

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire



Larry & LeAnn Sellers Church of God Missionaries to West Africa December 2016

Celebrate the Dream in 2017

The year 2017 will be one of special significance for us and for the Church of God in Côte d'Ivoire. In 2017 we will be celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Church of God's official startup in Côte d'Ivoire and the 10th anniversary of IBAO, our Bible training school. It seems like not long ago that we were dreaming of this new work among French-speakers in West Africa. The foundation was laid even before we came in 1996 by dedicated servants of the Lord, such as Bob Edwards, Africa regional coordinator at the time, and Bishop Edward Nkansah, national leader in neighboring Ghana. And God has used many people along the way to carry out this dream, and see it through stormy times as well.

It has been a process of growth and sacrifice all along the way that has brought us to the point of celebrating the event. A common West African proverb says, "A log thrown into the river does not make it a crocodile." God did not just throw Christ into the world as a human look-alike, but Jesus was born like us to identify with us. "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law..." (Gal.4:5). At this Christmas season, we celebrate this greatest event of all - God took the time to be born into the world as a human and to experience life as we do so that he could redeem our lives to become like him! But we also remember that it was part of a long process that God started long before and that continues on today to transform the world.

Over the next year we celebrate that transforming power at work in Côte d'Ivoire over the past twenty years and look forward to even greater things to celebrate in the next twenty years. Below are a few of those from the past year. Look for more in our upcoming letters "Celebrating the Dream in 2017!"



As 2016 comes to an end, so do three years of studies for our third group of students in pastoral training at IBAO. Eight students have completed their course studies and will begin their ministry internships in early 2017. This is an opportunity for them to put into practice what they have learned in actual ministry settings under the supervision of more experienced pastors. For some this means leaving their families for several weeks at a time to go to remote villages to serve in challenging circumstances. Please pray for them during this time from mid-January through April.



The last course for these students was the advanced preaching course taught by Dr. Kerry Robinson from Anderson, IN, who was with us in November along with his son and daughter-in-law, Kameron and Hannah. We enjoyed having them all. Using his artistic ministry skills, Kameron taught some creative ways to illustrate sermons while Hannah, a nurse, did health checks for some of the Children of Promise sponsored kids. The following week we were blessed by the visit of Mike, Heather, and Maddy Webb, our Africa regional coordinators, who came from Tanzania to spend Thanksgiving week with us. This was a good time for our

Côte d'Ivoire team to get to know them better. November was a full month for visitors!

November was also the last month for our colleagues and neighbors, the Mihsills, to be here with us before beginning their first home assignment in the USA. It has been a busy time, closing up, transferring some of their responsibilities to us, and getting them off on Dec. 11th. So now December seems unusually quiet for us as it is back down to just the two of us, after having the Mihsills and many visitors with us recently. This will be our first Christmas in several years without our children, whom we miss greatly already, but we will be with our Ivorian church family during the holidays.



Praises !

- ◆ IBAO students finished class work.
- ◆ COP start up in two areas of the country.
- ◆ All pastors received Audio Scripture players during their meeting.
- ◆ Central District Women's Meeting elected new officers in November

Prayer Requests

- ◆ Mihsill's home assignment begins in December. Pray for safe travels.
- ◆ IBAO student internships begin in January throughout the country.
- ◆ Abidjan land process to be completed in January.

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Children of Promise-Literacy

At the end of September LeAnn had the opportunity to go to Korhogo with the Mihsills to launch the opening of COP. This was LeAnn's first time to visit the north since our return to Côte d'Ivoire! As the committee met, it was a joy to see Fatou, a former CHOG literacy student, now serving with Children

of Promise on their committee in Korhogo. Fatou now has a good basis for reading and writing and attends night school to further her education. As a newly literate parent Fatou



serves as an example for parents to value and encourage adult learning. Praise the Lord! Now, we are seeing the impact that literacy can have on the parents of COP children to enhance and encourage learning in their homes. God is Good!

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