

Building from Centers of Strength — Kisangani
The Church in the DR Congo: A Personal Perspective, Part 5



In a presentation at the 2018 *FairMormon Conference*,¹ I shared stories of some of the faithful Saints in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa). In this new 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”

Despite the great potential for explosive growth in the vast area covered by the DR Congo Kinshasa mission, the Church is organized in only a handful of cities. This is due in large measure to the general policy of building outward from “centers of strength.” Given its distance from Kinshasa, Kisangani provides an interesting case study in Church development in a remote area of the DR Congo.

In Part 5, I describe the challenges for dedicated leaders and members in this historic and rapidly developing area. We also highlight the work of Elder Stan and Sister Melinda Webb, who served as a Member Leader Support (or MLS) couple in Kisangani. During their mission, they were a tremendous support for the branch, for the missionaries, and in building friends for the Church in Kisangani. Videos and photographs of their enthusiastic work in teaching English to neighborhood friends and in schools for the poor give poignant evidence of the value of their service.

We will also meet Jean-Pierre GOIKABA, a kind and faithful member of the Kisangani Makiso Branch, who is the director of government efforts for disabled students in two provinces. With him and the Webbs, we will visit a school for blind children. We will witness their gratitude for the gift of basic learning materials, including five thick volumes of the Book of Mormon in Braille.

¹ 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.lds.org) and the website of *The Interpreter Foundation* (<https://interpreterfoundation.org>). For more articles and videos by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, see www.templethemes.org.