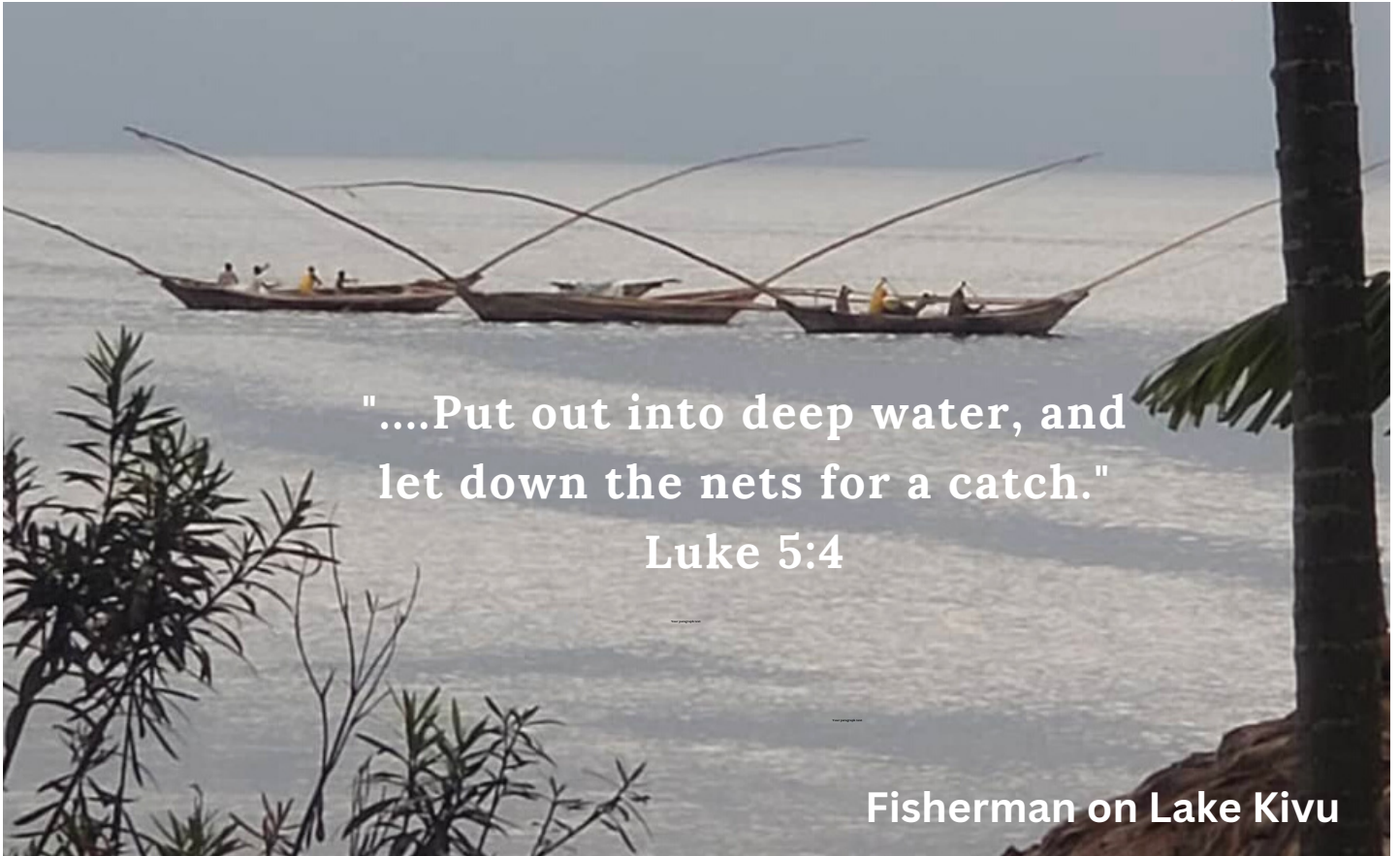




Sellers Sequel

*Larry and LeAnn Sellers
Missionaries to French-speaking Africa*



"....Put out into deep water, and
let down the nets for a catch."

Luke 5:4

Fisherman on Lake Kivu

As Jesus challenged his disciples to a life of adventure, launching out into deep water, so we are sensing that our new assignment is calling us into deeper waters than we have been accustomed to recently. We find that with each new assignment and each trip, we experience a new adventure, drawing us into ever deeper water, where we are challenged to let down our nets for a catch. From our country hosting the first ever West Africa Gathering of the Church of God, to our downsizing in our first relocation in twenty years from our large home in Yamoussoukro to a much smaller apartment in the city of Abidjan, to working with church leaders in Côte d'Ivoire through some major transitions and changes, to making our first trip back to Rwanda since we lived there thirty years ago, we feel the challenge of moving into deeper waters. After thirty-seven years of ministry, we sense that God is positioning us in new places or in some older places from the past with a goal of letting down the nets for a greater catch than we have ever seen.

