

Pastor Kifi pulled the old drum to center floor, awkwardly propping it with his knee. The drum was missing a leg. As he began a lively syncopated beat to lead worship, first one, then two more little boys scampered forward to steady the drum with outstretched arms. Their whole bodies danced to the tempo. What a treat to find Pastor Kifi at Moanza! The traditional church service welcome warmed my heart the weekend that our Medical Coordination team spent at Moanza. Pastor Kifi always loved music and choirs, and now the Moanza church rocked with his rhythm, while drummer boys exuded pride at their self-appointed task. I'm sure Pastor Kifi wisely chose 'community participation' rather than wood and nails to fix the drum.

Pastor Kifi's story is one of faithfulness to God's call from choir directing and teaching, to pastoring rural congregations. Trained as both a school teacher and pastor he began as an assistant pastor at Vanga. A musician at heart, he was a dynamic and appreciated director of multiple choirs. After some years, church rivalries and tribalism prevented him from carrying out his duties. Church leaders recommended him to the church at Masi Manimba. He accepted, knowing God ordained the move. Choirs multiplied, but unfortunately he could not find a teaching job, significantly reducing the family income. Still, he resolutely served his God despite the hardship. His family suffered financially because of his determination to serve Christ.

Two years later, the church leaders recommended Pastor Kifi move to Moanza, serving this time as head pastor. The community at Moanza had passed through a season of bitter tribal politics and they needed new leadership. Pastor Kifi's track record of humble service made him a perfect candidate. No teaching job again, however. But he accepted and diligently began building bridges in a severely divided community. His peacemaking began to draw people back together so that months later, when we discovered him at Moanza, we felt the impact of his selfless service in a remarkably constructive hospital board meeting, and in the warm (and syncopated) welcome!

Emmanuel, the desire of Nations. God with us.

*O come, Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Heaven's peace is creeping into Moanza through Pastor Kifi's ministry (and that of his "drummer boys"). May God make us all faithful instruments of God's peace, in this season and in all seasons. From our hearts, thank you for your partnership with us in Congo.

Katherine Niles



Pastor Kifi (orange shirt) offers a welcoming prayer on the arrival of the Medical Coordination team.

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