

The Lighthouse

Volume 20 – Issue 1

December 2008 - January 2009

MISSION WORK REPORT – BENIN

DECEMBER 2008: The main events in December are our regular Preacher's meeting and the youth Bible Camp that took place at the BTC campus.

Our preachers' meeting was to evaluate our work in 2008 and plan for the New Year. This took place on Saturday December 13 in the meeting place of the Cototomey congregation. We established only 3 new congregations in 2008. Most of the congregations are saving money to put up adequate meeting places and are not keen on outreach.

A problem arose between the younger preachers and the older ones (in age). The older preachers though they are being pushed too much by the younger ones. Yes, the situation is that some of us are getting fed up with the slow motion of some of the first graduates of BTC. Some sit in the way and would not allow the youthful preachers the liberty to move on. An example was in the 2007 Bible Camp. One of the so called older preachers was teaching. A member of the audience asked a question. The teacher said he did not have an answer. Quickly, one of the youthful preachers stood up and gave the answer to the question. The teacher was upset. This led to a lot of talking back and forth. Things like this occupy some of our time and we have been praying about it.

In December, my family was privileged to have Elder Peter Egre, from the Abuja church of Christ come to visit us. Brother Peter and his wife Comfort are old time family friends. We got to know one another in 1982 in Lagos, Nigeria and had continued our relationship ever since. During their visit, we worshipped with the English-speaking congregation in Cotonou. We drove to Lome, Togo the next Sunday to visit with some of the friends of the Egures. We ended up worshipping with two congregations on the same day. One had the worship first while the other was having their Bible class. It was a

wonderful experience meeting with some of the ministers working in the Lome congregations. They arrived on the 13th of December and left on the 22nd.

THE 2008 BIBLE CAMP

From December 24 to 28th, several of our young members gathered at the Zinvie campus for a four day camp meeting. Each participant contributed 2500 francs (\$5) for feeding for the 4 day meeting. It was a miracle for those in the kitchen to provide meals for all. We have to subsidize anyway. The theme of the camping was "growing towards spiritual maturity." For the first time in many years, I have to take charge and organize the annual Bible camp. The reason is mainly that interest was dwindling. I enjoyed it as everyone who participated. The Bible Quiz competition was keenly contested. Some of the older Christians who many feared at the beginning did not go pass the third round. Two women were among the five finalists, they came third and fourth.

TRANSITION – ESPERANCE QUITS BTC



Our first serious test as an institution has hit us. Brother MENS AH Esperance (in picture), BTC graduate and professor since 1998 is ending his work with us to take up

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appointment with one of the congregations in Lome, Togo the Nukafu Church of Christ. The Nukafu church lost their minister, another BTC graduate in September 2008. They sent out letters seeking a replacement. Esperance fulfilled their conditions and he was appointed to be their new minister beginning February 2008. Esperance is of Togolese nationality. He came to Benin when there were political disturbances in Togo and was converted by members of the Se Church of Christ. He enrolled in BTC among the first class and graduated top student. He was employed to join the teaching staff right upon graduation. During this work at BTC, he has preached for several congregations, established the work in the Porto Novo area. He also was very effective in organizing the youth and also was heavily involved in our outreach ministries.

The leaders of the Nukafu Church had spoken with me extensively about Esperance. They needed someone with Esperance's experience to work with them. I saw their need and also looked at possibilities of replacing Esperance at BTC. I myself had also worked for six years (1984 to 1990) in Lome, Togo when the Church was underground, giving life to the same congregation that Esperance is going to work with. So in one sense, he is just going to continue what I had started. Esperance is also looking for new challenges, as motivated as he is, this opportunity looks like what he had been praying for.

We have asked Brother HOUKOU Augustin, a classmate of Esperance who had been teaching on part-time basis to move from Se to Zinvie and take over the work of Esperance in teaching BTC. Esperance plans to move as soon as the semester ends in the first week of February and Augustin would move in as soon as he can to begin the second semester with us on full-time basis on the 9th of March 2009.

Esperance had been ministering for the Zinvie congregation and with his departure; the task fell on me naturally. I have spent a lot of time with the congregation in January planning for the work we intend to do in 2009. Yes, this has brought additional work both at BTC and in the Zinvie congregation. With this change,

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the Academic Board rescheduled the teaching subjects at BTC.

