

**MR. RENÉ MALEPOU**  
**Report #C07**

**ABSTRACT**

Mr. Malepou received theological training in France and the USA, serves as a lecturer in seminaries (such as FATEB), and is currently President of the Communauté des Eglises Baptistes Indépendantes (Independent Community of Baptist Churches). He is Mandja, in his early to mid-fifties.

**BACKGROUND**

***Childhood home***

Mr. René Malepou was born in Bangui in a Christian family. He has never been influenced by his friends. Rather his Christian education and the strictness of his father very early wrapped him up in a religious circle which prevented him from being in contact with the youth of his region until the day he received Jesus Christ as his personal savior. His childhood was not like that of the children today. Also, he was so interested in biblical stories that he wanted to know their sequences. In addition, the African Evangelical Youth Movement and the choir also influenced him because when he was growing in his faith, he was so totally committed in such a way that he always had short verses to read and recite and these verses helped him greatly in his pastoral ministry.

***Country of Residence***

Mr. René Malepou has had the opportunity to live in France for five years and to the USA for three months and this, five times. The first time he went to the United States it was for his junior brother's wedding, but for the rest of time, he went there to study.

***Current Family***

Mr. René Malepou is married to Henriette Malepou, with whom he has seven children. His wife is his companion and counselor in the ministry. It is because of the unconditional involvement of his wife in his ministry that he is what he is today. When they got married, he was 22, and she was 18. Then God called them to go and study theology in a Bible school and then at the Bible School of Theology where he got a B.A. and M.A. After completion of his studies, he was appointed as a lecturer for ten years. From there God opened the way for him to go to the USA do his Ph.D.

As his father taught him to learn and recite Bible verses, he also did the same with his children which positively impacted their lives while they were growing.

***Educational Training***

Mr. René Malepou did his nursery, primary and secondary schools in Bangui. After his baccalaureate, he had the opportunity to attend a conference on the Bible and it was during this time that he made the decision to serve the Lord. He stopped his university studies for theological studies. He was supposed to go to France in the beginning at the Barlenge Bible Institute, but because of lack of financial support, he was compelled to enter the Sibut Bible Institute where he studied for four years in Sango without being discouraged. After graduating with his pastoral diploma, he served the Lord for five years and after that, God opened the way for him to enter a theological school. It should be noted that Mr. René Malepou went to France where he studied Islam for three months. He also went to Pennsylvania, the USA

where he studied at the Baptist Bible Seminary for 4 to 5 years for his Ph.D., thanks to the support of the Baptist Mid-Mission. When he was in France, he was supported by the church of Saint-Denis. However, for his doctoral studies, he was supported by a family whose name he does not mention.

### ***Personal Testimony and Calling***

Mr. René Malepou was very young when he committed himself to serve the Lord. Despite the fact that many of his friends, colleagues, acquaintances and family members tried to discourage him, he stood firm, and the Lord blessed him with a wife and children who are all successful in life. The Lord gave him also a house. When he reads Mathew 6.33, he sees God's hand on him. Those who tried to discourage him and mocked him, when they later saw what God had done in his life, they were confused and came to him to ask for forgiveness. If Mr. Malepou succeeded in doing what he is doing today, it is because he believed in Jesus and it was the Holy Spirit who guided him. He received his vocation directly from God because he did not follow a pastor or anybody else to serve the Lord. After his studies, he did not stay in Bangui but chose to go to the province where he was paid a small amount each month. The level he has reached, whether he has money or not, he can survive. He has learned to live with very little money.

### ***Key Influences***

Mr. René Malepou was influenced by two people. First, his father that he continues to consider as a signpost, and the second person is one of his lecturers. He has become what he is today because of these two people.

## **CURRENT MINISTRY OR VOCATION**

### ***Work/Ministry***

Mr. René Malepou is currently the President of the *Communauté des Eglises Baptistes Indépendantes* (Independent Community of Baptist Churches). He is also lecturing at the Brethren Theological Bible School, at FATEB/BEST and also at the Baptist School that opened two years ago.

### ***Mission/Vision***

Mr. Malepou's vision is to see the Evangelical Churches in the Central African Republic become one because denominations have divided the churches. He believes the time has come for Central African Christian leaders to influence their fellows through the Evangelical circle to fulfill the task God has entrusted to them. Mr. Malepou asserts that: "If we always continue with our differences it will not help our salvation, our biblical doctrine, is more focused on our selfish interests, we will never reach the goal." He also has the vision to encourage and influence the youth to do like him. When he teaches the youth, he encourages them not to consider themselves as greater than others, but to have a humble spirit and to scrupulously follow the Word of God.

