

THE SELLERS SEQUEL

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serving the Church of God in West Africa



Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 2 Corinthians 4:16

SCATTERED BUT NOT SHATTERED

Over the past two years we have seen families fractured into pieces, jobs lost, families separated, events canceled, school closures, economic upheaval and a tiredness that does not seem to find rest in the midst of this heaviness; yet we know that God is in control. Across the pages of the Bible, the people of God have been scattered, at various times in their history but not shattered, but even in those times, God used these moments to mold and shape a people of faith that He could use to accomplish His grand design. He is still at work today to accomplish His grand design even in the scattering and brokenness in this pandemic world in which we live. Though we may be scattered, we are not shattered. Though the world seems in pieces, we are not devoid of God's Peace!

IBAO: FINAL GATHERING BEFORE THE SCATTERING

In February the IBAO students completed their final courses of study with us. Then in April they returned for their Practical Integration and Internship Orientation. This small group has grown very close together over the past three years of study, never missing a course and always encouraging one another when facing challenges.



Students celebrating the end of their studies

Now they are being scattered out to different regions of the country in order to carry out their internship experiences. Two began their internships in mid-April and another one began in early May. One is in a city setting doing urban ministry, another in a small town, and a third in the rural areas of the west of Côte d'Ivoire, doing church planting and evangelism. Each will work among ethnic groups different from their own and in some cases may need to learn a new language in order to communicate with the local population. You can be sure that though scattered far apart, they will be in frequent contact via cell phone and through prayer. Would you also remember to pray for these eager young men?

THOUGH SCATTERED -- THEY MATTER



A phenomenon that the Church of God in Côte d'Ivoire has faced over the years is that of losing our young people from the villages and small towns as they scatter to larger cities for university, vocational training, or job opportunities. Virtually every congregation has faced this dilemma, losing its young, bright and motivated future leaders to other places and often other churches.

But in recent years we have seen the longer range fruit of this “scattering of seed” to the wind with some of these returning to become even more capable and experienced leaders with so much more to offer the church on all levels.

Moïse, a young man who grew up in the Korhogo church in the north, went to Abidjan to be trained in electrical engineering after high school. He later acquired an entry-level job at the national electric company. He has worked in several regions of the country as he has moved up the ladder to become a regional manager for the company. He has recently been moved back to Abidjan and is an active leader in the Niangon Church along with his wife and three sons. He has become very crucial to the church on the national and local levels in helping the church over some major hurdles and challenges in recent months. He has also taught himself to play the keyboard because his church had no one to play for worship. He is now an accomplished worship leader as well. He is also an engaging lay preacher. He is just one example of several young leaders who were scattered but not shattered and who have come to matter all the more to the church where they serve.



Moïse and his wife



Moïse preaching in Abidjan

PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Pray for clearing of the property in Abidjan to begin developing it for ministry purposes.
2. Pray for the Lord's hand of healing for the Mihsill children recovering from typhoid.
3. Pray for teachers and children during the upcoming VBS this summer.
4. Pray for the Executive Committee leading the church through a time of transition.
5. Pray for the IBAO students during their internships over the next five months to put into practice what they learned at IBAO

A SCATTERED CHURCH IS A GROWING CHURCH

Much of the early church's growth came from the church being scattered for various reasons. New groups were planted wherever believers scattered resulting in new churches springing up. Similar growth is happening in Côte d'Ivoire. A recent IBAO graduate named Pastor Chris has recently planted at least four new church plants in the extreme west of the country as he has traveled in this region, evangelizing, making disciples and pursuing new contacts in remote villages and towns.

Just before leaving Côte d'Ivoire, we visited the two newest ones located right along the border with Liberia. This was our first time in this part of the country. The main ethnic group is the Yakouba tribe, living on both sides of the border. This is still a predominantly animistic tribe with few Christians among them, especially in the remote villages. On Sunday, the believers from two villages came together in the village of Dietta for worship. We drove through dense forest at times right on the national border to get to the service with Pastor Chris as our guide. People began to trickle into a small thatched lean-to building in small groups until it was bulging and latecomers peered in the doors. The children sat on the dirt floor on mats. Their worship was exuberant, simple and fresh, mostly in the Yakouba language. Larry preached in French with translation into Yakouba. Following worship they served us a meal of one of their local dishes, and then we met with the local leaders to hear their concerns and plans.

We left the village by a different route so as to visit the other village where there is a new church plant, currently meeting in a local leader's home.

Pastor Chris and local leaders are scattering throughout the region to make contacts in new villages with the goal of growing the church in this remote area of Côte d'Ivoire. And they have one IBAO stu-

dent there with them doing his internship in this location. Their plan is to establish a ministry and training center in the main town of Danané in the coming year. Please join us in praying and supporting this new endeavor to grow the church as it scatters across western Côte d'Ivoire!



NO MATTER HOW TATTERED, STILL SEEKING WHAT MATTERS

Having served for 36 years as missionaries now, we have not come through it all unscathed. We have lived through numerous coups, wars, a genocide, drought, a carjacking, illnesses, the loss of friends and co-workers, times of loneliness or betrayal, and most recently the departure from our long-time home.



With all our belongings stored in a single room (see photo on left), we left Yamoussoukro on April 2 homeless with our four suitcases to travel back to the USA. We left our home of twenty years where we raised our children, rejoiced and cried with friends facing life's challenges and joys, and we learned so much from our African brothers and sisters as we ministered to them and they ministered to us as well. When we return to Côte d'Ivoire next year, we will be in a new location, a new home, and working in some new ministry directions. But our calling remains to nurture God's creative

work in the life of his children through our service, mentoring, teaching, and investment in the lives of others, wherever we may be.

Since returning to the USA in April, we have resettled into a missionary guest house provided by East-Side Church of God in Anderson, Indiana. LeAnn spent ten days in Florida, caring for her mother following an accident that required shoulder replacement surgery. Larry has had knee replacement surgery and is recovering and re-learning how to walk. And while serving as his home nurse caregiver, LeAnn broke her foot. So now we are both hobbling around the house, a bit battered but not shattered!

As we both recover, we will begin planning to visit supporting churches and individuals. We hope to be present in Anderson for the Regional Convention of the Church of God in late June and then have some time with family in Florida in July. Then we hope to begin church visits in late summer and fall.

Since we placed emphasis on visiting those on the West Coast during our last time in the US, we will prioritize covering those in the Central, Southern and Midwest regions this year. So if you or your church would like for us to visit in the coming months, please send us a note with proposed dates so we can put together our schedule soon. Please use our contact information below.



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We can also arrange Zoom meetings.



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