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LOPC conference emphasizes conflict resolution

By *Bobbie Dodson*

A special opportunity to learn about the Democratic Republic of Congo will take place Sept. 21-23 when Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church will host the Congo Mission Network Conference: "Moving Mountains in the Congo Through Reconciliation." Keynote speaker, Dr. Pakisa Tshmika, who grew up in Congo but now resides in Fresno, will discuss "Congo Current Conditions in the DRC; Causes of Conflict and Why Reconciliation is Critical" from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Friday, Sept. 22.

"There will be a special emphasis on conflict resolution which is a topic on which Dr. Tshmika is well-versed," says Roberta Spaulding, LOPC chair of the event. "Missionaries from Congo as well as members of the Congolese community and people from throughout the United States interested in Congo will be in attendance. A group from California will be presenting Congolese music."

Holding a doctorate in Public Health from Loma Linda University, Tshmika travels to Congo several times a year and has held numerous positions there including training public health workers. He has established the Mama Makela House of Hope, which is named after his mother, to support efforts in education, health and peace building in the DRC. This in a country where some 7.7 million people are on the verge of starvation and chronic malnutrition affects 43 percent of children.

"The DRC has for many years suffered under warfare and political chaos while it has an abundance of natural resources. It is important for us, as citizens of the world, to learn more about such impoverished nations as the DRC and how we might improve their lot. Speakers at our conference will address such issues," says Herb Long of Lafayette, chair of LOPC's Congo Team.

All the lectures, held at 49 Knox Drive in Lafayette, are free to the public. The cost to attend a lunch or dinner is \$10 and reservations can be made at 42queens.com. For full details of the conference go to: Congo Mission Network Annual Meeting CMN Conference at congopartners.org.

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