

# INTO THE DARKNESS

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75 Years of Free Will Baptist  
International Missions



FREE WILL BAPTIST  
INTERNATIONAL  
MISSIONS

# WELCOME

**I**nto *The Darkness* is an appropriate title for this volume. For 75 years, Free Will Baptists from rural areas, small towns, and the great cities of the United States departed the land of their birth and voluntarily headed *Into The Darkness* to share His Light and Truth. From coast-to-coast, an unrelenting flow of men and women responded to the call to go.

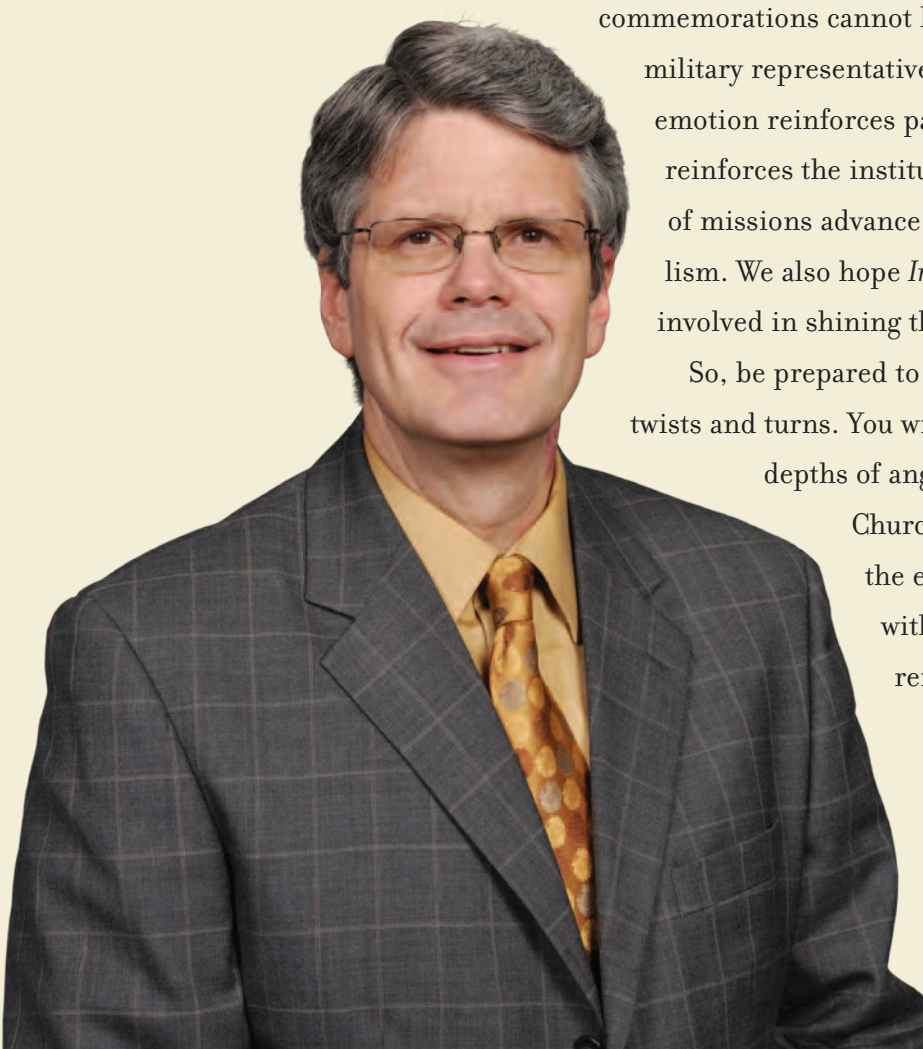
Obedience to God's call led them to tribal peoples in Africa and India. They faced spiritual darkness in the world-class cities of Europe, Asia, and Latin America. With abandon they labored in the midst of civil wars, military invasions, natural disasters, and abject poverty. These intrepid men and women battled discouragement, opposition, and the forces of evil in the attempt to bring worshippers to the throne of God.

In the midst of the darkness *He* has been their Light and Truth. What He promised, He has fulfilled, “. . . and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20). *Into The Darkness*, therefore, is a book of celebration. We celebrate the faithfulness of God, and of His servants who answered His call. Celebration is important for any group of people. It can be a powerful instrument to reinforce values and beliefs. Celebration even serves as a vehicle to transfer values and beliefs to future generations.

Lloyd Kwast's model of understanding cultures states that our behavior is based on our values, and our values are based on what we believe. Ultimately, what we believe is based on our worldview. In transference of culture from generation to generation, the younger generation realizes what is considered important, worthy, and of value. A faithful reading of Scripture will always lead us to the conclusion that sharing the gospel with those who haven't heard is of ultimate and eternal value to God. We trust *Into The Darkness* will reinforce that truth.

In addition to celebration, the 75th anniversary of Laura Belle Barnard boarding the S.S. *Potter* in New York City provides us a perfect opportunity for commemoration. In any cultural group, whether a hidden tribal people, a college booster club, a branch of military service, or in our case, a denomination, the importance of rituals and commemorations cannot be overstated. We choke back tears when a United States military representative presents the flag to the widow of a fallen soldier. That emotion reinforces patriotism. A 50th anniversary celebration for a couple reinforces the institution of marriage. Likewise, this celebration of 75 years of missions advance reinforces the ultimate importance of global evangelism. We also hope *Into The Darkness* will deepen your appreciation for those involved in shining the Light.

So, be prepared to be surprised. The road *Into The Darkness* has many twists and turns. You will experience the heights of joy and victory as well as the depths of anguish and defeat. In the midst of it all He is building His Church and the gates of hell are not prevailing against it. In the end we hope that this chronicle of the journey will fill you with joy, encouragement, and a passion to reach those who remain in darkness.

James F. Forlines  
James F. Forlines, General Director

## INTRODUCTION

Ralph Winter, a missionary statesman of our generation, wrote, “[God] has given us a clear and simple task to finish: to see that Christ is worshipped and followed in every people. This is the essential missionary task. This we must do with utmost focus and passion until it is finished” (*Finishing the Task*, Mission Frontiers, June 2000).

