

The Ministry of Jesus Togo

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

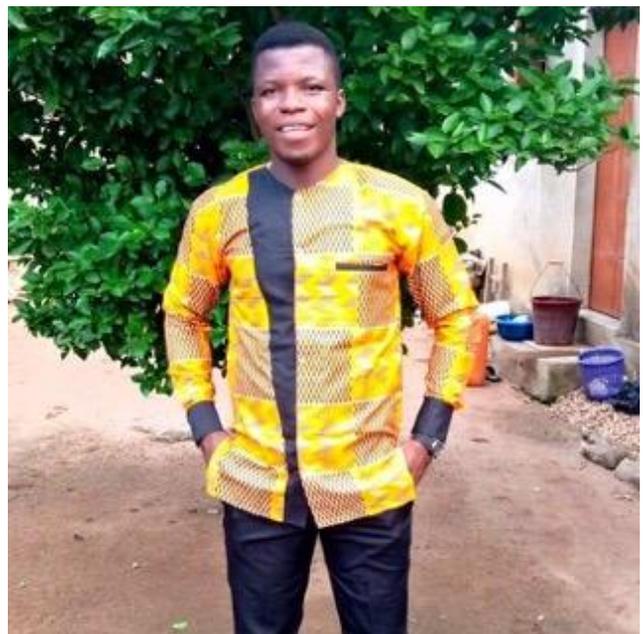
COVID Here, COVID There, COVID Everywhere

We winged our way out of Togo on Friday morning, March 20. All flights to Europe stopped that evening. The blessing was that we had bought our tickets for that flight in August! **We praised God!** It was a surreal trip that led us back into a whole new world. We quarantined for 14 days and then began the almost quarantined life. Jayne and I both led Zoom Bible studies for our church in Maryland in April and May, and I taught a Zoom class on "How to Interpret the Bible." We have dropped in on Zoom meetings at a couple of supporting churches. We have managed to have outdoor, social distancing meetings with friends. Since our kids were pretty much quarantining too, we have had several weekends with our family. I took Jayne to New York, where she spent two weeks **helping Daniel and JoAnna with our new granddaughter, Kyniska**. Daniel is now out of the army and he and JoAnna and Kyniska stayed with us for a few weeks before Daniel started his Master's program in medieval studies at Catholic University of America. **We would normally be in Togo for our student seminars this month but COVID restrictions have made that impossible, so we are still in the US.**

Meanwhile, COVID has had a completely different progression in Togo. Until recently, there were only around a hundred cases and fewer than 20 deaths. When the first cases appeared in Togo, security forces quickly shut down all travel between cities. No one was allowed to travel without government permission. A curfew was imposed, and police began aggressing anyone who was outside as the curfew hour approached. Fearful people remained in their homes. Recently, school classes

Elie riding pastor Nagbandjoa's motorcycle, on his way to go out and serve Jesus.

During COVID, graduate student Moise, has been leading worship for his landlord's family and renters in the home. He has also been leading an online Bible study for students.



have resumed, and the number of cases has gone up to over a thousand.

As in the US, churches have been closed. Village pastors live mostly by farming, but **our pastors in the towns and cities have been pretty much going without salaries.** I suspect the long-term impact on Togo will be much, much greater than the number of people who eventually die from COVID. We hear reports of people who are afraid to go to the hospital for needed treatments. The economic impact will affect the government's ability to build schools and hire teachers, their ability to build hospitals and hire doctors and nurses as well as many other unforeseen consequences.

Elie Kombate, a young man on fire for God

Elie, (Elijah), comes from a very isolated village tucked into a corner of the Togo – Burkina Faso border. There is no way to get to his village without crossing a river that is often flooded. There is also no path to get to his village without crossing through a part of Burkina Faso. **The part of Burkina Faso across from his village is now controlled by Jihadists.** All western governments have strongly advised their citizens not to go beyond Dapaong in the direction of his village.

Felidja, the pastor responsible for the churches in this remote area, lives in the nearby border market town and rides his bike along narrow and treacherous paths to visit the churches he supervises. In the wet season, he either wades the river with his bike over his head or he hires a dugout canoe to take him across. **Faithful is the best word to describe Felidja.** He doesn't have much education, but he loves God and seeks to obey what he knows. **He is willing to sacrifice for the sheep of his flock.** Elie's father is one of the leaders in Elie's village church. His level of education does not allow him to follow many of the seminars, but, like Felidja, he is faithful. **With these two godly examples, Elie started preaching when he was in junior high school, and he was leading a cell church in a nearby village by the time he was in high school.**

Because of his family's extreme poverty, Elie took time off after high school to earn money to attend the university. It was Jeremie Y who talked him into going to the university on faith. Because of this delay in starting the university, he became ineligible for the small monthly stipend that the government often pays students. Even with his two years of savings, Elie didn't have enough money to complete his first year. **Because of his evident love for the Lord, desire to serve, and leadership abilities, we began to support Elie.**

Elie threw himself into every opportunity to learn and grow, both academically and spiritually. **He begged to be in the preaching class in Kara.** Because he was already preaching in the village churches, he was accepted ahead of others who had been waiting longer. He loved English and loved serving God, so together with a friend, he started a Bible study for other students in English. In addition, he has learned to play piano and do sound for the worship team. When he returns home during vacations, he organizes and teaches seminars for the students in his village.

