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Mimi Kanku was ordained in July 2012, the first woman to be ordained by the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Congo (CEM). This young mother of two was also one of the first Congolese Mennonite women to study theology. But Mimi believes that everything she does is the Lord's work.

She was born in 1981 to a Mennonite family in Kinshasa. In fact, the Righini congregation of the CEM leased its lot from her parents. She began attending Sunday school as a child and became active in the church and the choir.

It was her pastor, along with the president of the CEM women in Kinshasa, who strongly urged Mimi to study theology. Mimi was convinced that she should follow this discipline, even though it might not lead to a pastorate, as she hoped. But at the time she was already enrolled in the National Pedagogical University, majoring in commercial sciences. She did not immediately change her studies.

The year 2006 brought many changes into Mimi's life. She married Belarmain Ngalula, who was a member of the Bumbu CEM congregation in Kinshasa. Their first child was born. Mimi left her home church and began attending her husband's congregation. With all of this going on, Mimi received a scholarship to pursue theological studies and enrolled in the department of theology at the Christian University of Kinshasa. She had to manage the demands of being a

wife and mother, along with academic requirements and often very late scholarship payments.

At Bumbu, Mimi took charge of Sunday school and immediately joined the choir, which at the time was composed essentially of the pastor's children. She missed her home church and was dissatisfied with the weaknesses she found in the new one. She is not afraid to say these were the consequence of poor leadership on the part of pastors who distributed funds unfairly, as well as regional leaders who replaced pastors in an untimely fashion.

All those irregularities led Mimi to leave CEM in order to worship at her mother's church in another denomination, where she immediately became a choir member and an intercessor. And it is there that she felt called to the Lord's service. "In effect, it was because they came to my house to take me to a prayer service or to the choir that I felt called to be in service to the Lord as his disciple."

But her marriage to Belarmain obliged her to reintegrate into the Bumbu congregation, where she pursued service to God in the Sunday school, the choir, as an intercessor, and as an officer in the women's group.

Mimi declares that she has never encountered shadows in her life. "I have lived my whole life in the church." That is why she believes that everything she has done for the Lord has been important. "I am the one who organized the Sunday school and strengthened the choir. I was at women's conventions from time to time and took care to see that CEM women stood up for their point of view, like the other women. Without role models in the CEM, I forced myself to moderate certain events and to lead singing—if only to improve the image of the CEM."

Although she had always wanted to organize big conventions, Mimi never had the courage to try it. It was when she went to university that she had both the courage and the means to do it—with the goal of taking up a challenge on behalf of her community. "I always want to do better for my congregation and my church," she says. "My church never used to organize women's conventions. But I organized the very first one of its kind. The occasion was Women's Month and the theme was 'Woman, Wake Up!'"

That was the time Mimi made history by being the first Mennonite woman to preach at a CEM event. This moment was crucial for her, because for the first time she was in front of a microphone

that echoed far from the congregation. On the same trajectory, Mimi organized and led seminars never before held in her congregation, to the great satisfaction of believers and unbelievers alike.

Mimi believes that the Lord gives total support for all her ministries past and future. One of the strongest testimonies of this, she says, is that her children have suffered all kinds of illness but have always recovered. “In all kinds of unhappiness that I have known as a woman, mother, and servant, and in all the joys that I have had, God alone is my help.”

Jean Félix Chimbalanga