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The Rev. Placide Yongo acknowledges that his task is not easy. He is a pastor in charge of “military morale,” a chaplain to members of the military who are part of several congregations in Tshikapa. He himself is a captain in the army. This is a highly unusual position for a Mennonite pastor in the Congo, as it would be in North America.

“We counsel and encourage members of the military,” he says. “Encouraging a conscience in military personnel—helping them want to do good and avoid evil—is a task that requires a lot of care.” He believes his apostolic calling is comparable to that of servants of God who bring unbelievers to a recognition of God as the sole creator of the universe.

Placide Yongo was born in Mukedi in 1939 and baptized at the Mennonite mission on December 28, 1952. He attended primary school at the same place, high school at Nyanga, and finally trained at the Protestant theological school of Kinshasa from 1969 to 1973, followed by eight months of teacher training in Kikwit. He taught for six years and worked for twelve years as head of the Mukedi primary schools. He then joined the military and served first as a provincial chaplain for seven years in Bas-Congo.

Placide Yongo and Florentine Madiwasa married in 1961 and have now been married more than fifty years. Mama Madiwasa was born near Kahemba in 1942, went to primary school in Mukedi, and

photos—Florentine Madiwasa (left); Rev. Placide Yongo (right)

was baptized at the mission in 1957. Before marriage, Florentine had had a year of training at the school of home economics, and she was one of eighteen women chosen in Ndjoko Punda for training and leadership in the movement to transfer leadership to Congolese. She was then trained in theology at the school for women in Kinshasa. When she was in her second year, she taught the first-year students.

In Tshikapa, Florentine was elected director of the Deaconess House where she would work for seven years; two skilled women assisted her with the heavy work, embroidery, dyeing, and sewing attractive men's and women's clothing. However, once the couple went into the army, Pastor Yongo says the deaconess house went downhill, and "today no one mentions it anymore."

The Yongos have eight children, four girls and four boys. All are well educated, some with the equivalent of a master's degree. "As for me, I am a military parent, the war is not our problem"—meaning that, although he is in the military system, war is not what he is about.

Both Placide and Florentine hope to set an example of the kind of life to be followed in the Christian community, dedicating themselves to their vocations in order to have the blessing of God and to find peace and blessing during their earthly lives as well as in the paradise to come. Their children, who have followed the counsel of their parents, are all appreciated in the environments where they work.

Jackson Beleji