There is no area where Elie stands out more than in his involvement in the GBU (Groupe Biblique Universitaire – InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.) By his second year at the university, Elie was a member of the student steering committee for the GBU. This means he was directing a ministry of the GBU and was attending the weekly meetings of the steering committee. By his last year, **Elie was in charge of the new departmental cell group system.** Changes in the way the university scheduled classes required that, instead of weekly meeting for all students together, each department and year has to have its own cell group. **Elie often sacrificed going to his own classes so that he could help fellow students from different departments organize their cell groups.** (Someday we'll have to tell you about some of the amazing Ministry of Jesus students who helped organize cell groups in their departments.)

Elie has now graduated from the university with a degree in English, and he will begin a two-year non-paid internship with the GBU. For years we have encouraged our students to give two years of their lives to serving God full-time before beginning their careers. This is a great sacrifice in a context where some people try for years to get one of the few government jobs, and where you are mocked by your family and village if you don't have a job. **If you would like to help Elie with a special donation to pay for his housing, transportation and communication expenses, simply mark your special offering as being for the internship fund.**

World's cutest granddaughter, Kyniska, was born to Daniel and JoAnna on May 16, 2020.



It has been three years since we took Essodezam into our home. Recently, I asked pastor Nakpergou if he noticed growth. He said, yes, because he has a family now. **The family is not just Jayne and I, it is the family of God. We praise God for Moise, Jeremie Y and so many others who have loved him and shown him the way to Jesus.**



Région de la Kara



KOMBATE Y. Léa
Nouvelle présidente du GBUK

- AFLANKPAO Fernando - Vice -Président
- MENSSA Prosper - Secrétaire
- BANAME Valentine - Trésorière
- DJADJIGUE Dorcas - Secrétaire financier
- APITA A. Kossivi - Bibliothécaire
- YEMBLIMA T. Florence - Coordinateur de cellule
- MAKIE Dieudonné - Coordinateur de cellule
- KPOHOU P. Arsène - Coordinateur de cellule

We are proud of the three young women from our Kara church who were recently elected to direct the Groupe Biblique Universitaire at the University of Kara. Lea, the president and the daughter of pastor Nakordja, spent four years in our Kara Student Center as she struggled through high school and while **God was developing her leadership and character.** Valentine, the treasurer, comes from a background of miserable poverty. During high school, she lived with her brother, who is a teacher and a graduate of our Lome Student Center. Dorcas was a children's leader in her local village church. **Pastor Nakpergou brought her into the Dapaong Center when it looked like she would drop out of high school.** She has been in the Kara Center for two years. A fourth, Florence, is from a village that was evangelized by The Ministry of Jesus in the early 90s and was turned over to the Pentecostal Church. Her brother, Abraham was featured in our newsletter last fall. In addition to these outstanding student-leaders, five of our upper-class students and graduates are on the regional GBU board as officers, ministry heads and high school club liaisons

Finances

With gratitude to God, **we are happy to announce that classes will begin in January of 2021 at our farm for the training of village pastors!** We still need one more dorm room, a classroom, facilities for raising livestock, and operating funds for our first year. Our last newsletter extensively explained our farm project but apparently, as its arrival coincided with the beginning of COVID, some people missed it. If you missed our last newsletter, email us and we will resend it. **We would be grateful for all contributions for this vital program.**

Due to COVID, our students are required to do their classes online. For them, this means on their cell phones, causing **greater expenses for students who were already living on the edge.** Transportation expenses (only 7 in a 15-passenger vehicle instead of 20), food expenses and almost all of their other expenses have increased dramatically. COVID has also prolonged the programs of our graduate students. These students are among our very best and their programs are quite expensive. **Please consider a special donation to our student program.**

Prayer

- **Praise God** for revealing to us many years ago to prepare the churches in Togo for our eventual absence. God also revealed to us to plan on this year being a sabbatical year after 25 years of service. **We thought that we would be going back for short visits for the major seminars, but God knew his plans!**
- **Pray for** wisdom for the Togolese government as they make COVID related decisions.
- **Pray that** our leaders will focus on new opportunities and not on what they can no longer do.
- **Praise God** for Pastor Nagbandjoa who has used the COVID time as an opportunity to evangelize and who has started two new cell groups.
- **Pray that** God will raise up more **faithful village pastors** who will lay down their lives for their flocks like Pastor Aly (See photo below).

Pastor Aly went to be with the Lord in July. Aly served 3 "sectors" over 23 years. In each sector he oversaw and trained local church pastors. He served in each place with the heart of a shepherd. One of the reasons our training farm is so urgent is that a whole generation of pastors we started training 25 years ago are getting to the age where we can no longer count on their service.



*For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like
me,
10 declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not
yet done,
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my
purpose,'*

Isaiah 46:9b-10

We thank God for the many ways he has prepared the church in Togo for times such as these and we **thank you for your faithful prayers and generous support.**

In the joyful service of the King,

Gregg and Jayne