Free Will Baptists have manifested their obedience to this task for the past 75 years through Free Will Baptist Foreign, and now, International Missions. The journey *Into The Darkness* began with Laura Belle Barnard on July 5, 1935. According to ship records that was the day she left New York City aboard the *S.S. Potter* bound for Bombay, India. Or, more accurately, we might say that the journey began again with her. One hundred years earlier, in 1835, Jeremiah Phillips and Eli Noyes departed as Free Will Baptist missionaries to a different part of India (now known as the state of Orissa).

From 1835 until 1911 Free Will Baptists had a foreign missions presence. A merger with Northern Baptists in 1910-11 left the scattered and unaffiliated Free Will Baptists without a foreign mission organization, and in many ways, without a missionary vision and zeal. Twenty-five years went by without any organized Free Will Baptist foreign missions efforts. God then sent a single, young woman in her mid-20s to awaken the denomination to this “clear and simple task.”

Former president of Free Will Baptist Bible College, Dr. L. C. Johnson said it this way,

“An entire denomination was without a missionary conscience. For a quarter of a century no one had emerged to give an awareness of this responsibility to ‘the other lost sheep.’ The

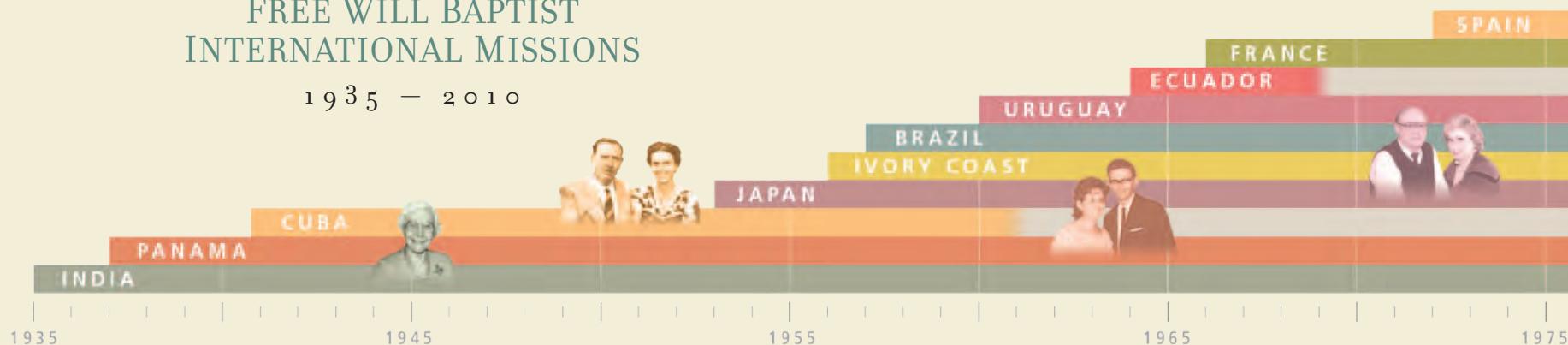
workings of God in Miss Laura Belle’s life, to prick the conscience of an entire denomination, becomes evident even though unusual” (*Touching The Untouchables*, p. 9).

The journey since the *S.S. Potter*’s voyage has been an incredible story of Kingdom advance. More than 300 Free Will Baptist men and women have followed in Laura Belle’s footsteps—leaving their home in the States to take the Light to unreached peoples on five continents around the world. Beginning in the Niligiri Hills of Tamil Nadu in South India, the Light has dispersed and now shines in over 20 countries. In 1935, Free Will Baptists had no churches outside of North America. In 2010, people in over 1,100 overseas churches and mission works worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Nearly 600 national pastors join our current missionary force of 100 in fulfilling our stewardship responsibility of reaching the unreached. Twelve Bible institutes and seminaries around the world are training an additional 400 workers for the harvest fields. This is the story we tell in *Into The Darkness*.

The purpose adopted and pursued by our early pioneer missionaries is still our purpose today. FWBIM has always reached out to unreached peoples with the ultimate goal of planting churches and initiating church planting

### FREE WILL BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

1935 — 2010





movements. In June of 1935, Laura Belle met with the Eastern General Conference in Greenville, North Carolina. She had a clear understanding of their expectations. “I was to make it a definite aim to search out a *needy field* in India where Free Will Baptists would be invited to send further missionaries, develop a work, and *establish churches*” [Laura Belle Barnard, *Touching The Untouchables*, p. 49—emphasis supplied].

The call of reaching unreached peoples (needy fields) has been a defining characteristic of the Mission. It has determined the areas of the world to which we feel called. If another evangelical group is working in an area, FWBIM has chosen to go where no evangelical effort exists. Our goal is not to simply advance the Free Will Baptist denomination, our goal is to advance the Kingdom.

We adhere to the confession of the Apostle Paul in Romans 15:20 when he said, “And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation” (NKJV). This is the origin then, of our current purpose statement: We exist to facilitate church planting movements among unreached peoples.