West Africa Gathering 2023



Our first adventure was not very far from our former home, held at the Yamoussoukro Church of God. It was a joy to see friends and make new ones from Burkina Faso, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana and to spend time with guests from Egypt, Tanzania, Zambia, South Africa and the United States. We are thankful for all those who traveled from afar to join us and to speak into our lives. Some of the topics that were discussed included Education leading to Ordination, Self-Sustaining Churches, Projects, Serving Your Community, and Women in Ministry in an African Context. All of these sessions were held with French and English translation.



Photos

Top right: Pastor Nkansah with Larry, interpreting into French

Top Left: Delegates from Liberia, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire

Bottom Photo: Pastor Mailesi Ndao, Sister Nkansash-Ghana, Sister Victoria-Liberia, Mme Kouassi- Côte d'Ivoire, Rev. Jenny Mihsill, Dr. John Johnson, Dr. Larry M. Sellers





As soon as our visitors left after the West Africa Gathering, we began our big move, from provincial Yamoussoukro to mega-city Abidjan. While we are still located in Côte d'Ivoire, this move is to facilitate our new assignment involving more trans-African travel. Our new location is about 30 minutes from the Abidjan International Airport, which connects us to flights throughout Africa. Our regional coordinators, John and Gwen Johnson, stayed over to help us with our move, and then we were blessed to host them as our first guests in our new apartment.

We were barely in our new place a week when we headed back north for a wedding at Toumodi. This couple accepted the Lord through Pastor Issa and have been quite involved at the Toumodi Church. As is common here, they wore three outfits: one for the civil ceremony, one for the church blessing, and then traditional African outfits (shown here).



The following week found us at Yamoussoukro once again to see the students who had finished their internships last year complete their final reports and exit interviews with the IBAO Committee. These students will graduate from IBAO on May 27 before being assigned ministry locations by the national leadership.

On weekends when we are home, we visit local congregations in the greater Abidjan area. One Sunday, Larry had the joy of dedicating three new babies at the Niangon Church. We have also been working little by little to unpack and set up our new apartment to make it our home. We also made a trip to Korhogo to be involved with the Executive Committee in dealing with some leadership issues in the northern district churches.



Then in early April we made our first trip back to Rwanda twenty-nine years after we had to leave due to the genocide in that country. We were amazed to see so many changes there, but also many familiar things that made us feel at home, such as our old house in an idyllic setting around Lake Kivu with volcanic mountains in the distance. This time the weather seemed much cooler than we remembered, especially since we came from hot tropical coastal West Africa.



We were royally received by the Rwandan church leaders, arranging our lodging and transport in Kigali and Gisenyi and taking great care of us and the Johnsons, who met us there. We so appreciate all that Pastor Charles and his wife Christine did to encourage us and welcome us to Rwanda! (See photo below.)



We were blessed to celebrate Easter at a rural Rwandan church near the forests where the mountain gorillas are found. It had rained all night, so walking to church across muddy fields was a challenge. Larry was thankful for his guardian angel, a short but sturdy park ranger, who kept him from falling down on several occasions. The service was a wonderful celebration with sincere believers perched on the slope of a volcano. John Johnson preached a powerful message contrasting the remembrance of the Resurrection with that of the tragic genocide that was being remembered that same week across the country.



Easter at Kabatwa Church



Larry spent three days teaching the doctrines of the Church of God to a group of ten Rwandan church leaders and then another three days with ten leaders from Congo (DRC).



Rwandan Leaders



Congolese Leaders

Though we had hoped to be able to go into the DRC, the situation was too unstable with the influx of refugees into Goma from surrounding villages attacked by militia groups. But we were thankful that the Congolese leaders were able to cross the border to join us in Rwanda without any problem, despite the political tension between these two countries.

We were surprised to find that our unused Swahili came back to us fairly easily once hearing it in use again. Larry taught primarily in French, with translation in Kinyarwanda (for Rwandans) and Swahili (for the Congolese).

This was by far a most wonderful experience for us that provided healing from the past, and celebration to see the church's vitality in a new generation despite facing great hardship and tribulation. We look forward to returning there in the fall to finish the doctrinal teaching, using Larry's book on the subject, that we hope may be translated into the two above African languages by that time. Leaders in Congo are already using it to teach others in churches.

Since our return, both Rwanda and Congo have experienced catastrophic flooding that has taken hundreds of lives and destroyed thousands of homes, churches and fields, leaving many without shelter or livelihoods. This has affected many of our churches and believers in this area surrounding Lake Kivu in both nations. Some relief funds have been sent to the church in both places to help with emergency aid, but more is needed. If you would like to help with this, please send funds to the Global Strategy marked for Disaster Relief Project 45.04502-Rwanda and DRC.

Yes, each new trip has become a new adventure as we explore the depths of our new assignment and its implications for casting our nets in deeper water with the goal of bringing a yield that will serve the Church of God across the French-speaking nations of Africa for generations to come. As the young bicyclist in Rwanda caught some help up the mountainous terrain of his context, we pray that, with your help and support, our efforts in the coming months and years will provide impetus to a new generation of African Christians to bring light and life to those that they cross along life's road.



*Larry and
LeAnn*

If you are attending the Tampa CHOG Convention this summer, we would be happy to connect with you!
Send us an email to set up a time!!

CONNECT

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Call: Prefer a Zoom meeting or phone call? Email us to arrange one so we can set it up.

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