### ***Organization***

Mr. Malepou is the President of his association. But apart from that, he is also the counselor of many NGOs mostly when people come to him for counseling. However, he is not too much involved in this area because of his numerous responsibilities. It should, however, be noted that Mr. Malepou's term as president of the association ended in April, but because of the recent events in the country he has not been yet replaced. He does not want to continue with

his leadership position. He wants to be more involved in teaching the Word and leave his position to younger leaders.

### ***Impact/Success/Assessment***

In 30 years of pastoral ministry, Mr. Malepou led two churches. He is not the kind of pastor who will go from church to church. When he heads a church, he remains attached to the members to teach them and preach every Sunday. He organizes visits and other things to help the members of his church. He trained many pastors, not only those he taught in Bible institutes and theological schools, but he has also influenced others who are on their way to be like him. Some have their B.A., others their M.A., and very soon some will have their Ph.D. He keeps on encouraging the students to carry on in their studies and his fellow pastors to be trained at the university level. Thus, Mr. Malepou is happy when he sees those he has influenced be successful. In his denomination, people are not used to seeing a pastor work with an associate. But Mr. Malepou worked with three pastors who are assisting him in the ministry. Some of his fellow pastors are not happy with him because of that. However, those who have assisted him as associate pastors have been very happy because they learned a lot at his feet.

### ***Training/Leadership/Development***

Mr. Malepou not only teaches young people in theological or Bible schools, but he takes time to interact with them, because before becoming a lecturer he was, first of all, a pastor. Furthermore, Mr. Malepou always advises younger pastors first to experience a personal encounter with Jesus-Christ before pretending to serve him because without this encounter it is impossible. Then, younger pastors should know their vocation and test their calling. They also need to be faithful, humble in the ministry because it is not a profession but a vocation that comes from God. In fact, in the secular world, when a person is looking for a job, what will be required of him is his resume, he can lie about it, just to earn living expenses. But, God's ministry is not about earning living expenses. It is a vocation. It is God who calls. Thus, one must respond to the call and do the work by accepting to go and work where the Lord sends him without thinking about better future and material things that will not last in time. Mr. Malepou thinks he trained about fifty pastors when he was teaching at the Bible Institute.

### ***Professional Relationship***

Mr. Malepou's relationship with his associates was difficult, but because he is a leader, he could move on with them. He was first misunderstood by the missionaries. For the missionaries, Mr. Malepou, after completion of his studies and obtaining his degrees, would not only fall in the system of this world but would be a handicap to them. But after so many years have passed, they rather observed the contrary of what they thought. In fact, he does not attach so much importance to his degrees. The most important thing for him is what he is doing for the Lord. His fellow pastors also criticized him; but was able to stand and display a spirit of humility. He never boasted about his degrees. If he had boasted, he would have never had the opportunity to teach other pastors. Having studied anthropology, Mr. Malepou knows human nature very well and knows how to deal with difficult characters. His secret is humility. He wants others to be up.

### ***Partnership/Link***

For Mr. Malepou, partners or network partnerships are first of all the places where he is called whether to preach or teach. Also, what he is looking for through these partnerships are

opportunities to be in perfect collaboration with his brethren in Christ, it is what God wants his children to do.

### ***SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats***

Just like any human being Mr. René Malepou has weaknesses. He can easily be discouraged. But, fortunately, for him he has a counselor (his wife) beside him who pushes him and tells him to be careful with the gift of reconciliation he has. He does not hold grudges against people who discredit him or try to neglect them. But he thinks that it is not good to ignore people; it is rather better to go to them as a leader and try to assist them.

