# **Congo Women Arise: Three United Methodist Conferences Partner to Support East Congo Women’s Center**

The Tennessee, Memphis and California-Pacific Annual Conferences of The United Methodist Church are partnering with the East Congo United Methodist Church through “Congo Women Arise” – an initiative to address the needs of rape survivors in a location often called the “rape capital of the world.”

In Congolese culture, women are the foundation of the family, church and village. These women are targeted and used as pawns in the war raging in the region. In an attempt to disjoint families and communities, their aggressors leave them as victims of physical, sexual, psychological, social and domestic problems.

Congo Women Arise will provide a women’s center with transitional housing in Kindu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, as the local church brings physical, psychosocial and spiritual support for survivors. Women can learn income-generating skills such as cooking, sewing, midwifery, and childcare to provide long-term sustainability.

United Methodist Women provide a key leadership role for the program, as survivors rediscover their own value and reintegrate with society.

Named the “Mama Lynn Center” after Lynn McAlilly, wife of Bishop Bill McAlilly of the Tennessee and Memphis Conferences, it will become a life-changing place of hope with a transformative effect on many villages and communities. Supporting this center is a continuation of the relationships and work that each of these U.S. conferences already has established in the East Congo Episcopal Area.

A team of United Methodists plans to travel to East Congo in July to aid in the construction of the women’s center. Clergy and laity from the three conferences are invited to participate in the mission. Scholarships were donated so young adults could participate as well.

The three conferences are raising funds to assist with the construction of the Mama Lynn Center, as United Methodist Youth in Kindu contribute brick-making skills to the program. An anonymous donation of $150,000 given at the end of 2016 has kick-started the effort to raise a total of $350,000. Bishop Unda said, “I am the happiest man because I initiated this project, and day by day, it is becoming a reality.”

Visit congowomenarise.org for more details, resources and to donate.

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