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Mission Connections

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Nancy Collins | Mission co-worker serving in East Central Africa

Praising God for 21 Years of Mission Service

Dear Family and Friends,

- How have you been changed or affected by your mission experiences? How are you different?
- Share with us the satisfying parts of your life and work in East Central Africa. And the difficult and challenging issues you faced in your life and work.
- What are or were some of your disappointments?
- Tell us about your spiritual development and growth over your years of service.



These are some of the questions discussed during my recent two-hour-long “exit interview” with Debbie Braaksma, Presbyterian World Mission Africa area coordinator, and Lydia Kim, mission personnel coordinator. It was an intense, reflective, thought-provoking, emotionally difficult period of time.

After 21 years in mission service with the PC(USA) — 11 years in Egypt working with the social services wing of the Egyptian Presbyterian Church and with the Presbyterian Hunger Program network and 10 years based in Zambia as PC(USA) regional liaison for East Central Africa — I am now retired.

The exit interview and questions above provided me with an important opportunity to consider the ways I grew as a child of God during those years in mission service, the frustrations I sometimes faced, and the joy I experienced from responding (rather late in life) to God’s call to serve in mission work in Africa.

At 70 years of age, it seems wise for me to step aside and embrace new opportunities for work and play. I am considering adopting a pet, planting a vegetable or herb garden, joining Curves Women’s Health and Fitness here in Lusaka, and attending a women’s Bible Study group.

However, I have to say that there is a part of me that deeply grieves loss of this work that I did willingly and well; work that resulted in treasured relationships with international church partners in Zambia, Malawi, Rwanda and Kenya; work that I believe enabled partners to move forward in important and effective ways; work that strengthened the partnership missiology of mission co-workers in East Central Africa and of PC(USA) constituencies in covenant

Thank you for supporting Nancy’s work as the regional liaison for East Central Africa. Your prayers and financial support have helped make a difference to the lives of people living in Malawi, Kenya, Rwanda and Zambia.

relationships with international church partners; work that was deepened and broadened in me through the collegial relationships with World Mission and Africa regional staff; work through which the Holy Spirit shaped and molded me in new understandings of social justice, economic equity (or inequity), and faith in the face of adversity. I praise God for the blessings I have received from this work.

The outpouring of appreciation from regional international church partners has been overwhelming. One partner indicated, “Words cannot express what you have done for the Church, but our God knows. We are so grateful for your love and passion for the Church. As a result of your hard work, we have seen many programs progress, develop and reach completion.”

I have been heartened and humbled by comments from regional mission co-workers such as the following: “You have poured your heart and your energy into your work over more years than would be ‘required,’ and that work has obviously come from both the mind and the heart. You have engaged with and empowered your/our partners to do their work more effectively. Various strands of ministry are being done in various parts of the African continent because of what you have contributed to the effort through your faithful grant-writing, visits, accompaniment, encouragement, and hospitality.”

A pastor from one of my supporting congregations said, “Thank you so much for all you have done, are doing, and will do in service with and to and through the church ... it has been a pleasure to work with you. You are amazing to be ‘slowing down’ by getting an advanced degree and teaching in a seminary with no electricity. You have clearly been ‘charged’ by God for great work.”

As the quotation above alludes to, I am “retiring” in Lusaka, where I am in the process of completing a master’s degree in church history at Justo Mwale University. I have between now and the end of October to develop and finalize my dissertation. The topic agreed



With Rev. and Mrs. M. Msiska (5th and 6th from left) and session members of CCAP Livingstonia Vibangalala Congregation, Loudon Presbytery, northern Malawi. Nancy and Paula Cooper are on the far right.



From left: Dr. Takuze Chitsulo, principal, Zomba Theological College; Nancy; Dr. Donna Sloan, who has just ended service as a long-term volunteer lecturer at Zomba; and Paula Cooper in southern Malawi.

upon with my Justo Mwale adviser Prof. Edwin Zulu is "Evaluation of the impact of the General Assembly of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) on its Member Synods from 2000 to the present." I am looking forward to what I will discover as I review existing literature, investigate primary resources in various archives, and interview targeted CCAP leaders.

Retirement Step 2 is teaching church history at Chasefu Theological College (CTC), the small seminary of CCAP Synod of Zambia in rural eastern Zambia. I will serve in a long-term volunteer position (2 years renewable) developed by CCAP Zambia and approved by PC(USA) World Mission. This will begin after I complete my MTh program. I expect to move to Chasefu toward the end of 2019.

Chasefu is currently off the electrical grid, so life there will be somewhat more rustic than it has been in Lusaka! The CTC Board of Directors has offered to me use of the "Principal's House"—nearly completed but never occupied by the CTC principal. By the time I arrive in Chasefu, I trust the house will have screens on windows and a solar system capable of supporting lights, mobile phone, laptop and a refrigerator (can't live without mayonnaise!!). Please join with me in praying for the leadership and students of Chasefu Theological College and for funds to complete the various infrastructure projects that need to be in place by end of 2019.

Because of my 21 years of mission service, I am eligible for a "re-entry grant" equal to six month's salary and Board of Pension benefits. As a result, Presbyterian World Mission joins me in asking that you continue to financially support my ministry through August 2019.

As of March 1, Rev. Paula V. Cooper, my successor, has assumed the roles and responsibilities of regional liaison for East Central Africa. I worked with Rev. Paula throughout January, assisting her with the myriad roles and responsibilities that comprise the work of regional liaison. Throughout the month of February, I traveled with Paula to introduce her to the leadership and work of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa in Kenya, leadership and work of the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda in Rwanda, and leadership and work of the four synods of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Zambia and Malawi. Beginning September 1, 2019, you are invited to discontinue support of me, and begin supporting the ministry of Rev. Paula.

Since I am completing my master's dissertation here in Lusaka, I am not returning to the USA in 2019 to thank you all in person for the ways you have accompanied me here in East Central Africa over the past 10 years. I am thankful for your greetings, your Facebook comments (!), your prayers, and the generous financial support you have provided to my ministry. You are precious to me as the arms and hands and feet and voice of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am able to rejoice in my 10 years of service in this place because of your generosity. Without you, it would not have been possible for me to accompany PC(USA) international church partners, mentor regional mission co-workers, or interact with congregations across the USA. Thank you for what you have done and are doing for my ministry. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more.

Your sister in Christ,

Nancy

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Nancy Collins

Serving in East Central Africa

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Thank you for reading about Nancy's ministry.