Concerning his strengths, he can work with a team. Even with difficult people he can work and also in difficult circumstances. He is ready to encourage people to move on and cannot accept to see someone suffer. He faced a lot of opposition and threats in his ministry most of the time from his fellow pastors because of misunderstanding. It is as if they do not speak the same language. But, later, after many years, they came back to him and asked for forgiveness. He also faced opposition from the missionaries because of their paternalistic attitude as they continue to see the churches they planted as baby churches. This situation caused him to speak frankly before the pastors and the missionaries. He considers the missionary agency as a construction. In fact, when one wants to start a foundation and build the walls to reach the roof, one needs scaffolding. When the person finishes the construction, the scaffolding will not remain in the building. It will be put somewhere, and when a problem emerges, the scaffolding can be used again. Mr. Malepou means that the time for mission is over. Missionaries can come back, but should be careful not to become sources of discords among local pastors interfering in problems that concern the local churches. Thus, Malepou does not agree with the missionaries and their paternalistic attitude. Consequently, Christianity has become superficial because of this situation. Missionaries and pastors do not have time to teach the Word of God, but they rather have time to talk and criticize.

In the area of opportunities, Mr. René Malepou would like to have printers, photocopiers beside his computers to help him write because he has so many things to write about.

### ***Reading and Writing***

Mr. Malepou wishes that we could see his library. He has documents that are part of his library. He does not display his books in his office to decorate it. By the way, his office is not in order which shows that he reads a lot. When he sleeps, he wakes up at midnight and read up to 4 AM. He reads a lot to prepare his lecture notes, sermons and also presentations. He reads a lot of books from Africans and non-African authors. He wishes he could publish books and reviews, but he is limited because of lack of finances. He has documents, even his Ph.D. thesis that he wishes he could publish, but he could not. However, he thinks it is time for African theologians to write because this is the legacy they will leave to the future generation. They will not leave old cars or houses, but books to read.

### ***Electronic Media***

For Mr. René Malepou, the Internet is a means through which he can be in touch with brothers within and outside the country. But most of the time, he uses it for research to have more information on God. He also uses the internet to be informed of what is happening in the world. He uses this information as illustrations in his teachings. He has an e-mail address, but he does not have a Facebook page for him. Facebook is a place where a lot of young people go to have fun and also make a lot of mistakes.

### ***Finances & Other Resources***

As the President of his association, he faces great difficulties because of lack of finances. The main reason he does not want to continue to be the President of the community is because of lack of resources. The missionaries do not want the association to be financially autonomous, even though the association is registered. When he tries to explain this to Central African pastors, they do not understand. Even when he writes to brothers to support them, still the pastors and missionaries see it as a way to try to take over with the aid of other people and criticize him. Mr. Malepou does not want this situation to become an obstacle to the ministry of God. Therefore, the church does not have any financial source as such. They are limited only to their churches and unfortunately, here in CAR, churches do not give much to the Lord. It is difficult. But some brothers support him. As he is not pastoring a church, he does not receive anything from a church.

### ***Political Arena***

Mr. René Malepou has had the opportunity to speak to three presidents in this country, and none of them arrested him nor put him in jail. This means that Servants of God and religious leaders have the possibility to speak to political leaders, and they are ready to listen to them. But unfortunately, servants of God and Christians remain quiet -- they maintain a total silence when things do not work. For Mr. Malepou, servants of God should show where they belong with respect to what is happening in the country. Therefore, he encourages the members of churches, deacons, youth to study (have a degree) so that they may occupy a high position in their region, in the parliament and the government so that they can influence the world in which they live because: "We are Salt and Light of the world. We are not from the world, but we live in the world. Therefore, we cannot pass by."

### ***Future***

Mr. René Malepou's expectations and dreams are to see one day the Evangelicals achieve unity rather than be divided by theological debates -- in order to help the church to move forward and also to train the servants of God at a higher level so that these can write and help the future generation for the church to be established in this country and be rooted. He observes that the church is moving, she is suffering, because Pastors have left what is essential to concentrate on secondary things. His future plan is to write articles or books that will be published. For him, human beings and their visions are critical to the future.

Often human beings take action to prevent other human beings from realizing their calling. Mr. Malepou asserts: "I agree with the philosopher who said that: 'The man is a wolf to another man,' and you know when the Apostle Paul talked about predatory wolves, he did not just use it randomly, it is a deep assertion which means that man does not want his fellows to move forward. He looks for the area where his brother prospers to build barriers all around him."

