



# Profiles

of Mennonite Faith

## *Pascal Tshisola Kulungu: Leader and Peacemaker*

Pascal Tshisola Kulungu was born on October 11, 1953, in the village of Kambanguya in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to Kulungu Musehenu Kambanguya Balthazar and Mwanoka Nayilowa Jeanne. He was the eldest son in a family of three children. He died on January 16, 2019, less than a week after being elected to the Congolese National Parliament. He is survived by his wife, Therese; four sons, Bienvenu, Doug, Iren, and Julio; and two daughters, Christelle and Juliana.

At the center of Pascal's life were family, education, friends, his Anabaptist-Mennonite faith community, and his deep desire to witness for peace.

Pascal spoke very highly of his family. He was proud of his wife, a nurse-midwife and a graduate of the Mennonite Brethren nursing school in Kajiji. As for his children, Pascal would sometimes exaggerate their accomplishments. Once, he met a childhood friend whom he had not seen since high school graduation. Pascal excitedly told him about his marriage to the most beautiful woman in the world with whom he had a son, Bienvenu. He boasted that Bienvenu was exceptionally intelligent and could speak Chokwe, French, English, German, Kituba, and Kimbala, the local language of the region served by the high

school where Pascal was principal. When the friend visited several months later, he was surprised to discover that Bienvenu was less than a year old! That was Pascal.

When four of the children were back together in Kinshasa in the fall of 2018, Pascal and Therese invited a small group of friends to celebrate their children's accomplishments. One was working as a senior advisor to the Prime Minister of DR Congo. Another would later replace Pascal in the National Party. Another was working as a senior accountant for a large firm on the US east coast. One had just earned an RN degree in the US and one had graduated from university in Kinshasa. Pascal and Therese had every reason to be proud of their children.

In terms of education, Pascal was a lifelong learner. In 1965, he completed primary school in Kambanguya. He attended junior high in Kajiji, a Mennonite Brethren mission station. In 1968, he went to Kikwit, 450 km from home, to pursue his high school studies at the American Mennonite Brethren mission school, now known as Congo Mennonite Brethren Mbandu Institute, where he graduated in 1973.

While in Kikwit, life in the dormitory provided excellent opportunities to develop lasting relationships. Besides being a good student, he became an excellent



Pascal Kulungu (1953-2019)

comedian. Several times, he was caught standing in front of the class imitating the broken French accent of his American and Canadian teachers. Years later, while in Fresno, California, he shared with childhood friend Pakisa Tshimika that he now realized how hard it was to speak in a foreign language and suggested that they apologize to their former teachers.

Following his desire to pursue excellence in his professional life, Pascal embarked on a long journey of academic preparation. He first earned an associate degree in English and African Cultures from the Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Kikwit. Then, after working for several years in DR Congo as a secondary school teacher, later as a principal in MB church schools, and as a hospital administrator in Kajiji, he pursued studies at Fresno Pacific University in Fresno, California. There, he earned a BA in Business Administration and an MA in Peace and Leadership Studies.

With an excellent academic preparation, several employment options became available to Pascal in the US and in the international non-profit community. However, he was committed to returning home to serve among his people. As Pascal was finishing his studies in California, war and conflict broke out in the eastern region of DR Congo. After much reflection, he chose to go back with Therese and their two daughters, Christelle and Juliana. The decision was also influenced by the family's desire to reconnect with their four sons who had remained in Kikwit with their maternal uncle.

After his return to DR Congo, Pascal served in many professional capacities between 1998 and 2019, including director of the Department of Health and Development of the Congolese MB Church; budget

administrator for the Christian University of Kinshasa; founder and director of the Center for Peacebuilding, Leadership, and Good Governance; member of the Service Network of the Mennonite World Conference; member of the International Community of Mennonite Brethren commission that drafted the ICOMB Confession of Faith; professor of conflict resolution, leadership, and governance at the Christian University of Kinshasa; chair of MCC's Congo Urgent Peace Project committee, training some 200,000 people in preparation for Congo's first, post-independence election in 2005; mediator for several conflicts in churches; national coordinator of the Teach Beyond Program for DR Congo; and co-founder of the national political party, Alliance for Good Governance.

You could always tell when Pascal was present by the laughter coming from a room. His laughter was infectious. But when news of his sudden death was announced, his legacy began to echo around the globe.

The best way to summarize Pascal's life is by quoting from a note that his mentor, professor Dalton Reimer of FPU, gave Pakisa to share with Pascal's family.

*Pascal was indeed a faithful one. He is now with his Lord and Savior, who has welcomed him into his presence. While we grieve, we also remember Pascal's work bringing peace on earth. He lived life well in the context of continuing challenges. His many contributions as teacher, headmaster, health administrator, leader, and peacemaker will be long remembered. And you will know better than any his presence and modeling within the family. Those of us who knew him as a friend and spiritual brother will also remember his wise counsel, gracious spirit, many kindnesses, and good humor.*



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