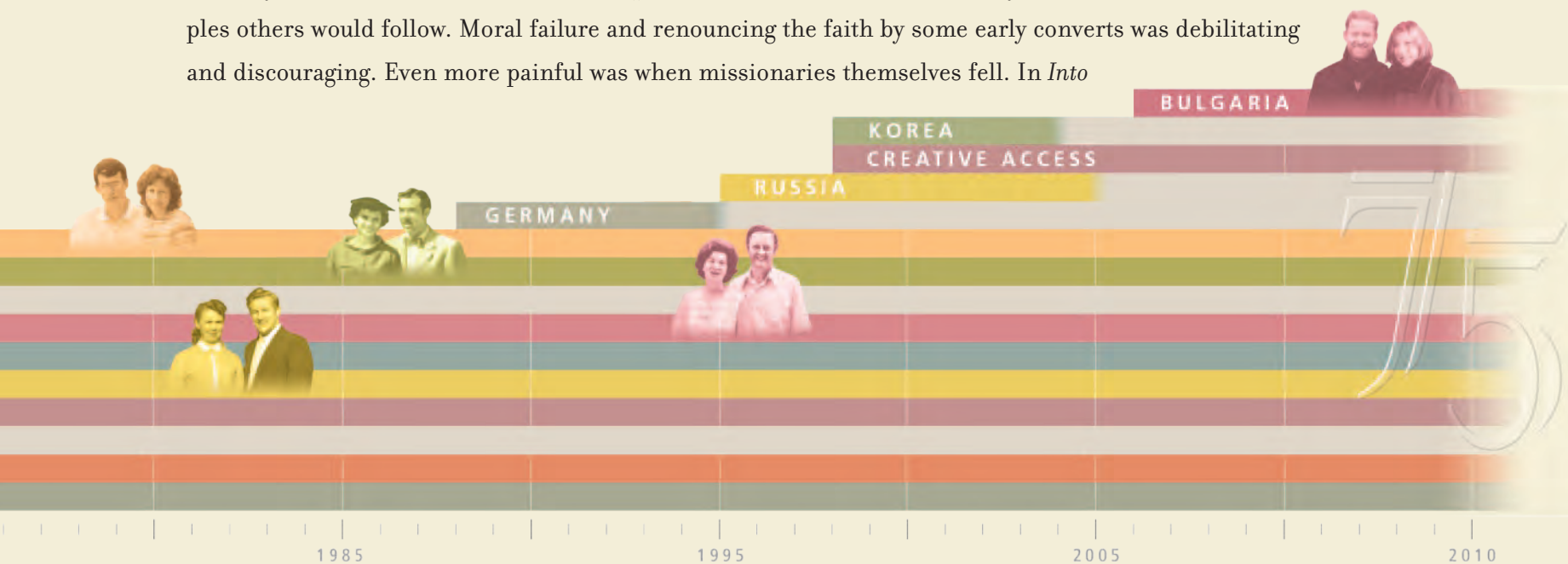
A prime example comes from the experience of Laura Belle Barnard herself. Upon arriving in Kotagiri, South India, Laura Belle learned of an earlier outreach effort to the Harijan (outcaste) people. A Scottish lady, Miss Cockburn, abandoned her outreach in the community. “Apparently, she had become thoroughly discouraged and withdrew, declaring confidently that she had found an ethnic group of subhumans who were decidedly incapable of responding to education or spiritual truth” [*Touching The Untouchables*, p. 15].

This did not dissuade Laura Belle.

When people enter our churches around the world, they usually do not come from the Nazarenes, Southern Baptists, or the Assemblies of God. They come from Animism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Islam, or Catholicism. We do not aim to rearrange the Kingdom, but to advance it.

This has been a laudable, but difficult road. Totally unreached people require much prayer and labor before harvest time. The early years were difficult as our pioneer missionaries painstakingly carved a church from the bedrock of superstition and false belief. Conversions were slow in coming. Leadership training was frustrating at times.

Early converts had few Christian examples within their own cultures. They, themselves, were the examples others would follow. Moral failure and renouncing the faith by some early converts was debilitating and discouraging. Even more painful was when missionaries themselves fell. In *Into*





*The Darkness* we acknowledge the contribution of those whose ministries did not end well. The message of their early years was true and their sacrifice worth noting.

Crucial to the cause was the willingness of pioneer missionaries who paid the price and remained faithful to the call. Wave after wave of missionaries followed the trailblazers. The promise on which they based their ministries was, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (NKJV).

Praise the Lord, on many of our fields it is now harvest time. The attendance in Free Will Baptist churches outside of North America has more than doubled within the past decade. Around the world, children are born into Free Will Baptist homes with parents who are second- and third-generation followers of Christ. The unrelenting faithfulness of missionaries and national pastors is now resulting in an exponential harvest.

As you read through *Into The Darkness* these are not the only changes you will recognize. Laura Belle would stare in disbelief at a sign on the front door of the church in Kotagiri which reads, “Please turn off your mobile phones.” In her day they did not even have electricity.

Some of our earliest missionaries served seven-year terms. It was just too expensive to make the long ocean voyages to and from the field more frequently. Visitors to the field were almost non-existent. Phone calls had to be arranged well in advance, or were only made in extreme circumstances because of prohibitive costs. Banking systems around the world were undependable and untrustworthy, making financial transactions and channeling support extremely challenging.

Things have certainly changed. Today, hundreds of Free Will Baptist teens and adults visit, see, and assist the works around the world firsthand. With the advent of the Internet, every missionary now has access not only to e-mail, but also to free video conferencing. Worldwide banking and property laws have strengthened, aiding the advancement of the Kingdom.

But, with all the changes, some things remain unchanged. Almost two billion people still have no access to the gospel. Cities, towns, and villages all over the world are waiting for the first witness, the first church, and the first missionary to arrive. Scores of men, women, and children enter eternity each day without hearing the truth of the gospel. The “clear and simple task” remains unfinished.

As was true with Laura Belle and the Free Will Baptist denomination of the 1930s, we are faced with significant challenges in our generation. Most of the two billion who have not heard the gospel live in areas that refuse entry with a missionary visa. Are we going to look at the



challenges and say, “It’s too difficult?” or, “It’s too dangerous?”

This is *our* challenge. This is *our* calling. *Into The Darkness* is not only an attempt to chronicle the provisions of God and the faithfulness of His people in the past. The book, and the stories it contains, is meant to serve as an appeal—a challenge—to the current generation, and others who will follow, to continue piercing the darkness until the words of Jesus are fulfilled, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and

then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14—NKJV).

This task demands the same spirit, creativity, and tenacity that existed in our earliest missionaries. If governments will not allow missionaries to enter with missionary visas, we will have to find other ways. Some will enter providing humanitarian aid. Others will teach in schools or hold various occupations. Some will start businesses. Some will birth creative alternatives.

Though the means of taking the gospel has changed through the years, and will most certainly change as we head into the future, the purpose itself should not. “We exist to

facilitate church planting movements among unreached peoples.” Winning people to Christ, making them disciples, and gathering them together to form a church will always be the call.

