Back to God Ministries International

SHORT TAKES

CRC Member Named Acting General Secretary of Canadian Council of Churches



Peter Noteboom, a member of First Christian Reformed Church in Toronto, Ont., and an employee with the Christian Reformed Church in North America, has recently taken on the role of acting general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), an ecumenical council representing 25 denominations in Canada. ■

—Anita Brinkman,
CRC Communications

Plantinga Wins \$1 Million Templeton Prize



Relying on his bedrock belief that God is the creator and guiding force of the universe, philosopher Alvin Plantinga made a career of asking hard questions and stating

the case for the existence of God. In doing so, he has won many awards, most recently the 2017 Templeton Prize. ■

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications



More Churches Join Climate Witness Project

The Christian Reformed Church's Climate Witness Project has been gathering momentum in recent months. More than 70 participating congregations have signed on to the project. ■

—Chris Meehan,
CRC Communications