A REPORT FROM THE TODEGO BROTHERS

One of the young men that I admire greatly is Christian Todego. He finally got married on January 10th to his long time girl friend, Estelle. Christian chose a civil marriage which was done by the deputy Mayor of his suburb in Cotonou. Several of us attended the ceremony.



Newlywed Christian and wife Estelle posing in picture with the deputy Mayor after their marriage ceremony on 10th January 2009

PREACHING ON THE RADIO

For a while now we have been preaching messages of encouragement, how to survive some the difficult situations in life. This is to show our large audience that we do not only preach and teach against false doctrine and error but that we can also bring messages of exhortation.

We finished our series of lessons on the 10 commandments during which we spoke against idol worship, a big problem in Benin. Lots of people pray before images and statues. We encouraged our auditors to follow the moral principles taught in God's word. We challenged them to do so to make our world a better one. We encouraged good citizenship and the fear of God in our radio sermons.

The reaction of our audience

Our listener base is increasing daily. Visitors to the Vedoko church is increasing on weekly basis, young students especially have been coming to worship with us. Most of them ask the same question why we do not use instrumental music in our worship, and strangely, for this reason, some of them do not come back. We have

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enrolled those who can read and write in the Bible Correspondence Course work at the BTC. We have two denominational neighbors and some of our visitors regrettably end up there not being able to make the difference between them and us.

Some very prominent people in the city of Cotonou listen regularly to our broadcasts. Some calls to criticize and while these are at it, some intervene to praise and encourage us and some ask for our prayers.

A wife of a very popular radio talk show host called us for us to come to her home to teach her and also counsel her on some difficulties she is facing in life, and of course for prayers. Her husband died suddenly and her husband's family is accusing her of being the cause of his death. She is suffering from all kinds of persecution. The husband's family has consulted an oracle (a witch doctor) who would have confirmed that the man's death is caused by the women.

We do receive phone calls as far as 28 miles from Cotonou asking us to come visit, pray or teach. If there is a church nearby, we send the request to that church. Some we just cannot help at all.

Since October 2008 and January 2009, we have had 6 baptisms ourselves as a result of the radio work. This is a great encouragement to us.

Our plans for 2009

- Preach Bible based messages that would create more reactions from our listeners. We would teach lessons on the True Church, Denominational Doctrines, God's plan of salvation, True worship, etc.
- We still pray for the opportunity to increase our preaching time from 30 to 45 minutes or to an hour. A 30 minutes sermon in two languages put too much pressure on us and we are not able to go into much detail.
- Devote more time to follow-up and create a Webb site for the radio ministry where we can have some more opportunities to teach our young listeners and offer some lessons to them on the internet.

Our Prayers

- That God bless all those who sponsor this good work financially.
- That health, deliverance from accidents be ours as we criss-cross Cotonou on motorcycles.
- That we would have increased broadcast time.

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- That my junior brother and partner in this ministry Christian, who is newly married, would continue to be so strong. He needs your prayers.

OPEN AIR PREACHING.

We had begun a three-month open air preaching at the village of Kpe, two miles north of Zinvie. The church in this village is not growing. The reason is mainly due to the fact that the first converts were people who did bad things in the past in the village. People told me that to see those men leading the church is making it difficult for them to come to our church. Every Friday through Sunday night until the end of February, we go to the market square and openly preach the gospel using a public address system. This we did all through the month of January. We pack my truck with BTC students, some on motorcycles and we go teach and preach. To draw the public, we show a short religious movie and end up with the gospel. Since this village did not have electricity, they are drawn to our meetings when we turn on our gasoline generator and light up the whole area.



Section of B.T.C. students in class

PUBLISHED BY

GEORGE & JOYCE AKPABLI

EGLISE DU CHRIST

B. P. 01-3268 R. P. COTONOU, BENIN.

WEST AFRICA

E-mail: akpabli@yahoo.com

**Under the Oversight of the
BENTON CHURCH OF CHRIST**

3091 Main St. P. O. Box 229

Benton, KY 42025 E-mail:

eljones@newwavecomm.net

Visit our Webb site www.frenchafricanmissions.org