As we face this challenging future, new colleagues are coming alongside us. Free Will Baptists from our churches around the world are sensing the need and answering the call to reach more than their Jerusalem, and are reaching into *their* Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Over the next 25 years, this may be one of the most exciting developments we will see. By the time we celebrate our centennial in 2035, more Free Will Baptist missionaries may originate from our works internationally than from North America. If current growth trends continue, more Free Will Baptists will be worshipping in churches internationally than in the U.S.A.

Perhaps before the next 25 years have elapsed, we will all be gathered around the throne of Heaven to worship the Lord together. The Apostle John had the unique opportunity to see that scene in advance. He records it for us in Revelation 7:9-10, “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”

As we look, we will see a Bengali man from India, a Lobi woman from Ivory Coast, and a Frenchman from Châteaubriant. Scanning the crowd further, we will see a former Shinto priest, a mountain villager from Panama, and a senorita from Alpedrete, Spain. Thousands upon thousands of our brothers and sisters in Christ from all over the world will be present because of the sacrifice and commitment of Free Will Baptists who were obedient to send and be sent.

*Into The Darkness* tells part of that story. Praise the Lord with us for those who will gather around the throne as a result of the labors of those whose story is contained herein, as well as those whose story is being lived today.





# CÔTE D'IVOIRE (IVORY COAST)

## *A Light in the Dark*

*That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

JOHN 1:9

Welcome to Ivory Coast—West Africa's most magnificent and diverse showpiece. Also known as Côte d'Ivoire, the country rests in Africa's western bulge, with coastline facing south, and its borders touching Ghana to the east, Burkina and Mali to the north, and Guinea and Liberia to the west. Just beyond its rocky beaches, lush rainforests stretch for more than 200 miles. Forests give way to savannah grasslands, with occasional trees, creeks, and rivers cutting across its more primitive terrain. During the rainy season, temperatures and humidity soar. Yet farmers work undaunted, yielding 80% of the country's exports. It is the world's third largest producer of coffee and cocoa.

Unlike most African countries, a few regions of Côte d'Ivoire boast refined architecture, exquisite homes, and regal palaces. French influence permeates the country. Amid skyscrapers and bustling city life in Abidjan, it seems impossible that utter poverty and ancient animistic rituals prevail only a stone's throw away.

Côte d'Ivoire's deep history reaches back into darkness like the many rainforests that blanket its interior. Before Portuguese traders discovered the land in the 15th century, her story grew unrecorded. As trading posts took root along the coast, French activity increased. After sporadic wars with African states and extensive military operations, the French gained complete rule just before the start of World War I. Under French leadership, Côte d'Ivoire developed into a French overseas territory, allowed to elect a territorial assembly. Eventually, in 1960, the country gained full independence.

More than 15 million Ivoirians from five principal ethnic groups call this land home. High living standards lure more than 25% of its population from surrounding countries. Literacy rates are rising from the meager 42.5% scored in years past, and industrial output continues to increase.



**UPPER RIGHT:** Coffee beans are one of Ivory Coast's main export crops.

**ABOVE:** Women prepare a traditional Ivorian meal for a large group of people.

**RIGHT:** Women typically transport groceries, harvests, and other items on their heads, as shown.





In spite of its modern façade, most of Côte d'Ivoire remains enslaved to archaic forms of animism and ancestor worship. Aware of a creator, but ignorant of the one true God, Ivorians find themselves constantly placating a spirit world they believe surrounds them and threatens to wreak havoc on their lives. An animistic form of Islam, the fastest growing religion in Africa, grips the Ivory Coast as well. Muslims hold 25% of the religious market. Roman Catholicism takes on a more idolatrous role as Ivorians use its symbols and rituals as charms to ward off evil spirits. Animal sacrifices and food offerings are believed to absolve guilt and restore goodwill between deceased ancestors and the living. The process of guilt and atonement continues until death, a depressing and hopeless state-of-flux in which most natives spend their entire lives.



### Mission Facts

Over 6,000 people crowd into 19 churches and more than 70 other locations each week to joyfully worship God. Standing firm in the face of civil unrest and persecution, the Ivorian church is reaching into neighboring countries like Ghana while continuing efforts to evangelize remote villages within their own country.

more than 30,000 Lobi. A Bible institute program began in Bouna in 1985, and leadership training classes began in Bondoukou. By 1996, the Free Will Baptist staff in Côte d'Ivoire numbered 24 missionaries, 6 ordained pastors, and more than 30 lay preachers.

It took decades to loosen evil's deadly grip on the Ivory Coast. But the light of Christ is breaking through the deception. God's Word is going forward among dif-

ferent tribes and tongues, through the written Word, cassette tapes, films, neighborhood outreaches, and other creative methods missionaries devise. One soul at a time, captives are released into Christ's glorious freedom. While there is still much work to be done, missionaries laid a solid foundation for future growth. Now, alongside our workers, African workers hold high the flaming torch and are taking the light of Christ to all the darkened corners of the Ivory Coast.



**TOP:** At great personal risk, a missionary captured this Lobi dance on film during the early days of ministry in Doropo.

**LEFT:** General Director Raymond Riggs sits among village elders and chiefs with two missionary families in the early days of work in the Ivory Coast.



### COTE D'IVOIRE

CAPITAL	.....	Yamoussoukro
LARGEST CITY	.....	Abidjan
AREA	.....	322,460 sq. km.
POPULATION	.....	20,617,068
CURRENCY	.....	West African CFA franc
PER CAPITA INCOME	.....	\$1,640
RELIGIONS		
	Muslim	..... 38.6%
	Christian	..... 32.8%
	Indigenous	..... 11.9%
	None	..... 16.7%
	Unreached People Groups	.... 34



# SEEDS IN FOREIGN SOIL

## *The Lonnie and Anita Sparks Story*

*And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying,  
This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to  
the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.*

ISAIAH 30:21

She was faithful. Lonnie Sparks' mother planted gospel seeds in her son from earlier than he was able to remember. By age 11, those seeds began to take root. Lonnie understood what it meant to have Jesus as his Savior, and he asked Him to come into his life.

