

News from Benin!

Daniel Timofte - Benin - West Africa - December 2009

We have been **in Benin** for about 5 weeks now; we have visited Cotonou while being in Togo in search of a house for the team but we did not find, so we decided to all 5 of us move by faith to Benin trusting that the Lord would lead us and He did indeed! For first 6 days we rented 3 guest rooms, while looking for a house to rent and evangelizing daily. After 6 days we found a house, rented it for 2 months, time to get to know the town and decide where the Lord would have us start the work.



So we rushed into the streets eager to talk to the people. We discovered people are very open, but in the same time very religious, many going to church without even being saved! Some believe that Catholicism is the reference for Christianity and that Christianity is quite the same religion as islam! As we opened the Scriptures in the streets we saw the Lord opening the hearts of people. We started a **Bible study in our house** on Saturdays, last week some 15 people attended and a week ago **we found an unused church building** for rent; last Sunday we had **our first church service!**



Benin, the nest of voodoo worship is very open to the Gospel, we **evangelize** daily 2-4 hours; many are interested in knowing more about the Lord, some pray with us accepting Christ and want to keep in touch; many Christians look forward to our starting of a free Bible College to study the Word, local pastors thanked us and are eager to send their people to us to study!

Please pray that the Lord of harvest strengthens us and gives us wisdom in investing in **disciples**; in these first 5 weeks in Benin we already have some 15-20 great contacts! One brother was amazed at our way of evangelizing, one-on-one daily in the streets, while their church does some twice a year evangelism events, so now he wants to learn with us how to evangelize in the streets; he said, 'that is the method of the Jehovah's Witnesses!' so I answered, 'no, it belongs to the Christians, the JW have stolen it from us!' Another precious brother who quit his church because of legalism met us during evangelism, he showed me his tracts – he buys tracts and evangelizes on his own; I met with him few times to evangelize together, he is greatly encouraged and decided to start Bible College! We meet often people that want to know the Bible so they started to study with the Jehovah Witnesses, thinking they are Christians...precious sheep fallen in the hands of wolfs...I met 5 guys in 2 days reading JW literature because they cant afford buying Bibles!

One Catholic, a journalist, thought salvation is a recompense for life here on earth...reading to

him Rom6.23 that eternal life is a free gift given to those who believe in Christ – it really amazed him and left in awe! Another Catholic was so glad to hear the message of grace, that he wants to invite us in his village where everybody is a voodoo worshiper, please pray that the Lord brings life to his village.

R. is a 18yo Catholic, works in our neighborhood, I spent often time with him expounding the Scriptures...the day before our first church service he said he would go to the mass to continue his catechism...that night I prayed the Lord would bring him to our service, so He did! I visited him home and there I found he has a brother that thirsts for the Lord and other family members, unsaved, that are to some degree open. Ground for seeds!

J. is a 21yo methodist, student from Central Africa, whose grandfather was a church planter; he left his church because of lack of love and vision, for a month now; he met us during evangelism and his heart melt, thinking of the Great Commission and of the last words of his grandfather while holding his hand giving his last breath: 'do the work of the Lord'; we met yesterday and evangelized together!



Please pray for:

-our personal **time in the Word** and P Luigi's preaching and leading

-**disciples**

-**health**

-**finances** for the whole team, **especially for me as my 5-months budget has ended**; if the Lord leads you to contribute please contact GGWO Missions Office (+1 410 483 3700), my needed support would be around 350\$/month

-a **car** for the team; using the local taxi – motorbikes – is not the safest thing to do, we see often accidents...and none of us have medical insurance (I in fact wrote a will: if I die, my wish is to feed my carcass to the lions or crocodiles; ok, it's just a morbid Romanian corny joke)

-a **video projector** (around 800\$) needed for evangelism

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Conference at Oagadougou - Burkina Faso 13-15 November



PS: I very much enjoyed P Luigi's latest blog news regarding our visit to Burkina,I would like to share it with you:

Dear friends,

In reading 2Samuel 7 this morning, my eyes fell on verse 11 where at the end of the verse, God specifically said to David (who had wanted to build a house for Him), that instead it was Him, God, who would build a house for David.

This is what God does in us, because we have become a spiritual house, a temple for our God according to 1Corinthians 6:19.

Who is this God who cares more for what he wants to make of us than what we can do for him? What grace we have to know and to walk with such a God.

Here in Benin this is what we see, and we feel so privileged to live the life of God in us and through us.

Thanks again for your prayers. To show you that they are not in vain: here's some news of the work in Benin. Since several weeks we have begun a Bible study in our home each Saturday. About ten people come regularly: people of all kinds and of different spiritual backgrounds and even of different nationalities: from Benin, Togo, and Central Africa.

We can already observe several things: the lack of knowledge of the Word of God, yet also the thirst of many for the Word. Our next step therefore is to begin the Bible School.

I believe that God will amaze us with the response to this project of Bible school. A great number of Christians are seeking a way of being formed in the Word but don't have the means, and since we desire to offer free training, people are surprised that this could be possible. To our knowledge, this kind of opportunity doesn't exist in Benin.

We continue to evangelize daily, morning and evening, in the streets and houses, and it's a real pleasure. If you're discouraged with street evangelism or if you wish to taste the joy of speaking about Jesus with a stranger, then plan to come spend a few weeks with us: you won't be disappointed. A permanent smile will be fixed on your face.

Last Sunday, the 29th November, was a day that we have marked with a red exclamation mark. We had our first public church service. 15 adults and some children came together with us for a time in the Word and praise.

We were looking for a place to begin our meetings and Friday past a contact led us to a pastor who owns a church meeting hall which he no longer uses. After a brief meeting with the pastor, we decided to rent this room for 2 days a week: Sundays for the service and another day in the week for a Bible study.

