

1) Title Slide: California-Nevada & West Angola Conference Partnership

Slide 2) Picture of Bishop William Taylor

Our conference partnership was recently established, but our shared Methodist roots go deep in time. When he was still the Reverend William Taylor, the future Bishop was “a colorful and creative” Methodist minister who preached on the San Francisco wharves, in taverns and in the mining towns (and in churches, too!) in California and Nevada from 1848-56. Lawrence Henderson writes, “Aside from his commitment to holiness and his zeal for the spread of the gospel, Taylor is known for his conviction that missionaries should be self-supporting.”¹ (Sounds like the first UM Volunteers in Mission team, doesn’t it?).

On March 20, 1885, Bishop Taylor and his band of forty-five missionaries—twenty-nine adults and sixteen children—landed in Luanda, Angola. A few weeks later the Portuguese governor wrote back to the government in Lisbon, “A collection of fifty some Americans presided over by a Methodist Bishop Taylor arrived here. Their poor, miserable appearance makes it seem that they are composed of fanatics with an exaggerated religious spirit with their sick minds influenced by the most extravagant doctrines. They think that they can live here without help, maintaining themselves on the basis of “self-supporting missions”, which will produce in practice—as I see it—complete disappointment.”²

Slide 3) Taylor and his band of missionaries made a six month whirlwind journey across the interior of Angola, establishing five mission stations which included a church and a school at each site. These are the remnants of an abandoned home of the first missionaries near Pungo N’Dongo.

Some historians have suggested that the Governor in Luanda was right in his predictions about the rag-tag missionary group. By the end of Bishop Taylor’s tenure in 1896, only thirty-six Angolans were registered members of the church.

BUT, if you were to suggest that in Angola today, the church members would disagree with you vehemently...

Slide 4) There are over 170,000 members of the United Methodist church in Angola today!

There are two annual conferences presided over by two Bishops. In the upper left photo is Bishop Gaspar and Mrs. Lucrecia Domingos of the West Angola Conference; upper right is Bishop Jose Quiquingo of the East Angola Conference and his wife, Dr. Laurinda Quiquingo is in the lower center photo.

Slide 5) Over 260 pastors serve in churches in West Angola. They preach and lead in large, urban churches like the one on the left; and, small, one-room churches like the one of the right.

Slide 6) Attending the Young People’s rally and celebration of 25 years of Youth Ministry, you can not help but catch a bit of that original evangelical zeal and joy in the

Lord that continues to spread the Gospel today in Angola and throughout Africa and southeast Asia.

Slide 7) But, the work of the mother church in Angola today is difficult. The struggle and achievement of independence from Portuguese colonial powers in 1975 was followed by 27 years of civil war. People in rural areas have little cash income and build their homes and feed their families with the natural products around them.

Slide 8) Most farming is subsistence farming. Women grow, harvest and pulverize the cassava or corn and the vegetables that their families depend upon. Their drinking and washing water is from surface waters, or hand-dug wells if they are among the lucky few. The children and women often haul water from long distances in buckets placed on their heads.

Slide 9) People left the war-torn areas of rural Angola, often fleeing with only the clothes on their backs and the children and food they could carry. They struggle to build a place called “home” for their children in the major cities. The capitol Luanda, once a city built to house 400,000 residents, now has a population of 5 million.

Slide 10) With the war over, the government is spending it’s resources on cleaning up garbage instead of buying tanks. But, progress seems slow for the people yearning for prosperity in their own lives. Angola is rich in oil and diamonds—resources that led to outsiders funding much of the civil war during the cold war era. But, the wealth is slow to trickle down to the Angolans. The annual per capita income in Angola is \$2,700; but, 70% of the population makes less than a dollar per day. Will justice follow peace?

Slide 11) In the middle of these poor areas, the Angolan United Methodists are building “posocas” (social centers) which provide food to street children, educational and vocational training, and peaceful sanctuaries in the noise and chaos of the slums.

Slide 12) Teenagers who never got to attend school because of the war, now are learning to read.

Slide 13) The number of people attending worship in the slum is growing and they have out grown their small church. Though they are poor, day by day, brick by brick, the people are building a larger sanctuary with bricks, tin sheets, and boards for pews.