### ***Question For Pastors Only: How are you influential as a pastor?***

To the first question this is Mr. Malepou's answer: If I am identified as a pastor that has a positive impact it is because of the teaching and preaching: when I preach, I do not need to hide anything. I preach what God reveals to me because I know that it is the Word of God. When I teach, I teach everything for life. That is why those who receive my teaching encourage me by saying that they receive many things from me because I do not hide God's oracles. In fact, I teach things that can help. I also contextualize my teaching. I am not preaching western culture; I preach the word of God. I remain in the biblical culture and not European culture or other culture. Thus, I am not ready to hide my head somewhere to act. If I

can speak what the Lord asks me to speak, I just say it is knowing the cause and the outcome that will always be fruitful.

In fact, if Mr. René Malepou wants to prepare his sermon, he uses the Greek, Hebrew and French versions of the Bible. According to him, he has 15 versions of the French Bible that he uses. He also uses an online CD Bible, reference books and notably Bible commentaries more precisely the exegetical commentaries that he prefers to devotional commentaries. Besides the Bible commentaries, he also uses Bible dictionaries of all kinds from his personal library. He also uses an encyclopedia, biblical index, the Atlas, French grammar, and Larousse dictionary. He is a person who takes his work seriously. He will take hours to prepare a sermon, and anytime he preaches or teaches his messages are always appreciated. Finally, Mr. Malepou is not the kind of person who will jump on a scripture at random and begin to preach without taking the time to search the Scriptures and see what God wants first to teach him before teaching others.

### ***Report Information Preparation***

Names: Max José Koyadibert and Kalemba Mwambazambi

Date of interview: Thursday, 26 September 2013

## POST-CONFLICT INTERVIEW REPORT

*3/2/15, Interviewed by Paul Sakalaima*

At the beginning of the crisis, Dr. Malepou and his family prepared by stocking up on food and other basic necessities. These stockpiled goods helped them provide a refuge in their home for over 70 people who were fleeing from more violent areas. Some of these people stayed for 2-3 months. Dr. Malepou says he encouraged everyone who stayed with them to turn to the Lord, so many would get up very early to read the Bible and pray. A few Muslims also spent time with them, and two of these eventually fled the country.

Dr. Malepou's brothers, who live outside CAR, offered to assist him financially so that he could leave the country. He says, "I refused to leave by conviction because I was very much concerned about my fellow servants of God. I wondered how their condition would be after my departure. I chose to suffer together with others, and the Lord has been sustaining us so far."

Dr. Malepou was threatened by the Selekas, but their violent attempt on his life was unsuccessful, and he did not lose any family members during the conflict. However, nearby houses were robbed, and one of their student pastors in the Bangui area was killed. Churches in other areas of the country were looted and occupied by the Selekas for a time. And the pastors of his denomination suffered the loss of crops, books, and other important items.

When the crisis began, Dr. Malepou called leaders in his church to advocate that their members throughout the country avoid becoming involved in the armed conflict as much as possible. During this time, the church's mission station in Bambari sheltered 900 people. American partners sent funds to assist churches, missions, and Bible institutes in Bangui and throughout the country with basic necessities, and Dr. Malepou helped distribute some of these funds.

Dr. René Malepou had two opportunities to speak with pastors, political officials, and Anti-balakas about the crisis. At the ceremony of accreditation of the Virtuous Women at UFEB Church, he preached on the story of Cain and Abel, emphasizing that Cain was called to give God an account of the murder he had done. On this occasion, Dr. Malepou addressed the Head of State during that time, Mrs. Catherine Samba Panza, asking her to investigate and give an accurate account of exactly how many people had been murdered during the crisis. He also told the government ministers that poor governance was responsible for the state of the country at that time and that theirs was the moral responsibility for the destruction of their country's socio-economic structure.

The President thanked him for the sermon and said that she had been ready to resign before hearing his encouraging message.

Going forward, Dr. Malepou believes that before reconciliation is possible, people in the sociopolitical arena must admit their faults and apologize to victims. Furthermore, he believes Christians need to come together to talk and ask for forgiveness. He hopes that the crisis has brought some unity between different churches that was not there before. For example, he says, during the crisis, Christians from many churches lived together on the campus of Bangui Evangelical Graduate School of Theology.

Dr. Malepou says, “The main issue is for Central Africans to disarm their hearts prior to any program of demobilization and disarming of war mongers.” He hopes that Christians will listen to the Lord, repent of their sins, and follow God so that they will not repeat these crises again. Dr. Malepou believes an important step to accomplishing this is to focus the church’s efforts on teaching the word of God in a way that simplifies and demystifies it for Christians.