

Larry and LeAnn  
Sellers  
Côte d'Ivoire



March - June 2018

Welcome to our Veranda. We are not sure what comes to your mind, when you hear the word *veranda*. For us it recalls meaningful moments. It is the first place visitors, friends, and family come to greet us at our home. Much of life takes place on our veranda—a favorite place in our home here in Yamoussoukro. It is a covered patio surrounding half of our house where we may spend many waking hours on any given day. It is a lovely and peaceful place surrounded by tropical flowering plants of all kinds with a great view of our yard. We eat our breakfast on the veranda most days as we watch morning birds frolic in the bushes. We receive visitors throughout the day there and offer counsel and prayer for those hurting or in need of guidance. We hold meetings there to plan IBAO or VBS programs. Often we just sit and enjoy the patter of an evening shower from the veranda. The veranda is also a great place to process a day's activities, issues and concerns to see what lessons we need to learn from them. Sometimes we learn cultural lessons of deep significance as we listen to our Ivorian friends tell us about their lives and the issues that they face.

A psalm attributed to Moses (90:12) expresses this in prayer: "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." This is what our veranda seems best suited to, encouraging us to take some time to learn lessons of wisdom as we pass through life with its many tumultuous days, full of unceasing activity. During our time here in Côte d'Ivoire we have learned the importance of taking time to greet visitors in the culturally appropriate ways before discussing any other news. For instance, water or a drink is always offered before asking the news.

So for the next several months at least, we hope to share "A View from the Veranda" in our newsletters, a place to share reflections, observations and nuggets of truth drawn from the things that we see, hear or learn from the vantage point of our veranda, when we take the time to "number our days aright that we may gain a heart of wisdom." We hope that these may be of interest and encouragement to you in some way as well. And we would love to have you come and enjoy the view from our veranda some day as well!

### Spring was in the air...



There is always excitement when the pastor announces on Sunday morning that a wedding is coming soon. However, it was more exciting than ever when it was announced that one of the single pastors was going to be getting married!

Pastor Lucien and Viviane held their wedding at the Kononfla Church of God on March 10. They now reside just down the road from the Kononfla Church as they wait for the **pastor's house to be completed on the church property.**

The second couple, Ouattara and Madeleine, faced a dilemma of where to hold their wedding as each congregation wanted the ceremony to take place in their home church. So they found a unique way to satisfy both congregations! Madeleine comes from Yamoussoukro, so



they held the official wedding at the city hall there followed by a reception at **Madeleine's** family home to allow everyone to celebrate with the couple. Then a week later they held the church ceremony at Korhogo **with Ouattara's family and church friends.** They now reside in Korhogo. The photo was taken at the Yamoussoukro city hall on April 25.

## Easter

The past few months have been full of events in the life of the Church of God in Côte d'Ivoire and in our lives as well. We are grateful that the Lord has given us this season in our lives.

What JOY filled our hearts this year as several young persons who have grown up in the Yamoussoukro COG made the decision to be baptized on Easter Sunday! Some were young people that LeAnn worked with in the Young Youth. What a JOY to witness them dedicate their lives to the Lord! Thirteen people were baptized.



If you would like to watch a video of Moise Coulibaly being baptized follow this link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/h7448tw0ske038t/YEO%20Moise%20-%20baptism.m4v?dl=0>

## Pentecost 2018

On May 19 we headed south towards the small town of Toumodi to attend the first baptism of a new cell group recently started by Pastor Issa and his wife. We found Issa at an intersection and followed him down a dirt road that led us to a dirt path. When we stopped the vehicle, we saw several of the women from the cell group who had preceded us; however, we did not see any water. We did see cows grazing in the field and a woman clearing her garden in preparation to begin planting. Pastor Issa and Pastor Ehoussou took off walking through the fields. We followed with great interest to discover the location of the baptism.



