



MINUTE FOR MISSION

Come to the Table of Justice

TAKING A RISK FOR PEACE

A group of church women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are living witnesses to the declaration in First John that God's "perfect love casts out fear."

While the civil war in the DRC officially ended in 2003, the conflict continues to rage in the east of the country. More than five million lives have been lost, and terror can strike communities at any moment. Gang rapes are common, as is the conscription of child soldiers.

Weary of the atrocities war had inflicted on their communities, a delegation from the Federation of Protestant Women in Ituri took a huge risk for the sake of peace. In March 2013, they visited the hiding place of rebel leader Cobra Matata and asked him to lay down his arms. "We have come to tell you that we are fed up with the war," delegation leader Neema Androsi told him.

Matata was amazed by their courage, but the women walked away with no assurances the militia would cease hostilities.

More than a year later, in August 2014, Androsi, accompanied by the community chief and his staff, paid another visit to Matata, past burning villages that reminded them of the horrors they wanted to stop. The militia leader listened to their appeal but would not commit to peace. Two weeks later, they visited again with the same result.

However, one day in November 2014, Matata announced he was ready to lay down his arms. In anticipation of his surrender, the Protestant women gathered for worship and prayer not far from where Matata was hiding. Moments later, he and many of his militia members gave themselves up to the Congolese army.

Matata's surrender did not end the hostilities in the eastern DRC. There are many more rebel groups that continue to fight for control of land, gain access to vast mineral wealth, and avenge ethnic strife.

Yet Androsi and others continue to work for peace in the DRC, inviting their enemies to join them at a table of justice, a table set by God—a table where women experience dignity instead of abuse, where children flourish in school rather than languish in militia camps, and where communities look to the future with hope instead of fear.

Your support of the Peace & Global Witness Offering helps draw people to God's table of justice, where adversaries are reconciled and God's abundance is celebrated and shared.

Fifty percent of the offering is sent to our national church, 25% remains with our congregation for local ministries, and another 25% goes for mid council ministries. God has set this table of justice and peace for our neighbors down the street and around the world. Presbyterians like you and me who support the Peace & Global Witness Offering are gathering around the table and invite others to join us there. **Please give generously.**