

Appointment Congo



Please note our
home base address:

APPOINTMENT CONGO

PO Box 98764
Raleigh, NC 27624

Email:

paulandmarty@appointmentcongo.com

Website:

www.appointmentcongo.org

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Dear Colleagues,

In April we came home for Paul and Pastor Kitambala to attend General Conference in Tampa. This was the Pastor's first stateside visit, so I noted some of his observations and comments.

We arrived into the Indianapolis airport on a beautiful spring day. Our son, Burleigh, met us with his family van. We let the Pastor ride in the front. Since it was about 5:30 p.m., we drove to KFC and Burleigh ordered from the outside window. Then he drove around and paid for the bucket of chicken with plastic money and we drove away.

We then went to our son's new home. After meeting the family, whom the Pastor had heard about, I took him on a tour of the house. Upon entering the master bedroom/bathroom, he commented that it would be possible to put a whole village hut inside! Walking back down the carpeted stairs, he remarked that if this were in Congo, the sand would soon destroy the carpet!

Later, driving to our home, he saw several geese and wanted to know if we ate them. We told him that was against the law, and that we had no need to eat them since there was plenty of meat available at the grocery. In our home, I showed him the dishwasher, the stove, microwave, washer and dryer--appliances that allowed me to get work done easily. In the Congo, I need people to accomplish the tasks that these appliances allow me to do in the U.S. (and without running water there!) The Pastor then commented that he could let the water run as long as he wanted to in the shower, and no one would care.

Two days later, we drove down I-65 to visit my 96-year-old mother living in a private home. The Pastor wanted to know why there were no people walking along the roads? A bit later, he wanted to know why there were no bicycles? He noticed that most cars had only one person in them! He saw only pavement and then grass, and the grass was always being mowed. Where was all of the sand? He said he had pictured America as mostly houses, but here he saw lots of open fields and farms with lots of space--especially in Indiana. That really surprised him.

While in Tampa, he was appalled by the number of women he saw smoking, saying, "A Congolese woman would never do that!" Then he talked about the women who walked around with only halter tops and very short shorts. He said, "No respecting woman would walk around like that!" He said, "Missionaries taught us to wear clothes. Then I come to visit, and I see you are taking them off!"

He noticed the long daylight hours, since usually it is dark by 6:30 p.m. in Lodja each night. "Why do you have such long days?"

The Monday after his return to our home after the conference, our oldest grandson, Caleb, invited him to visit his French class. It was a block class, so the Pastor had 90 minutes to share. The Pastor spoke in French, while Paul translated. The students seemed to enjoy his descriptions about the different way he lives at Lodja, compared to the way they live.

At one point the teacher let me get on her computer to bring up our web page--which showed up on a large white board (there are no longer any black boards!) called a "smart board", which displayed the computer screen. (That was the first time this grandma ever saw one as well!) Our grandson's high school even blew my mind. The school is very new. There were two gymnasiums, with one having an indoor track. The school had a very large completely updated workout room, two large swimming pools, a large cafeteria, and a library.

We met Caleb's engineering teacher in the classroom--where each desk had a computer. We asked him the cost of the school. He said it was supposed to be \$130 million, but it had gone over budget. That is more than most governmental budgets in Congo! And this was only ONE school in the U.S.! We told the Pastor that these are our tax dollars that REALLY work.

Outside, there was one field to practice soccer, and one to play on. There were other fields for a marching band, baseball, and football fields with lots of parking. There were large cement balls in front of the entrance doors for security.

One of the students asked what food he liked best. He replied "Hamburgers and 'finger-licking good' chicken"! Rice is his favorite food, which he ate only twice before he refused to eat the "plastic rice you have in America".

As we returned back to our house, he saw a dead deer on the side of the road. He wanted to know if anyone would eat it. We told him, "No, we have all the meat we want available at the grocery." The next day I took him to Walmart and showed him the large variety of meats and fish we have from which to choose.

For decades now, the Congolese in our area have believed that we came to Congo just for the eggs, since we are always sending out for eggs or trading salt for eggs, or sending someone to the market for eggs. At Walmart I showed him the egg section. Later, while at General Conference there was a buffet breakfast and each day there was a large hot tray with scrambled eggs. Paul asked him, "How many of our small eggs do you think it would take to fill that hot tray?" He said, "Way more than we have in the market!"

One day I was cutting up a roast for supper with an electric knife. The Pastor commented, "There are so many things that you can do because you have electricity!"

He saw the waste management truck come and take our trash away. He saw lawn mowers that keep the grass so nice. He talked several times about everything being mowed.

When traveling to Waxhaw, NC, where we were to arrange our things for the ocean container, we stopped and spent the night at Lake Junaluska to visit Paul's step parents. While there, we ate out and once we walked outside, he commented to Paul that he felt like "a piece of charcoal on a bed of white rice"--meaning he was the only black person in the restaurant! However, once we arrived in Charlotte, he saw he was no longer the only black man there. In a Charlotte restaurant he counted the televisions to watch... there were 14! Several times he exclaimed that we certainly live in a different world.

He said, "In Lodja, I live in a nice house compared to others there, but it is nothing compared to the U.S." Of course, our Interstate road system was a lot to take in. He said that was what impressed him most--our Interstates.



He talked many times about the conveniences of life in the U.S., and how good and easy it was. After having observed TV and people while shopping, he concluded that all of the "things" in the U.S. would probably keep any young folks from ever coming to Congo to work, since life in central Congo is so different. But then he said, "You can have all of the good things in America, but if you don't know Jesus, then it is for nothing." Amen!

He said repeatedly that Paul and I must really love them (the Congolese) to give all of "this" up to come and live like we do at Lodja. He said, "You are giving up so much to come to us--many, many conveniences." Yes. We do love them! The only difficult things we really miss ("give up") are our children, grandchildren and friends. The other things we can do without. "Things" are not necessary in order to have contentment and commitment and a calling.

Pastor Kitambala's perspective from Paul and Marty

P.S. Since our return to the Congo, the Pastor has been have having very HIGH blood sugar and has been very sick. Please pray for a special touch for his health. He is our key man!

Email us: paulandmarty@appointmentcongo.com

Website: www.appointmentcongo.org

Facebook: facebook.com/appointmentcongo

Paul and Marty Law

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TO OUR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS: