

# For the Love of Africa and its People

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*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*

*In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6*

Dear Friends in Christ,

January 28, 2012

A New Year has begun, and I am thankful for another year to grow in the Lord and serve Him in whatever situation He chooses for me. More and more I am learning to trust in Him in all things. Many ideas, plans and hopes which I had for my return to Togo have not come to fruition- but the Lord knows His plan and I am learning to adapt. It has been quite some time since I sent my first newsletter and I apologize. At times I was discouraged and frustrated, and did not feel I could write about my work. . the folly of relying on the wisdom of my own plans and the strength to carry them out. But in the past month, I have been blessed by what He has done and what He has allowed me to do! The verse I wish to share with you in this letter is from Isaiah:

*I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you.*

*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.*

*I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:9b-10*



## Teaching English to High School Students



English Class on the Porch

My desire to return to Togo - and my passion - was to work once again with high school students in English as a Foreign Language. My greatest joy and fulfillment in past years as missionary came from working with the young people in English, and in the conversations and relationships which resulted. When the public schools finally opened last October, I was so eager to begin. The National Church leaders had other priorities though, and English classes were put on 'hold'. October and November passed. In December, students started coming to my house, asking if I was going to conduct English classes, or asking for help with class work. I was more than ready to begin! I had a carpenter friend build a portable blackboard, bought a box of chalk and spoke to the students of the Lutheran church here in Dapaong. We set up a schedule which would suit most everyone, and decided that the classroom

would be my front porch. Sometimes it gets a bit crowded, but that doesn't matter. The students from church are bringing friends from school and we are growing in knowledge and understanding of English, and discussing challenges in life. I was so discouraged at the difficulty in getting started, but finally I understood God's reasoning. Just as our classes began, the public school teachers went on strike, asking for increased salaries and benefits. There was unrest in many of the towns, including Dapaong! Students and teachers marched into the market area, burned tires and caused mayhem. The police force used tear gas to disperse the demonstrators. The unrest and strike lasted for about two weeks. The students are now in school once again.. However, I realized that if I had been giving free English classes and printed exercises in a public school at that time, I might possibly have faced some opposition. The students instead used their 'free time' for extra English classes on my porch. God's perfect timing is best.

## CEG Lokpano School Project - CCCS kids

Another long awaited blessing involves a junior high school in the village of Lokpano and a Recognized Service Organization of LCMS. In 2009 while I was still working in Dapaong with LCMS, one of my first high school students asked me for help. Not help for himself, but for a school that parents had created in his village.



Inside the millet stalk classroom

For some years there had been an elementary school in the village. However for any studies beyond elementary level, the children had to leave home and live in another village, or walk long distances.

In 2009 parents of junior high school students organized a school, found volunteer teachers, and collected enough money to build some school benches. They lacked school books and other teaching materials, and salaries for the teachers. I had just read about the Children's Christian Concern Society in a communication from LCMS World Mission, and did some research on the internet. We contacted CCCSkids, received information concerning projects, and submitted a request late in 2009. Unfortunately we were too late to be considered, but the director of projects encouraged us to resubmit our request in 2010, with a few revisions. YEMBORE Azouma, the young man who had contacted me, visited the village school several

times during the interim. He found a few used school books of his own and of friends to donate, as the school had practically nothing. He worked to arrange for religious instruction, and gave as much encouragement to the school as possible. In the early fall of 2010 we submitted our project once again, and waited and prayed. .and waited. .and prayed. Near the date when the decisions were to be announced, I received a strange email from the project director which seemed to be addressed to another member of the CCCS Board. I responded, but did not receive a reply. The wait continued until, through another LCMS communication, I learned that the project director had suffered from a major illness. I went to the CCCS website and found a new project director listed. I sent a message, asking about our project. I immediately received a response. At the same time the original project director had become unable to serve, her computer crashed, and information concerning our project had been lost! The new director was very happy to be in contact once again, and asked us to resend the project. Once again the CEG Lokpano project was revised and sent on its way. In December 2011, we received the wonderful news that our project had been accepted, and the school would be awarded some funds. This month of January has been exciting for all involved. The school site is on the grounds of the first Lutheran Mission in Togo. One classroom is an old storeroom, another is the chapel (which still serves as the church on Sundays). Two classrooms are constructed out of dried millet stalks. The project funds are helping to pay salaries for the volunteer teachers. A number of Bibles and catechisms have



Students in front of a millet stalk classroom and the church

been purchased, and two ordained Lutheran pastors have accepted the task of giving religious instruction.

