

# THE SELLERS SEQUEL

ENJOYING THE JOURNEY AND EMBRACING THE DETOURS



Missionaries of the Church of God  
to Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa

## Family & godly values in African culture

In the last few months we have been exposed to some unique and culturally eye-opening experiences. We are thankful that our brothers and sisters are sharing deeper cultural values with us, allowing us to be a part of these important moments in their lives as they learn to apply godly values to their lives and families within their own cultural contexts.

We were recently invited to a traditional dowry ceremony, our first in 25 years. Two families come together to exchange the agreed upon items for the privilege of taking the young lady to become part of the young man's family. It is done with great theatrical flair, fun and cultural nuance. In this case, the couple comes from different ethnic backgrounds, adding to the cultural mix. They will carry out their civil and church ceremonies in April.



We have been asked to do some premarital counseling for couples preparing their weddings. We were invited to a civil wedding and then on to an open-air wedding for Pastor Yassia and his bride, Lea. These different events included some unique cultural elements that we have not seen much in Côte d'Ivoire. The civil ceremony was performed by a woman civil official.



The religious ceremony took place in a village setting with both Christian and Islamic elements included. The married couple was raised in CI, but their families come from Burkina Faso, so the wedding included traditions from both countries.



**Bounafla Church of God praise team singing and dancing in honor of the new couple!**



**Some of the gifts for the new couple included suitcases, cloth, pans, washboard, and money**



**Larry officiated the wedding and prayed over the couple**

## **Dedication of twins !**

We have been invited to visit different congregations since our return to the field. There are several remote congregations that are easier to get to during the dry season. This dry season is called the Harmattan due to the winds that blow down from the Sahara Desert. It has been very hot this year during this season with temperatures above 100 degrees. We trust that that the rains will start within the next month so people can begin to plant their fields.

However, this season has given us the opportunity to venture into some of those areas that are not easily accessible during the rainy seasons. Bounafla is one of those areas where we have had to go mudding to get to the church. However, this time we left a dusty trail!

One reason the Pastor invited us to come was for an exciting event, the dedication of a set of twins! This is the second set of twins for this young couple! Larry preach-ed on the importance of a Christian marriage, using a triangle to illustrate God's role in a godly home to protect and nurture the family!



We also had the privilege of giving the family two blankets that were sent to us from one of our Living Link congregations. These blankets were lovingly made by the whole congregation several years ago during a Vacation Bible School activity. Inside each blanket is a paper heart to remind the parents and children that they are loved by God! It was a joy to celebrate with the congregation and family that are learning what it means to establish a Christian home.

# Power of a life well lived !

We were recently invited to a funeral in the village of Nouplé, not far from Korhogo, for a well-known Christian woman from the Church of God in that village. Many chiefs and Church of God Christians, between 500 and 700 people, came from surrounding villages on Friday afternoon, arriving on foot, motorcycle, car and bus. Once everyone arrived, was fed, and then was seated under tents, the program began with the ceremonial arrival of the head chief and his entourage.



While many unique traditions were a part of this funeral, the most striking part to us was the testimony of the head chief. When he spoke, everyone listened intently as he shared from his heart. He testified that when the woman who passed away and her husband accepted Jesus as Savior, it was a change in their character that was evident to all. Everyone knew these two to be honest in all of their dealings and that they wanted the best for everyone in their village. The head chief noted that the deceased's husband was the only Christian village chief in the whole area. It was an amazing testimony to the power of a Christian life lived well in community!

With typical African flair and generosity, the head chief gave funds out to be distributed among all the village chiefs and pastors present (presumably for their transport). After he finished, members of the extended family and friends brought gifts to be presented to the bereaved family. The most common gift was a cloth used for burial of loved ones. These presentations took over an hour.

After sunset, while the casket was set up in the center of the village square with tents surrounding it, everyone was served food again and allowed some time to rest before the all-night service began. This watchnight service was a night full of singing and dancing in traditional style with locally made instruments. Because it was a Christian funeral, much time was spent in prayer and preaching as well, with at least four sermons before the burial at sunrise (Larry preached the last two). Throughout the night, people were served coffee and tea to keep them warm and awake, though some did take little naps throughout the night, which is culturally acceptable. After the burial, everyone was fed once again before being "given the road" to return to their homes. Nothing in African life shows the high value placed on community support better than these all-night funeral services!



**Tribune Jeunes**, the French-language radio program of the Church of God in Côte d'Ivoire continues to make strides into new areas of ministry and outreach under the creative direction of young people in the church. In January a series of thirteen programs were recorded, dealing with how dress for young Christian women and men affects their witness in the world and the church. These will air beginning in April on the Christian radio network that covers about 80 percent of the national territory of Cote d'Ivoire.

In **2020**, the Facebook page of **Tribune Jeunes** had over **30,000 subscribers** who interact with our radio production team and listen to the programs online.

In 2021, the website for **Tribune Jeunes** is to be launched to provide greater opportunities for outreach and connection in French-speaking countries beyond Côte d'Ivoire. Long-range plans call for the establishment of our own local radio station and initiatives to make the radio ministry more self-sustaining. We are deeply indebted to CBH, the global radio ministry of the Church of God, for its long-standing support and commitment to establish radio programming in many languages around the globe that continues to make this ministry possible.



### Prayer Requests

- Pray for Pastor Moïse as he continues to recover from a stroke.
- Pray for IBAO's upcoming classes in March 2021
- Pray for the Mihsills as they are on home assignment.
- Pray for John & Gwen Johnson, regional coordinators for Africa, as they travel across the continent

As we have entered into **2021**, we are once again reminded of God's faithfulness! We could never have imagined all that He allowed us to be a part of in the past year, much due in part to your faithful, on going support of us and the ministry in Côte d'Ivoire!

We hope your new year 2021 will be as bright and unique as this tropical flower which grows in our neighborhood. It grows on the outside of the trunk of the Cannonball tree.



Warm THANKS from the tropics!

*Larry,  
& Lelann*