

Prologue: What Brought Us to Africa?
The Church in the DR Congo: A Personal Perspective, Part 1



“Baptismal Day near Ikot Eyo, Cross River State, Nigeria, by Janath R. Cannon. Elder Edwin Q. Cannon, Jr. baptizing. Photo taken 4 March 1979. Following the June 1978 revelation on the priesthood, the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ was taken to West Africa. On 4 March 1979, at a small stream near the village of Ikot Eyo, Cross River State, Nigeria, sixty-seven persons were baptized [by Elder Edwin Q. Cannon, Jr.]. One hundred seventeen had been baptized the day before. Supervising the baptism (at left and right of the baptismal line) are the Cross River State District president [Ime Eduok] and his first counselor [E. D. Ukuot]. They were the first two black brethren in [West] Africa to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.”^{xi}

In a presentation at the 2018 *FairMormon Conference*,ⁱⁱ I shared stories of some of the faithful Saints in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa). In this series of presentations, I would like to speak from a more personal perspective, reflecting on the meaning of that experience for Kathleen and me, and pondering some of the dynamics of numerical and spiritual growth of the Church in that country.

The series is organized into eight parts:

1. Prologue: What brought us to Africa?
2. Snapshot of the Church in the DR Congo
3. The missionaries
4. What attracts people to the Church?
5. Building from centers of strength — Kisangani
6. Building from centers of strength — Wagenya and elsewhere

7. The temple: A light to the world
8. “The labourers are few”

Part one is a prologue that begins by outlining some important milestones in the history of the Church in West Africa. This will be presented through the eyes of my mother and father who served in Nigeria twice, beginning in 1980. I will then give a few of the circumstances of our call as a couple as senior missionaries to the DR Congo.

ⁱ J. R. Cannon, *Baptismal Day*; J. R. Cannon *et al.*, *Together*, p. 199. See also R. N. Mabey *et al.*, *Brother to Brother*, pp. 97-99; R. N. Mabey, *African Legacy*, pp. 127-129.

ⁱⁱ The video version of the entire FairMormon presentation is available on the FairMormon YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJl9FvLkmjw>. The seven segments of this presentation, in an edited and somewhat expanded form, are available for reading at *Meridian Magazine* (www.ldsomag.com) and the website of *The Interpreter Foundation* (<https://interpreterfoundation.org>).