At the beginning of the service I thought to find myself 20 years back when we began the missionary work in Togo. Isabelle played the guitar while I accompanied her in singing, just like...the good old days! For the whole team it was a special day that we had been keenly waiting for like a mother to bring a child into the world. Praise God!

From the 13th – 15th November, the church in Ouagadougou, in Burkina Faso had prepared its annual conference to which we had been invited. All the team were excited at the thought of traveling across Benin and maybe even catching a glimpse of an elephant or another ferocious African beast. This being said we launched ourselves into an adventurous voyage of 24 hours from the south to north of Benin, then entering into Burkina Faso all the way to Ouaga.

After 4 hours of waiting at the station we left Cotonou around 6 o'clock pm. On entering the bus, after someone called our names from the ticket list, we ventured towards the back of the bus to reserve the back seats, 5 seats as we wanted. I did notice that nobody was fighting for these places, but outright I thought to myself that God who loves us, reserved for us these seats. After one hours journeying the

night fell and invaded everything. The scenery became black, the sky was black, the bus was black, and our joy had begun to blacken too. With the night, also came the cold. I don't know where it came from exactly, but it came. At the beginning, the fresh air which rushed into the bus through the windows – forced open because of cords that came in: used to hold the luggage on the roof – was nice. Little by little it became biting, but we are “Yovos” (whites) and we – in theory – appreciate fresh air. Rapidly Christine and Isabelle – to name only the weak creatures, began to be very cold. The wonderful seats reserved by God Himself for His super servants now resembled more a trap than a blessing. Every bit of cold air that entered into the bus, came and took its place and stayed, right where we were. We were chilled to the bone. Isabelle and Christine began to take out all that they could to cover and protect themselves with a little. Soon, we the men followed. But we couldn't get to our clothes because our luggage was out of reach in the hold. “Pan-yey” (piece of African cloth), tee-shirt, shirts that were in our journey bags, all became defenses against the invasion. Paul, already not so well, had begun to shiver despite the extra layers of clothing. I then invited him to rest on my knees and I covered him with a “pan-yey” that Isabelle had taken with her. Christine had already since adopted this position on the knees of Isabelle. It was a unique spectacle. The people around us were watching with curiosity. Daniel finally found refuge on the floor in the centre-aisle of the bus, where he profited from the heat coming up from the motor.

It's the kind of situation where everything becomes tasteless. And in these conditions, don't talk to me about witnessing, everyone is so concerned with himself that it's out of the question, even if during some calmer moments we managed to witness to a few.

Needless to say it was a sleepless night for most.

The only note of pleasure would be the vision of the starry sky, traversed by some shooting stars that we had the opportunity of admiring during a stop in the middle of nowhere – for some kind of control/checkpoint.

Around 6:30am as we approached the border of Burkina, the first rays of sunlight had begun to light up and color the countryside. We could finally believe in a better world. Who spoke of a better world? The cold had finally departed from us, as a vampire flees at the arrival of the sunlight, but to leave place for his brother Vampire Hot. The good weather lasted only two little hours. Soon the light was transformed into compassionless heat. The otherwise cursed open windows had now become a blessing. As we rode we could enjoy the countryside that hadn't existed during the night. But woe was us when we stopped. Like a lion that was stalking its prey, the heat leapt on us to bite us. We tried everything, cold drinks, juicy watermelon, handheld fans, spraying water, everything, but to no avail. So, our only refuge was to firmly assure ourselves that the next time we take the trip, we'll do it in a nice air-conditioned car: we allowed such thoughts to liberate us from the roasting reality of the present heat. I won't mention the border-crossings, customs stops, bathroom-stops, the customs and again-customs, the police stops and again-police stops which seriously reduced the our average cruising speed, while increasing the temperature of the moods of the travelers.

It was around 5 o'clock pm when we entered into the city of Ouagadougou, a long, flat city, many times marked by floods. At our arrival, Pastor Ruffin, bearing his eternal smile came to get us and to drive us our place of stay. Isabelle and I were to be lodged in a clean, fresh and relaxing guest house: We were well content to have arrived.

The conference began the next day, and during 3 days was a cascade of fresh portion after fresh portion. Pastors from Togo, Niger, Ivory Coast, Ghana and of course, from Burkina Faso where there in unity of Spirit. Saturday evening we had the pleasure of seeing about 10 students from the Bible school receiving their diploma. Each day some 700 people gathered together for the sessions, and Sunday evening we concluded the conference with a time of prayer for the sick and for the needs of people. Since the next day came back testimonies as to what God had done. We have been really blessed by the receptivity of the people of Burkina to the message of the finished work and Jesus on the Cross. Pastor Bamouni and his church are doing a good work in Ouaga.

We stayed two days extra because the only return bus left on Wednesday morning at 5 o'clock. These days made became the "encore" of the conference. Each night, about a hundred people gathered in Pastor Bamouni's yard which serves as the church's chapel. What awesome moments!

The trip back was different from the trip up. We mainly traveled by day and in an air-conditioned bus. If it wasn't for the crazy music and stupid videos shown for entertainment all the way long, the trip would have maybe been nice.

But if I make the effort to rapport to you these diverse happenings, it's just to help you experience a little of our life, because all of this is no more, in our memories, than something we laugh about from time to time. There are much more important things.

Come visit us sometime. We could organize a little trip for you!

Thank you dear friends for your prayers, your support and your friendship.

May God bless you to the full.

Pastor Luigi and the team.

Prayer subjects:

A car or a minibus

A house

The finances of each team member

Each one's health

A video projector

Some long-term visas

Time on the radio