



As a supporter and friend of Canadian Baptist Ministries, Carla Nelson has used her educational skills to serve part time with CBM, first as educational coordinator (1999–2006) and currently as a strategic associate in the role of Africa liaison and education specialist (2019 until the present).

Carla completed a Master of Divinity at Tyndale (then Ontario Theological Seminary) in 1989. She moved with her husband Gary to Edmonton, Alberta, as he pastored a church there during the 1990s and developed her own career in public school teaching during those years. In 1994, she completed a Master of Educational Psychology and, in 2003, a PhD in education, both from the University of Alberta. In 2000, the Nelsons moved to Toronto. Gary took on the leadership of CBM as general secretary (2000–2010) and later became president of Tyndale University (2010–2019).

During her first contract with CBM, Carla had the opportunity through CBM and Carey Theological College in Vancouver to lead a ten-module professional development program for teachers in Kenya. Through this endeavour, the students earned a Certificate of Christian Teacher Education and Counselling. A further negotiated agreement with a local Kenyan university led to a

recognition that these studies could serve as the first two years toward a Bachelor of Education, allowing the students to enter university. While Carla coordinated professors of education and interested teachers to assist in this program, she also travelled and taught in Africa once or twice a year for three weeks at a time.

In 2007, as her career dovetailed with her husband’s ministry, Carla accepted the role of director of the Bachelor of Education program at Tyndale University College. In 2019, her retirement from Tyndale coincided with the return of CBM Field Staff Aaron and Erica Kenny to Canada; the Kennys had been serving as CBM’s Africa team leaders. At that time, CBM approached Carla to begin her second part-time contract, asking her to serve as the Africa liaison and education specialist. She works behind the scenes with Africa Team Leader André Sibomana, national staff in Africa. Carla and André meet virtually at least once a week to discuss various initiatives to which Carla can contribute.

In reading through Carla’s CBM news updates, it becomes evident that she has been an active encourager and adviser for all of CBM’s Africa team, especially through the uncertainties of the pandemic, ethnic tensions, and natural disasters. Carla is an advocate in informing and educating CBM

supporters at home of the present needs. As one of her assignments, CBM asked Carla to work alongside CBM’s Peace and Reconciliation Specialist Rev. Gato Munyamasoko to develop a series of teaching modules for church members. Throughout most of 2019 and 2020, they developed the curriculum, and, in 2021, Rev. Gato began teaching the modules to members of the Communauté des Églises Baptistes au Congo Est (CEBCE). As well, Polisi Kivava Baudouin, CBM’s relief and development officer, and Rev. Gato together began to facilitate



conversations between the church leaders of the Communauté Baptiste au Centre de l’Afrique and the CEBCE. On

May 18, 2021, these church leaders signed a formal declaration to work towards peace and reconciliation in their own homes and communities. In writing to Carla, Rev. Gato recognizes, “This is fruit of our work under God’s guidance.”

Carla, Rev. Gato, and CBM Field Staff Darrell Bustin (Rwanda) are developing a series of teaching sessions for the post-pandemic Baptist churches in Africa. This will follow up on the training that has already been given on “Integral Mission in the Workplace.” Continue to pray for the Africa team as they go forward with this training in the national church.

What’s next for Carla Nelson? Enjoying their family, certainly; Gary and Carla returned to Edmonton in 2019 to spend more time with their daughter and her husband and their four teen-aged grandchildren. They remain an example of how to use prayer and our skills to advance the Lord’s kingdom.

*by Ruth Anna Dana*

*Sources: www.cbmin.org; personal emails*