As years went by, Lonnie's faith in Christ deepened. So did his sensitivity to the Spirit's call. "It was such an internal struggle, at first," Lonnie remembered. "I felt so strongly God calling me to preach, both here and abroad, but I was afraid. I wavered, hoping God would call someone else. Eventually, I had to face the truth: be happy and fulfilled knowing I was in God's will, or be miserable the rest of my life wishing I had obeyed," he concluded. "I am so thankful God gave me the courage to follow His lead!"

Indeed, God was leading Lonnie to missions, with his first stop at Free Will Baptist Bible College and on to Winona Lake School of Theology. While attending as a student, God confirmed his direction through Dr. Oswald J.

Smith's message one night. "Why should anyone hear the gospel twice before everyone has heard it once?" Good point, thought Lonnie.

Little did Lonnie know that God was also at work in another person's heart. Anita Kaminsky, a student at Free Will Baptist Bible College, felt God calling her to missions. The two met and were married in 1954, ready to start a life together following God's lead to spread the gospel throughout the world.

Lonnie pastored several Free Will Baptist churches stateside before their first appointment overseas. Ripe with experience and passion, the couple left for Switzerland to complete a two-year, French language training course. By 1958, Lonnie and Anita felt ready and eager for all

that Africa had to offer.

"Where to begin?" they prayed. God answered, "The heart of the country." Gouméré was a central and pivotal place for outreach, but certainly not an easy environment. Bizarre insects, stagnant heat, and an entirely



**TOP LEFT:** Anita Sparks diligently typed the manuscript for the Koulango New Testament.

**LEFT:** As curious eyes observe the white man, Lonnie Sparks converses with a Koulango villager.





Baptists' pioneer Ivory Coast missionaries.

Over the course of the next 13 years, the Sparks witnessed God at work in their personal lives and among the people of Gouméré. In addition to being blessed with two sons, Paul and Noël, several churches were planted and numerous villages opened to the gospel. Lonnie reduced the Koulango language to written form, and then translated the New Testament into their native language. Anita worked alongside, typing manuscripts for the Bible and other primers to help teach the Africans to read. At last, the Koulango were able to read the good news of Jesus with their own eyes. Many hearts were turned to Christ.

Eventually, Lonnie and Anita felt their groundwork in the Ivory Coast was complete. They applied for a transfer in 1973 to begin a new work in Spain along with the Dock Catons. After a year of Spanish language study in Madrid, they began a new adventure sharing Christ with the Spaniards around them.

In reflection, Lonnie remembered the feelings he had when he first heard God's call to missions. "I realize now that every step of faith brings feelings of fear and uncertainty. I'm convinced that's why God calls us to do His work. He wants us to trust Him entirely—not just for our salvation, but for every moment of our lives," he said. "When we step out in faith, we find that the road may not be easy. But the pleasure that comes from knowing God's presence far outweighs the comfort of the predictable."

**TOP:** Young Ivorian believers study the Bible with Lonnie Sparks.

**RIGHT:** Lonnie prepares to baptize several Koulango converts in the muddy waters near Gouméré.

different culture awaited them. Supplies were difficult to obtain. Food had to be carefully prepared, and water—particularly during the dry season—had to be hauled long distances and then boiled to kill bacteria and parasites. Despite the difficulties, Lonnie and Anita pressed on as Free Will

## A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

A funeral seems a strange place for a revival. Nonetheless, God chose this difficult venue to accomplish a mighty work in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa. Mr. Bini Kouamé Daniel, beloved president of the National Association of Free Will Baptists in Côte d'Ivoire, was killed instantly in a freak motorcycle accident en route to the home of a Bondoukou church member. His wife, riding with him, was only slightly injured.

As a result of his death, many people heard the gospel. Almost 300 people were on hand for the three-hour service the night before Bini's body was removed from the morgue. The following night, 1,000 people heard Jerry Pinkerton's message, and finished the service with singing and prayer. Later that night, between 3,000 and 4,000 people gathered in the village square for a government mandated service. Jerry again spoke,

declaring to the masses that true peace and hope can only be found in Christ.

Mr. Bini Kouamé was a beautiful testimony to the community through his life and service. Through his death, God continued to use him to lead others.





# A FIRM FOUNDATION

## *The Dan and Margaret Merkh Story*

*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

M A T T H E W 7 : 2 5

Some might give up after the first or second breakdown. Or maybe after the first lost tire. Or the second. Or the broken trailer hitch, or the failed generator. Perhaps the collision of neighboring missionaries might thwart their intent. But Dan Merkh did not give up. Through sludge and sand and twisted jungle floor, he labored for more than a month and a half, simply to haul needed building supplies from Ghana to Doropo, where the local village desperately awaited a medical facility.

It became Dan's life focus during his term in Ivory Coast, West Africa. When he and his wife Margaret first arrived, he realized the most immediate need. "There were no mission facilities available," Dan remembered. "It was pivotal to provide a physical place—a platform from which future missionaries could work." He had some construction experience, coupled with a lot of heart and a good sense of humor. "You just cannot control the circumstances around you, but you can always be content in the will of God," Dan said. "The most important part is just getting the gospel out there, no matter how off-schedule or unconventional the methods seem to be."

Dan Merkh's rock-solid faith stemmed from the firm foundation he received from his Christian home. The last of four boys, Dan had more spiritual depth in his youth than many others years ahead of him. Directly out of high school, Dan found himself in the Marine Corps, stationed in Norfolk, Virginia.

It was there he discovered Fairmount Park Church, the channel which led him to the Board of Foreign Missions of the National Association of Free Will Baptists.



**ABOVE:** Dan Merkh lays the footing for the foundation of the Doropo clinic.

**RIGHT:** Bill Jones, Dr. Miley, Lonnie Sparks, and Dan Merkh.





After his discharge from active duty and just before entering Free Will Baptist Bible College, he met and married Margaret Johnson in 1948. In 1957 the couple left the states to study the French language in Switzerland. They joined Lonnie and Anita Sparks in Ivory Coast the following year.

