



The Ministry of Jesus Togo

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*Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God
and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward
to the redemption of Jerusalem.*

Luke 2:38

Dear Friends and Supporters,

What a joy the news of Jesus' birth was to Simeon, to Anna and to all those who saw their need for redemption. We, along with all those in Togo who have experienced the joy of the redemption that comes through Jesus, wish you a joyful Christmas and thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the part you have played in bring the Good News of great joy to Togo.

Covid 19 and beyond

The Covid 19 numbers in Togo are approaching 3,000 cases, with the number of active cases steadily increasing. Fortunately, most of the cases have been concentrated in Lome. Churches in the north are now allowed to open as long as they respect mask and distance requirements. We made a judgement that it would probably not be permitted, and definitely would not be wise, to organize a large inter-regional conference in February. So, each of our regions is contacting the authorities in their region and is organizing its own pastor training conferences for this year. We are planning on going back in August of 2021, with the anticipation that we will be able to hold a student conference at that time. We are continuing to be as active

When we first met Nakpergou and Bidenou they were a newly married couple with one child. As their family grew, so did our love for one another.

Bidenou's passion for orphans extended to buying school supplies for them with her own money and distributing it at a party to celebrate their lives.



as Covid allows in our home church in Maryland. We were able to get together outside with our children during the warm weather but have been somewhat restricted since the weather has gotten colder. Jayne was able to spend a week in Baltimore with Bekah's family after the birth of our 3rd grandchild, Athanasius (Athán) Gabriel Roach on October 18, his father's birthday. The Catholic high school in Dapaong is named for Saint Athanasius, a hero to be admired.

A Proverbs 31 Woman

It was with great shock and sadness that we learned of the death of our beloved Bidenou, Director of the Girls Program, wife of Pastor Nakpergou, mother of eleven children, and mother to every student or person in need who ever walked into our center in Dapaong. Bidenou died in childbirth while Joyce, her 6th biological child lived. The irony is that Bidenou was often the first person the hospital called when a mother died in childbirth and left a child for whom the family was unwilling or unable to care.

I remember seeing Bidenou drying sacks of gumbo (okra) and asking her if she planned on selling it. She laughed and said that, no, she would end up giving most of it to the students of the church. Many youth of our churches spent a part of their childhood or school years in her home. Just as many pastors came to her husband for counsel, many pastors' wives and other women sought her out for counsel. Like the Proverbs 31 woman, Bidenou had a gift for business. Not only did she run multiple small businesses, but she counseled many other women on how to run a successful business.

Bidenou served God in many ways, but **her deepest passion was to begin a culture-transforming ministry by motivating and equipping Christian families to adopt orphan children.** Among the five orphans she adopted were three whose mothers died in childbirth. Two of these were twin girls. Bidenou did most of this without outside support despite the fact that infant formula in Togo is way beyond the means of all but the wealthy. She tirelessly started new businesses to support the calling God had given her.

Just as Bidenou was a testimony during her life, her family has been a testimony in her death. Close friends have testified how Pastor Nakpergou's absolute faith in the resurrection has been an encouragement and a witness to Christians and non-Christians alike. **If you would like to help support the orphans that Bidenou left behind, and help continue her ministry to encourage Christian families to adopt orphans and provide them assistance in doing so, just put a note that your gift is for orphans.**

Administrative Change

A decade ago, we made the decision to give up our 501(c)(3) status with the IRS and to go under the covering of Oakbrook Church. We are very grateful to Wendy Schryber who handled our bookkeeping for the last 10 years and for Pastor Scott Johnson and the leadership of Oakbrook who agreed to make this part of their support for our ministry. Wendy has reached a point in her life where she will no longer always be available to continue to do this work. Again, we thank God for your life and your service Wendy.

Beginning on January 1, 2021, we will go under the cover of Freedom Church in Westminster, Maryland. **If you note the new address above, you will see that it is the same as our home address.** We have been members of Freedom Church since our home church merged with Freedom in 2012. We have lived in one or the other of the two houses on this property during the summer most of our 25 years in Togo. Beginning in January, Mandy Lustig of Freedom Church will be handling our finances. As always, we are easy to contact whether in Togo or in the United States by using our email address given above. We will be changing our online giving link on our website at the end of the year. If you want me to send it to you before then, send me an email.

Redemption

The New Testament, and the story of Jesus' birth, opens with the genealogy of Jesus. This list includes four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Only one of these was known for her virtue, and she came from a country whose people and their descendants were to be excluded from

Bidenou, with the twin girls she rescued from the hospital in 2014 after their mother died in childbirth.



Bidenou teaching the girls in the Girls Program to read and write. She transformed many lives.



Baby Joyce Lare, lost her mother just after her birth, but will be raised as the child of hundreds of mothers, aunts, uncles and grandparents of God's family.



Nakpergou, Bidenou, and their ten children. (Before Joyce #11) They always made it a point to never distinguish between the five biological children and the five adopted children.



Somehow, Bidenou made preparing delicious food for hundreds of people over an open fire seem simple. She always chose the neediest women to be part of her team and she was always willing to teach others what she knew.



the temple. Bathsheba's name isn't even mentioned, she is referred to as Uriah's wife. These names remind us of stories of shameful behavior. **As I reflected over the people we have discussed recently in our newsletters, I realized that many include stories of redemption.** One of the pastors we mentioned and praised had been removed from his post 20 years ago for marital infidelity. It took many years for him to work his way back up to his previous level of ministry, but he showed true repentance all along the way and was fully restored. One of our most key student leaders, who we have mentioned several times, had been removed from all of his ministry responsibilities at one time because he was caught twice with a girl in his room. **At that time, his pastor questioned that I had ever considered him a leader.** Now, he is a key leader of that pastor's church. A young man we have known since his childhood spent many years wandering away from his family, his church, and his home town before he gradually returned. Anna spoke about the Christ-child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Israel. God's great mercy, compassion, and patience with his people is our model for **It has been a privilege to watch God redeem the lives of the lost and the wayward. We thank you for joining us as agents of God's redemption!**

Finance

We praise God that we have enough funds for the phase one buildings for the farm. We still need the funds for our first year's operating budget. **Much of what we are spending now is with the goal that the farm will eventually be self-sustaining.** Due to the high number of key leaders who are now in graduate school, our student program expenses have rocketed. **This is an investment that will pay dividends for many, many years.** (*Don't forget that our giving address will change in 2021.*)

Prayer

- **Praise** God that we have the funds to complete all of the phase one buildings at the farm by the end of the year. Now all we need is our operating expenses for the first year.
- **Pray** for Pastor Nakpergou and his family as they begin a new life without wife and mother.
- **Pray** that our churches will always be a place where people can find redemption.
- **Pray** for our leaders as they finalize plans for a major realignment of key leadership posts.
- **Praise God** that all the churches in Togo, except in Lome, are now free to have in person worship again. **Pray** that God will protect our leaders and their families.
- **Pray** for wisdom for the MIJ leaders as they allocate too few leaders to too many posts.
- **Pray** for Essodezam as he enters the school year. He must test out of middle school without our presence and support

Kyniska (l), our second grandchild was born in May. Athanasius (Athn) our third grandchild was born in October. Titus is now almost 2 ½.



And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

Luke 2:10

In times of great fear and uncertainty, it is wonderful to know the one who is the solution to all our fears. Merry Christmas, and thank you for the part you have played in bringing the message and life of redemption in Jesus to Togo.

In the joyful service of the King,

Gregg and Jayne