Two portable blackboards have been constructed. Azouma returned to Lome, purchased a number of textbooks which the Director had requested, and sent them up to Dapaong via public transportation. I was given the task of delivering the school books. Last week, with the help of another one of my former students, I traveled on the back of a motorcycle the 40 or so miles up the mountain to deliver the books. The taxi drivers each carried a carton of books in front, with a passenger riding behind. It was such a joy to deliver books to the school, and greet the teachers and students in their classrooms. I am so thankful that there is now the possibility of a Lutheran School in Togo! I pray that the relationship between CCCSkids and the CEG Lokpano will continue and that other schools will be helped or created. The Lord has shown me what patience and perseverance and faith can do. His righteous right hand upholds me.

### *Ordination, Installation, Baptism . . .Exciting Events*

The Lutheran Church of Togo (l'Eglise Luthérienne du Togo) increased greatly in November 2011. Five men who had completed the course of theological studies at the CLET and the required work of the vicarage, were ordained as Lutheran Pastors during an ordination service celebrated in the village of Nano. Lutheran Church members and many visitors traveled by foot, bicycle, moto, and whatever other transport they could find to attend and participate in the service. Several of the vicars had served their churches for many years, first as



Entrance of the Pastors, Ordination Service

evangelists, and then as vicars, before finally realizing the goal set before them. The vicar of the church in Dapaong where I worship was one of the men ordained. Pastor Blaise Tchimbiana began his studies soon after I first arrived in Togo in 1997. It has been a long and strenuous road, not without difficulties, but the Lord gives strength where needed. Pastor Tchimbiana was installed as pastor of the Alpha et Omega parish the following week. He is now able to administer Holy Communion, baptize and confirm new members. On Christmas Day, three infants received the gift of salvation through Holy Baptism. One was the child of YEMBORE Azouma, who is so involved in the CEG Lokpano project. Another is the child of DAPOKLE Lari, the young man who traveled with me to Lokpano, and also the National Church Secretary. God's church and His mission continue to advance and grow here in Togo! I am blessed to be a part of the work being done.

### *Prayer and Praise*

Praise and thanksgiving for the Lord's patience and kindness with me as I learn to wait upon Him.

Thanksgiving for the high school students who requested English instruction, and continue to participate in the 'front porch' classes. It is such a blessing to me to help them learn and succeed at their exams.

Thanksgiving for the acceptance of the CEG Lokpano project by the Children's Christian Concern Society, and Prayer that the relationship between the school and CCCS will continue and benefit many children. Pray that many children will be given the opportunity to receive Christian education and will grow in their knowledge and faith in Jesus, their Savior.

Thanksgiving that I was able to safely travel to Lokpano by motorcycle to present school books and encouragement to the director, teachers and students of CEG Lokpano.

Praise and thanksgiving for the ordination of five men as Lutheran Pastors serving the Lord and the Lutheran Church of Togo. May the Lord guide them and give them strength to continue His mission here in Togo.

Prayer for good health, strength and understanding on my part, so that I may continue to serve the Lord with gladness in all situations, here in Togo

May the Lord bless you as you serve Him!

Valerie Stonebreaker

Lutheran Missionary in Togo

Thank you for your prayers and support. To give financially to the work of the Togo Lutheran Mission, please make checks payable to: Mountain Movers International. Send to: Mountain Movers International

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If you have questions or would like more information concerning the Togo Lutheran Mission and Valerie's work, please contact:

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