As we were leaving, we saw the cows move into the water hole and noticed a mosque in the background, reminding us of the vital need to proclaim our faith in an environment where many do not yet know Christ's love and salvation.



## Children of Promise

Children of Promise is making inroads into the Church of God in Côte d'Ivoire. Since the Mihsills' return in January, there has been an increase in children supported, to more than 30 children. In late March the COP director, Paul Maxfield, and a couple from the South Meridian Church of God in Anderson, the Jenkinsons, came for a visit.

While Paul Maxfield was here with us, he preached at the Plateforme Church of God and shared about friendship bracelets. He also shared how his mother made thousands of these bracelets for Paul to give away while traveling with Children of Promise. The young man who translated that day for Paul, named Kinda, felt led to put one on his wrist. This young man, who is a teacher, has had many opportunities to share about Jesus with his students as a result of the bracelet, and he has led six of them to accept Christ as Savior! Little is much when God is in it! This song that we sang as children is still true and being lived out in Côte d'Ivoire. What about where you live?

Children of Promise is helping meet the spiritual, health and social needs of children. If you are interested in supporting a child in Côte d'Ivoire, contact the Children of Promise office in Anderson, IN, by calling 765-648-2190 or at their website: [www.echildrenofpromise.org](http://www.echildrenofpromise.org).



Kinda is standing beside Paul Maxfield interpreting into French as Pastor Soukalo listens to the interpreted message.

Partner together to provide African leadership for the church in W. Africa Project #42.10074 Personal Missionary support [www.chogglobal.com/sellers](http://www.chogglobal.com/sellers) Or call Debbie Taylor at 765-648-2129 or 800-848-2464, ext.2129 Church of God Ministries, P.O.Box 2420, Anderson, IN 46018

## *The National Women's Conference*

**A**nticipation was in the air as we neared the date for the Women's National Conference. For months, women from all across Côte d'Ivoire had saved money to make the journey from their homes to Issia-ville. For some groups this necessitated a twelve-hour bus ride (and it is not the Greyhound bus). When the day arrived, women began to arrive from all over. The excitement in their voices was palpable as they greeted friends and caught up on each other's news! (All night long!)

At 6am the women began to gather for prayer. These were not your quiet morning prayers, but loud fervent prayers corporately in a large group. The days were filled with teaching on women from the Bible and what we can learn from their stories to enrich our walk with the Lord. These sessions were led by our speaker, Madame Pastor Dembélé. She led them in questioning, "How can we apply the stories of the women of the Bible to our lives?" Madame Dembélé, has written several books in French for women. One is about mothers of the Bible that the women are currently studying in their local meetings.

The first evening included the National Women's General Assembly meeting. The second evening after the service was a meeting to elect officers for the central district.



The women were also delighted to have Saturday morning to visit a local sacred place. The Catholic Church has established a large compound that has lovely gardens and a grotto that you can walk up the side of a hill to see where they have placed a statute of Mary. The women enjoyed having some free time to walk and talk in the cool of the morning with each other and to see the beautiful surroundings.

On Sunday morning the women were all dressed in their uniforms! Most of the women purchased the material that was printed and made for this special occasion. They marched down the main street heading towards town to the city hall, with the help of the local police for about two miles.

When all of the women arrived at the city hall, they held their final service together. It was wonderful to see everyone together praising and orshipping the Lord! The praise team from Yamoussoukro led in worship along with several of the young men from Tarato, who came

with their balaphones! We also had Pastor Emile from the Executive Committee and one of the co-mayors from Issia join us in this last service together.

After the service everyone was writing down contacts of new friends from all over the country, they were served lunch before heading back home, full of new understanding that as women they have a large role to in the family. Now the women will wait until 2020 for the next Women's Conference.



