

Global Conversations on Discipleship: Betty Kazadi

Betty Kazadi: I am Betty Kazadi-Musau, from North Katanga Annual Conference and I am the Director of Communication of North Katanga Episcopal Area. I am the Secretary of Board of Directors for Higher Learning Institution in North Katanga. I work with the disaster management office. I work with women as a strategist for women development and empowerment. And I am, by profession, my training and specialty, I am a teacher.

I told the District Superintendent who was on the field, he said “we need—we need to see those women and talk to them.” Those Pygmies they have right to live. They have right to live like any woman, like any human being.

Fortunately for us, we went to see them where they are and the district superintendent invited them to come to the church—the local church in Nyunzu. We organize, because the intention—we—we were sponsored by United Methodist Women. The intention was to train them on dialogue and the reconciliation but our training turned into a dialogue. Where we give them time to explain to what they need. And we heard a lot of stories: stories of anger, stories of resilience, stories of hope.

As a woman who lives in city, going to women who live in the rural areas, with all those books that I have read. I had an experience where my mind changed completely. In the sense that, I was expecting to go and teach them something yet, at the end of the day, those women—indigenous women, taught me something, to be humble and to develop more of listening mentality. I developed mental listening and attentive listening. In the sense that, women explain all their sufferings with boldness, with love and courage.

We are not alone, we had Bantu women and Pygmies women. we give them time to talk and they talked. The more they talked the more they—the easier they were getting healed from their sufferings, and pains and wounds that they had in their heart. And—I ate with them and I was just driving other women—Bantu women to eat with people that they consider, in the community, like, dirty and unworthy. And this was the beginning that, as women, we need to change our way of viewing or looking at one another.

We did that dialogue for almost four days and at the end of the day the community local leaders were interested to see how the United Methodist Church is reaching out to indigenous women, so that they may come to the church and this was, for the first time, for indigenous women to be in a building—like church, number one. And to be among—and to be among Bantu. I am I am—personally I am a Muntu and to be among Bantu people and talk to Bantu women. Because, indigenous people—Pygmies people they are—they are treated like slaves, like maids, people who are doing household in other people's house.

So, for the church this was a beginning of a very great ministry. I know some other people have done it in different places but for the case of Nyunzu, this was for the first time, women to enter a church to talk to other women and they would come, they bathe, they dress well to be

like any other woman. Because they came for the first time very dirty and some of the Bantu women could not— could not draw near them. Then I said "it is for a time, because they are in need. As a church we need to do something for them so that they may feel worthy living and worthy talking to other people."

This is the case for indigenous women but, for some of the time, I always— the good thing of that ministry is that I always get the reports from people who are in Nyunzu that because of that outreach, they come to church, they can work in the community, they feel comfortable.

Because the cause of the conflict between Bantu the indigenous people was about sexual abuse. Bantu men could harass easily the indigenous women but not the way round. No Pygmies men could harass a Bantu woman. Never. Bantu women think when you are married by Pygmy it is like a shame in the community. Yet, what I have noticed as somebody coming from outside Pygmies are very attentive, they are very clever, they talk with sense. That's why I say this was a change of mind at a personal level but as a human being, created in the image of God, we need to listen to each other with our heart, with our mind, with our soul.

I started reaching out to women. There is even a church where all the membership is indigenous people but I was the first one to reach out to women— Pygmies women. Because last time when I went there, I brought for them soap powder, blankets. I said "I want to see you well. I want to see you clean."

Not that I want to bring them something as Christian or what— No! I want them to be like me. I want them to be who they are: human beings created in the image of God. Mm-hmm.

Mighty Rasing: And so, as you reaching out and working with these indigenous women. What kind of support and resources has the church provided you or did you have partners? And how are you— how are you structuring this ministry and how are you sustaining this?

BK: For the first time, I did a project and submitted it to United Methodist Women in New York and they funded me for the first time as phase one training and I had another phase two training. But now I was asked by—by one of the presenters at the pre-briefing in Nashville (in early 2020) to send a project on indigenous women. How— how we can help them, because— because we also initiated how to help them do soap-making, right? And trained them how to sew and to knit, because there was a need on the ground.

That the only work that we do is to go and tell the workers on somebody's farm but we want also to be like other women who do. They make their clothes for themselves. They make their soap for themselves. We use the soap for sale and the other soap we use for the family. And I said "this is very interesting."

Then we initiated, but there are some of the women— Bantu women, who had this ministry of soap-making. And I said "Why don't you invite them and train them?" Because when— when you train them how to do their own— make their own clothes, make their own soap, this is

sustaining. They will not come and ask you. No, they will be self-reliant. We don't want them to come to the church but they want— Whenever they see you on the street they say "uh-huh, I am who I am today, because of United Methodist Women."

Because we want to humanize people. People need to be human. Not Christian but human. And in the same— in the same zone— in the same zone of Katanga Annual Conference, I did training on family budgeting. Family budgeting with United Methodist Women. Why? Number one: We noticed Africans— African women when—when— they don't have any monthly, quarterly budget. Because, when they are given money by their husband, they go to market— our African market.

They, you know, you said Today we are going to buy, maybe a meal... maybe ingredients or what. They bring— they buy whatever they see without any plan. And I said "This is the way that you are wasting your money. You don't— you don't foresee the future, to know tomorrow you retire, you start complaining." No. We need to be responsible of our own retirement. Budget our own things. Even though we have a little money but let's budget on this little money, because we don't need to waste time on things that are not useful to us. It can be useful maybe after some time, but now let's learn how to budget. The more a woman budgets in the house, the easier children will learn how to budget; even the husband will learn how to budget and you will not waste the money for the family.

