

About ANGOLA...



Introduction to the Angola Partnership

Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC)

Evangelical Congregational Church of Angola/
Igreja Evangelica Congregacional em Angola (IECA)

Geography

- Located in southwestern Africa, bordering Namibia, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Atlantic Ocean
- Area is slightly less than twice the size of Texas
- Capital: Luanda
- 18 provinces
- Mineral resources: Petroleum, diamonds

People

- Population of approximately 12 million
- Official Language: Portuguese
- Over 8 major ethnic/language groups, the largest of which are:
 - Ovimbundu
 - Bakongo
 - Kimbundu
- Religions: approximately 40-70% Catholic, 15-20% Protestant, 10-45% traditional beliefs
- Literacy rate: approximately 40-50%
- Poverty rate: approximately 70%
- Infant mortality rate: approximately 20%
- Demographic information uncertain due to the long period of war and the large number of refugees and internally displaced persons during this period

History

- Inhabited for thousands of years
- First millennium A.D. Bantu peoples arrive, displace Khoisan people
- Kongo Kingdom flourishes, 14th and 15th centuries
- 1482/1483 Portuguese arrive, slave trade begins
- 15th to 20th centuries: Angolan resistance to colonization, slavery
- 1671 Portuguese consolidate control of Kongo and Ndongo kingdoms

- late 1800's/early 1900's: Portuguese consolidate control of interior of Angola, including Ovimbundu kingdoms
- Modern independence struggle, 1961 - 1975
- November 11, 1975: independence
- Civil war: 1975 - 2002

The UCC and Angola

- 1880: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) sends 3 missionaries to central Angola, including one African-American
- 1922: African-American mission established at Galangue Mission; supported by American Missionary Association (AMA) and ABCFM
- 1955: Council of Evangelical Churches of Central Angola (CIEAC) formed
- 1975: Last UCC missionaries leave Angola as civil war starts
- 1979: CIEAC transformed into the national post-independence denomination Evangelical Congregational Church of Angola (IECA)
- 1980's - 1990's: UCC support for IECA continues, with periodic exchanges of delegations during times of relative peace
- 1990's: Southeast Conference supports landmine removal efforts
- 2000 - 2004: University Church/Trinity UCC of Chicago begin partnership work with IECA; Tuthill Fund of Illinois Conference provides funding for Canata Cultural Arts program, Lobito, Angola
- 2004: Illinois Conference Annual Meeting hosts IECA delegation, adopts partnership with IECA

Illinois Conference U.C.C./IECA Partnership

Purpose and Philosophy

- To build on historical ties between the UCC and IECA and between the U.S. and Angola
- The 2002 cease-fire ushered in an era of peace, creating a *biros* moment, a time when God offers Angolans, and us, an opportunity for faithful discipleship and action together
- The body of Christ consists of many members and "if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." (1 Corinthians 12:26)
- Recognize the many opportunities we have to learn from each other and grow together
- Priorities for projects and action to be set by the Angolans for projects in Angola
- New avenues of reconciliation and transformation

Current Projects

- Support IECA initiatives for church and community development:
 - Bibles for IECA churches, motorcycles for pastors, women's literacy, health centers
- Developing Christian education curriculum materials on Angola
- Education and outreach to Illinois Conference congregations
- Preparing for hosting and sending delegations during 2005 and beyond

For More Information

- Contact the Illinois Conference Office, 708-344-4470, uccillconf@aol.com