The Merkhs moved in with the Sparks while Dan constructed a colaborer house for the Sparks' ministry. Through trial and error, he erected a fine facility for the family in Gouméré. His first work complete, the Merkhs moved next to Koun

where Bill and Joy Jones were stationed. For 15 months Dan labored to build the Shepherd's Station at Koun, where the Jones ministered to the tribal groups around them. From there, he and his growing family moved to Doropo, where he built the shell of an important medical clinic and a house for the Mileys. By the time the Merkhs arrived stateside on furlough, their family included

four boys and a girl, and their construction repertoire was complete with several useful mission stations.

After furlough, the Merkhs felt led to open a work in France, planting churches and teaching Scripture. An original thinker with energy and enthusiasm, Dan understood the clash of cultures with the gospel and worked quickly and creatively to build connections with the French people.

Eventually, the Merkhs returned stateside where Dan pastored in South Carolina and Virginia for 20 years, most of that time at First Free Will Baptist Church in Richmond.

Whether building facilities, a family, or a mission field, the Merkhs were certain about one thing: Their lives were given to Christ as tools in the hands of the Master Carpenter. And God fashioned beautiful lives and works through their obedient service.

**TOP:** Margaret washes clothes with a kerosene-powered machine.

**RIGHT:** Lonnie Sparks and Dan Merkh pose with a group of children in the African bush.



## NATIONAL STABILITY

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

EPHESIANS 6:10-11

**R**ebel forces ransacked their way into Bouna, the northeastern region of Côte d'Ivoire where Ivorian pastor Jêromé Kambou faithfully served. Kambou kept close to his flock. He did not desert them, even under trial.

Kambou was falsely accused of being a spy and incarcerated for 11 days in June 2003. He was stripped, humiliated, and treated roughly. His wife and three children had to pay to visit him. But like Paul of the Scriptures, Kambou rejoiced in his sufferings.

"They thought I was the captive, but they were my captive audience," Kambou asserted. "I believe God allowed my arrest so that I could share the gospel with men I ordinarily could not reach."

After his release, several of the men returned to visit Kambou and ask more questions about Jesus.

"Living behind rebel lines is certainly not easy," Kambou admitted. "But God is more than faithful. It is an honor to serve Bouna, the city of God's choice for my life's work."



# AFTER GOD'S HEART

*The Dr. LaVerne and Lorene Miley Story*

*“the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”*

ROMANS 11:33



“Can anyone help explain God’s love?” the teacher asked his church class in the town of Doropo, Ivory Coast. One lady spoke up, “It’s the way Dr. Miley loved Moussa.” Moussa, the town drunk, was deposited dirty, drunk, and comatose in a wheelbarrow at the Doropo hospital. With patience and compassion, Dr. LaVerne Miley took him in, cleaned him up, and helped restore his health. As a result, Moussa prayed to receive Christ. It was a modern-day Samaritan story. It was also a scene repeated all day, every day as the lone doctor worked tirelessly to meet the overwhelming needs of more than 30,000 Lobi tribe members.

Although challenging and tiring, the work was the very reason LaVerne trained to become a medical doctor. His heart turned toward helping people in body and soul, so they might have the same hope in Jesus that he found at age 10.

After LaVerne gave his life to the Lord, it became clear God had unique plans for this child prodigy. He finished high school at age 14, ranking third in a class of 124, and purposed to use his God-given gifts for the Lord. By the time he earned his B.S. degree at age 18, he felt called to preach. He enrolled at Free Will Baptist Bible College where he met his wife, Lorene Norris. Sensing more training was needed, he enrolled at Northern Baptist Seminary. After graduation, he returned to FWBBC to serve as a professor of Greek and science.

Then it was time to settle down and have a family, or so the young couple thought. But as God showed the Mileys numerous times in their lives, God’s plans are unpredictable, and His ways are unsearchable. Encounters with Laura Belle Barnard left LaVerne unable to shake the picture of need in remote, unserved places. Eventually, the Mileys became convinced God was calling them to medical missions, a scary decision to make with three children to support.

Yet LaVerne and Lorene trusted God. “If God calls His people to do a work, then God can and will make it happen,” LaVerne asserted with confidence. Within five years, LaVerne earned his doctorate of medicine and completed a stateside internship and surgical residency. Miraculously, all bills were paid and they were ready for the Ivory Coast.

In January 1962, the Mileys arrived in Doropo. Immediately, the medical clinic was built and put into operation. Eddie and Sandra Payne arrived shortly to assist, with Sandra serving as a registered nurse. “It was amazing to see how God placed medicine as a tool in our hands to introduce the multitudes to Jesus Christ and His love,” Dr. LaVerne mused.



LEFT: An injured man waits while Dr. Miley and Archie Mayhew discuss the best treatment.



The Lobi people thought the Mileys were amazing, too. At first a trickle, then a flood of people began pouring in for help. After two years of service, the Mileys experienced some relief when Dr. Ruby Griffin arrived to help carry the load. However, less than two years later, she returned stateside to care for an aging, widowed mother. Again, the Mileys remembered that God's ways are different from His servants'.

When the caseload climbed to over 30,000 patients annually, LaVerne realized he needed a better health strategy. He trained in preventive medicine at Columbia



University School of Public Health in New York City. When he returned to Ivory Coast in 1977, he was pleased to find the Ivory Coast Health Services implementing new preventive strategies, and Sherwood Lee, his medical assistant, helping the African workers understand the importance of prevention through nursing classes.

Over the years, the Mileys watched God perform miracle after miracle. Facilities were provided, medicine obtained, and thousands of lives were touched by the good news of Christ. So when Dr. Miley began to hear that still, small voice again, he wavered. This time, he felt God was calling him back to the States. But how could that be? Why would God ask him to leave such a vital and important work? After much prayer and fasting, again the Mileys recognized that God's ways and plans are very different from ours.