## *IBAO*

Since the graduation of the third class of IBAO students last November, we have been working to prepare for a new group of students to begin in 2018. Though we originally intended to start classes in April, we did not have enough students signed up by then, so we pushed back the startup date to September. So far we have received, interviewed and evaluated four new students but really would like to have at least four more before classes begin. However, the four that we have confirmed so far are of a high caliber and show promise as future church leaders, pastors and evangelists. Would you please pray with us for another four qualified candidates to add to these before we begin classes? There is a lot of family pressure on young people to find lucrative jobs to help their families, so few feel that they can enter the ministry, as pastors are not often well supported by their local churches and live in difficult circumstances. Jesus was definitely describing Africa when he said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest fields" (Matt. 9:37-38). Would you also make this a part of your prayer concerns for the African harvest fields in need of workers?

## *General Assembly held in Issia*

The General Assembly for the Church of God in Côte d'Ivoire was held this year, for the first time in Issia-ville on May 11, 2018. All churches were represented as well as the different committees and departments.

The photo is of a time of prayer for several pastors as they take a step forward in the ordination process.

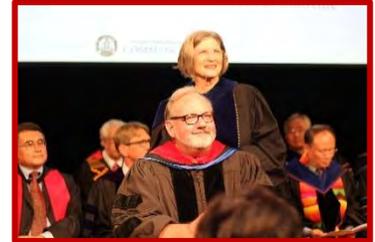


## Summer Rounds and Cap 'n' Gowns

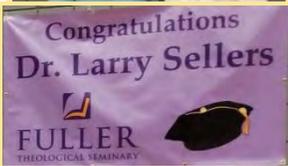
Our summer began with a long anticipated trip to the USA for Larry's graduation with his doctoral degree in intercultural studies (DIS) from Fuller Seminary in California. This trip was the culmination of a seven-year process for Larry to complete his doctoral program, so it was filled with much thanksgiving and celebration. We were blessed to have both our children, Laura and Lee, with us at the graduation as well as Larry's brother and sister-in-law and a great nephew from Texas.



The services were most meaningful and inspiring for Larry to be among the nearly 700 graduates from about 45 different nations serving in a wide variety of ministry settings around the world. Since Laura spent several days with us in California, we were able to do a few fun things in the area, such as hiking in the foothills and viewing the Atlantic from Santa Monica Pier.



This time in the States also afforded us some rare time with family: Larry attended a Sellers cousins' reunion in Texas while LeAnn spent a few days with her family in Florida. We also had some time with Lee in Texas over Memorial Day and with Laura in Indiana for Father's Day. While our time with family and friends went all too quickly, we were grateful for the time that we did have in four different areas of the country from coast to coast. While in Indiana we were quite overwhelmed by surprise receptions held for us at Church of God Ministries and East Side Church of God in Anderson in honor of the completion of Larry's doctorate.



We feel much gratitude for many of you who have supported us through this doctoral process as well as in our ministries in West Africa over the past years. Your prayers, support, encouragement and practical help have been such a big help to us. We are especially thankful for our Global Strategy office that allowed Larry considerable study leave time to work on his dissertation, East Side Church of God for housing provided in Anderson, and Larry's brother, David and his wife for housing provided in Texas for extended periods.

By the way, Larry did finish his dissertation within the time limit and it is available in published form through ProQuest. If you would like to see a preview or order a copy, it is available at the following link:

<https://search.proquest.com/openview/e7295f20d24f2039c428d260926ce3c0/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

Or you can find it on the internet by doing a title search under "Tasty New Sauces from Tired Old Pots" or a subject search for "African Proverbs in Ministry in the Church of God in Cote d'Ivoire." The title comes from an African proverb that says, "Old pots make the best sauces," which aptly describes the role of traditional proverbs in African society that add spice and flavor to daily conversation.

### Upcoming Events

-Bylaws Committee  
-Vacation Bible School  
August 20-24

-Work Camp  
August 20-24

-Youth Retreat  
September 4-9

-IBAO Begins  
September 17



Photo taken at the reception for Larry at Global Strategy. (Zonia Mitchell, Larry and LeAnn Sellers, Keri Mitchell and Bob Edwards)

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