Slide 14) On Sunday morning, they worship God in their unfinished church, because they know that Jesus’ message is for them. That God loves them....that God suffers with them when they suffer.... and that God is at work with them as they work to make their lives and their country a better place for their children.

Slide 15) The West Angola United Methodist church has partnered with the Angolan government and Portuguese partners to build a center of higher education, the Methodist University of Angola, so that the church will once again be developing the minds of tomorrow's leaders in Angola, as well as, their souls.

Slide 16) How does our Partnership fit into making God's vision for Angola happen? We pray for each other and visit each other—through UMVIM teams and Angolan's visiting California-Nevada. Some individuals and churches are faithfully providing teacher and pastor salaries each month.

Bishop Domingos has shared that he appreciates Conferences that help, but he hopes that California-Nevada will become a Partner. Help occurs whenever you think about it, or you have a little extra to give. But, being a partner means you are "in it through thick and thin". A partner commits to working together to see that each other's needs are addressed. Partners see that the goals of both partners are achieved.

West Angola's priorities are developing leaders and combating poverty as they preach a "Whole Gospel of Jesus Christ" that meets the physical needs as well as the spiritual and emotional needs of people. They can't do it alone. We can't either.

West Angolan United Methodists might be able to help us re-claim our heritage of evangelical zeal, as we seek to revitalize California-Nevada churches and start new faith communities!

California-Nevada has helped with this by providing scholarships, salaries, and by helping to finish some schools, but the Bishop hopes that we will be Partners in developing the Agricultural Training Farm. If we achieve that goal together, then we may be invited to address health care and water projects in the future.

Slide 17) These Avocado trees were planted at the training farm in 2004 by a UMVIM team from California-Nevada conference, and have survived even though canal flow had been interrupted for a couple of years. Today, the irrigation channels to the United Methodist property and other large farms have been repaired and waters are ready to flow again.

Slide 18) The West Angola Conference wants to train Angolan farmers and agricultural students in sustainable agricultural practices. Angolan soil is rich and the country was a net exporter of food before the war. They want to recovery that capacity again, but people need to be trained in the best of modern, sustainable agricultural practices. Dr. Tony Sozinho, (on far right in white shirt collecting soil samples for testing) has the agricultural expertise to share and is eager to have Volunteers in Mission come and share in the labor and training of future trainers at the Agricultural Training farm.

They have the land, the water and the expertise, but what Dr. Tony and Bishop Gaspar Domingos don't have is the money for capital equipment. They are inviting California-Nevada Conference to be partners by providing the capital required for buying a tractor, disc, cultivators, and other equipment necessary to start their training farm. Dr. Tony anticipates the farm will become self supporting from the sale of produce to Luanda grocers in six months after they start. Local John Deere dealers are in Luanda to provide tractor parts and repair, if needed.

Slide 19) How will this Agricultural Training farm benefit the children of Angola?

Slides 20) With better seeds, improved soil conservation and fertilization practices, crop rotation and other best management practices, family gardens and farms will produce more food. Child nutrition and food security will improve. More children will win the battle against childhood diseases and deadly malaria.

Slide 21) With more food production and marketing of produce by trained adults, the children will be able to go to school instead of working in the fields or selling produce at the open markets.

This Sunday morning church/weekday school building (in the lower left) was built by UMCOR in a refugee camp only a few years ago. It is near the farm and former refugees will have daily work and training at the farm. The Bishop and other church leaders will recruit people from other towns and provinces to come and stay at the Agricultural Training Farm. They will learn sustainable agricultural practices from Dr. Tony and others. The church wants to develop five other farms in Angola, as those trained people return home to teach others.

Slide 22) Slash and burn will no longer be the way land is cleared in Angola, when contour tillage, green manures, and crop rotation become the practice of farmers in Angola. The soil nutrients and water will be conserved. The air will not be filled with green house gases by the annual burning of grasses, shrubs and trees. And, the baobab tree will once again stand tall as the symbol of the African culture.

Slide 23)

It's not just charity—
it's a chance to make a difference!

Thank you, California-Nevada Conference!

¹Lawrence W. Henderson, *The Church in Angola: A river of many currents*. (Cleveland, Ohio, The Pilgrim Press, 1992), 46-51.

²Emilio J. M. deCarvalho, *Ouco os Passos de Milhares*. (Sao Paulo, Brazil: S. Bernardo do Campo Imprensa Metodista, 1978) , 51.