Dr. Miley stated, "Just as picks, shovels, and even bulldozers are necessary tools in preparing to lay the foundation of a building, so the medical work, it seems, was necessary to prepare the hearts of the people in the Doropo area for the building of His church." He knew God initiated the work. God sustained it. And God used the seeds planted through the medical ministry to accomplish His plan—in His way, in His time. The Mileys just needed to obey.

During the next 18 years, Dr. Miley served as a Bible college professor rather than entering the more lucrative medical field. He touched thousands of lives, encouraging new generations to risk obeying God's call to missions. As friend Don Robirds said, "Through his faith, LaVerne exalted the Lord without calling attention to himself...truly, LaVerne Miley was a man after God's own heart."

**ABOVE:** Lorene Miley teaches a sewing class to village women.

**RIGHT:** A Christian convert watches fire devour his fetishes, signifying his release from control of the spirits.



## FETISH PRIEST TURNS FERVENT PREACHER

*The Story of Kontin Paul's  
Changed Heart*

The fetish priest had no choice. His son was dying from a parasite, and his idols proved ineffective. He turned to the medical clinic at Doropo. His son was treated and told to return to the clinic three times each week for a month. At each visit, the fetish priest heard the gospel. By the time his son was healed, the fetisher's heart was changed. Joseph, a clinic worker who spoke Dissoumate's native language, led him to Christ.

The effect was immediate. The priest asked Dr. Miley to accompany him to his village where one by one, he burned and destroyed the idols that kept him and the villagers so far from the truth. Miley said, "People have come to consult you for a long time because you had the power of the fetish. I want them to continue to come to you, because now you can point them to God."

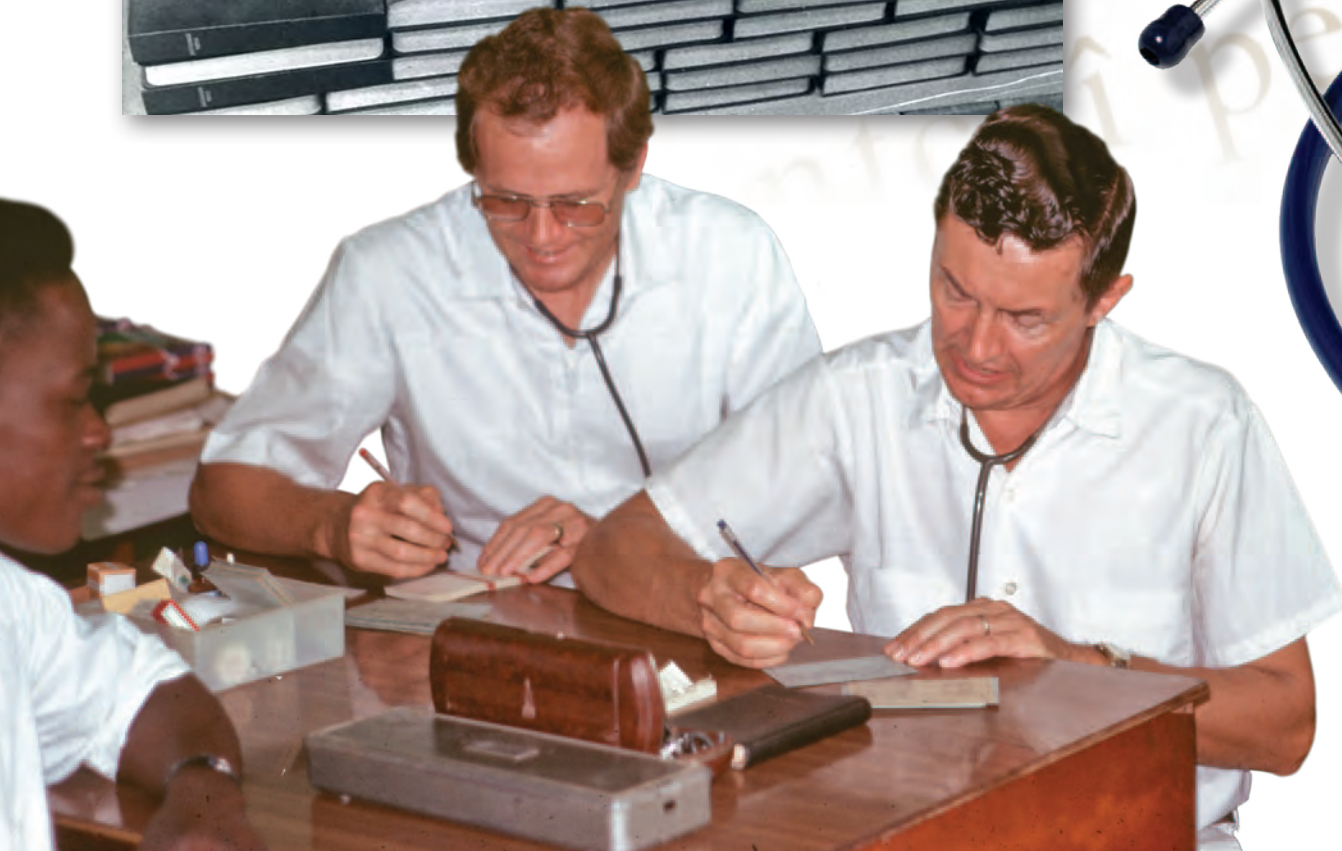
And the ex-priest did, with more fervor and passion for lost souls than any other missionary. After he was baptized, he officially changed his heathen name to Kontin Paul—

meaning, "Paul, the aged." His son also accepted Christ and took the name Moise (Moses). He later became a nurse in the Doropo clinic.



**RIGHT:** The Evangelical Publications Center in Abidjan served as the main source of Christian literature for French West Africa.

**BELOW:** Koulango New Testaments, translated by Lonnie Sparks and printed in the United States, gave villagers the opportunity to read God's Word in their own language.



**ABOVE:** Sherwood Lee and Dr. LaVerne Miley write prescriptions and make notes for patient files at the Doropo clinic.





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**TOP:** Dr. Paul and Tammy Gentuso and Dr. Mark Paschall pose with hospital staff and workers in Doropo.  
**ABOVE:** Dr. Miley reviews the list of medications received and needed at the Doropo hospital and clinic.  
**LEFT:** General Director Rolla Smith and missionary builder Dan Merkh pose together.