I did that training and, at the end of the day, I was — I think one of the—one of the partner... from West Ohio. I think so. We got funds from West Ohio, where I distributed sewing machines to different districts so that they start making their own clothes and I bought needles to knit clothes for babies or some gloves. Because there are some local churches who did that and sofa— sofa cover. They did some sofa covers for sale that they could go sell them on the market. People were buying for— to generate income for their own organization. Then when I go for a visit and I say "This is fine, because it starts from something. You grow. You get the habit of working hard and going to help you multiply and be self-reliant."

Women from North Katanga are initiated to the project of Women Sewing Center. When you go to North Katanga, official Facebook of North Katanga Annual Conference ([LINK](#)) you will see the Women Sewing Center, where women sew: clerical shirt, robes, scarfs. They sell them and they pay them. They pay the workers who are in the center and there's some of the women— No, girls who are doing tailoring in different schools. They come in that center for internship. This is really interesting, because I shared the vision with women and I was the one to raise funds for machines and I can see how other women— some girls come for training in that center.

So, you see how the church is being visible in the community and the church is helping girls to be who they are today. This is very important. We don't want those girls to be Methodists. No! Discipleship is not about denomination; discipleship is about to make disciples of Christ. Wherever they are they share the love God to other people, to family member, and to whoever!

MR: I can see you are doing a lot of efforts to engage the community, specifically girls and women. And you mention something about discipleship and that the— the hope is that we humanize them and that they become empowered. And that it's not like, "we give you this, in exchange, you come to our church." So, what I'm going to ask you next is how does discipleship enter the picture? How does a spiritual formation and teaching happen while you engaging the community, specifically these girls and women?

BK: Interesting. I have an example when I graduated from my doctorate, community friends said "Betty, we need to give you a gift." I said "Go ahead I want to listen to you gift." "We want to give you a personal gift." Then I told them "No, I don't need the first gift. Give me scholarships for other girls to be like me." And we— I signed a contract with the Church of Resurrection in Kansas.

So, for four years, the Church of Resurrection in Kansas was— has been supporting 14 girls in North Katanga. In different higher learning institutions. I don't know those girls, I don't know the criteria— how they were selected but what I'm telling you some have graduated because of me.

They— we train when they come to us like girls, like women, we train them, number one. Even before all those cases that I shared with you about training. The important thing is about devotion. In our devo— every day we do training, the devotion of the day should be linked to the theme for the day. So that people, women who attend, not only Methodists because we always invite other women from Pentecostals, Catholic women, we— we work together with them. So that they know that Methodist Church— United Methodist Church, United Methodist Women have a very strong foundation in faith. How— How? Women learn how to read the Bible. That's our foundation. It's because of the word of God that entice us, pushes us, stimulate us to do the work that we do and be passionate, compassionate to work with other people.

I've never— have never reached out to prisons but United Methodist women that I work with they usually go out to— to prisons. They share food, maybe to orphanages, to different people who are in need. Every time people say, like, the case of Kamina, this is our headquarter, people say "Ah! We need to go to the United Methodist Church, because United Methodist Church is giving value to people, you know, they are helping other people to gain value in the community." And they say "Why is that?" And I say "Yes! You people you are very serious if you want to help somebody you help them with all you heart."

The challenge that we have with women as Africans, particularly in North Katanga a lot of women didn't go to school. They are good at listening they are really good at listening than reading. Why? They can read in Swahili fine but French they still have a problem because a lot of women though they are leaders they didn't go— they didn't study. They are not educated. They are leaders. That's why we— we work with them to scale up the self-esteem in them and empower them, recover who they should be.

It is like today, after the pre-briefing at General Conference (in early 2020) I took social principle books. The first thing that I did is to give the social principle to women. Go and read, with your little French, do your best and read and study the content.

MR: What I can— What I can see from the ministry that you and the church in North Katanga is doing is that there is no separation of the spiritual and the looking after the welfare of the people you serve with.

BK: Yes.

MR: So, whether it's empowering, helping the women and then reaching out to the prisons and to communities. It's like there's this wholistic view of discipleship—

BK: Mm-hmm

MR: that the church is reaching out to people caring for people and, at the same time, presenting the Gospel message.

BK: Exactly.

MR: So, what is the impact that you see in terms of how the church is viewed or even in the way that people commit to follow Christ?

BK: The Church in North Katanga is not a building. The impact that I have seen is community building. That's number one. What does it mean? People come together, people learn how to socialize, people look after one another, people learn how to reach out to one another. If there is any funeral, any ceremony, any concerns, any joy people share in the community. Because: socialization, community building, coming together, fellowshiping is not easy nowadays. But because of the church, people learn to come together—people learn to come together share their concerns, joys and they are moved together.

Also, the other thing is the ministry of presence. North Katanga episcopal area has developed much of a ministry of the presence, where— Whenever there is any issue in the community you see the church visible. The visibility of the church in the community is very strong. And this, the more people see the church— by the church, I mean people representing the church; people feel comforted. When there is funeral, when there is joy people feel— people mingle one another they feel joy to share their joy together and the move ahead to build the Kingdom of God where they are.

MR: That's a beautiful description of the church, Betty.

BK: [Laughs] Thank you so much!