# KNOWN AMONG THE NATIONS

## *The Jimmy and Janie Aldridge Story*

*Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.*

ROMANS 15:20



*A*s red dust swirled up from the roads and the raw, earthy smell of warm meat and fresh fruit filled their nostrils, Jimmy and Janie Aldridge knew they were exactly where they wanted to be: in the center of God's will.

Saved at age 13, Jimmy was conscientious, ambitious, and sincere in his pursuit of Christ and the kingdom of God. Janie gave her life to God at an even earlier age, and desired to become a medical missionary some day. Her acquaintance with Carlisle Hanna, coupled with a godly mother, cemented her spiritual resolve. When Janie and Jimmy married, they were excited about the missions adventure they knew God had in store for them.

After graduating from Free Will Baptist Bible College and pastoring for two years, the couple was appointed to the Ivory Coast. Their hearts were moved with compassion as they first stepped foot in Koun, the southern region of the Bondoukou circle. The Aldridges realized most of the people they saw knew nothing about Jesus, and they were eager to bring them the good news.

Jimmy and Janie shared responsibilities in the French-speaking Bible institute in Bondoukou. Jimmy worked to establish preaching points throughout the area, while Janie used her training as a registered nurse to help the many hurting people at the small medical clinic.

At first, the results seemed slow in coming. "After nine years of preaching in the area of Bondoukou, we finally saw the first converts in the villages," Jimmy said. "Fourteen young men made decisions for Christ during the last school term." Jimmy taught them a new converts' course. He also taught them how to fight off temptation and opposition as the first believers in the village. Persecution did come, as the witch doctors

and fetishers tried to discourage the villagers from turning to Christ. But the powers of darkness were no match for the Light.

After 22 years, the negative impact of the climate on Jimmy's health led the couple to return stateside. Jimmy was appointed as Overseas Secretary for Foreign Missions. Joined by his wife, their new role included counseling, advising, and troubleshooting for the various mission fields.

Like Paul, God used the Aldridges to take the gospel to unreached people, to build churches and train Christians, and, in the end, to travel around the globe, encouraging Christians and missionaries. God proved Himself faithful, and the fruit of His work overflowed from the Ivory Coast to all the world.



LEFT: Jimmy and Janie Aldridge visit with a Christian couple and their baby in Bondoukou.

# CREATIVE FORCES

## *The Archie and Sarah Mayhew Story*

**S**arah Mayhew laid the Bible on her bed. She was finished reading through the New Testament for the first time, at the age of 26. With her whole heart, she desired to belong to the Jesus she grew to love as she read each page. She asked Him to be her Lord and Savior, and prayed for her husband, Archie, to be saved, too. Three weeks later, Archie also bowed his knee to Christ after reading through the New Testament. Within two years Archie felt God's call to preach and to missionary service.



Archie enrolled at Free Will Baptist Bible College. With a family to support, he entered night school. By God's grace and the Mayhews' teamwork, Archie graduated, and the family left for the mission field in 1969.

The Mayhews spent their first year in Lausanne, Switzerland, studying the French language. An innovator at heart, Archie saw an opportunity for the gospel before ever reaching Ivory Coast. God gave him the idea for a tape ministry, with readings of the New Testament recorded in French on audiocassettes and distributed worldwide to French-speaking communities. It proved a tremendous success.

The Mayhews continued creative approaches to evangelism when they reached Bondoukou, Ivory Coast. While studying the Koulango language, they started a Sunday school and worship service in their home near the marketplace. Despite opposition, they slowly won the hearts of the villagers around them.

The Mayhews returned from their first furlough with a renewed emphasis on village evangelism. Utilizing the cassette tape ministry, they traveled from village to village preaching the gospel. When it was time to move on, they left tapes of the messages for the new converts. "We only hear the missionaries once," one of the men said. "With the tapes, we can listen again and again to the message, and understand it better." Archie also teamed with an African pastor to record 16 messages in Koulango, that were broadcast over radio in Abidjan.

Then God gave the Mayhews another creative outlet for ministry. They opened a reading room in Tanda, where nearby students were welcomed to come and read a wide assortment of Christian literature. "God sent us these students," Sarah said. "We just made ourselves available to answer their questions and give them directions on how to find Christ. We are standing and witnessing the salvation of the Lord."

In time, God led the Mayhews to focus on training African leaders to reach their own communities for Christ. Archie enlisted help from supporters in the States by coordinating prayer warriors with specific villages.

They eventually returned stateside where Archie pastored several churches and served on the Board of Foreign Missions. After a brief battle with colon cancer, God took him home at the age of 71.



**ABOVE:** Archie Mayhew presents the plan of salvation to two Koulango students at the Tanda reading room.



# DIVINE VISION

## *The Sherwood and Vada Lee Story*

*And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

ROMANS 10:15



The young man was determined to find Sherwood Lee, the missionary who shared the gospel with him during a service in Kholaanyodouo. For three years, Lee's message of truth haunted the man's thoughts. Like Jonah, he tried to run. But he simply was unable to escape the relentless love of Christ and prayed to receive Jesus as his Savior. What relief! What joy! What hope he now had! All the man wanted now was to tell Sherwood Lee how his faithful witness saved his life. "When this young man approached me at the hospital and told me his story—and that he walked 10 miles on foot to tell it to me—I was deeply touched by God's goodness," Sherwood said. "Then we went with him to his village and watched him burn his idols. Our hearts rejoiced!"

It was just another strong confirmation that Sherwood and his wife, Vada, truly heard God's call to Africa. In 1969, the Lee family arrived in Doropo, Ivory Coast, to begin a new ministry among the Lobi tribe and to assist the Mileys in the medical clinic.

The medical clinic served hundreds of patients each week, with only one doctor on staff. Lacking any official medical training, Sherwood and Vada learned fundamental skills quickly and offered help in every way possible. Meanwhile, Sherwood worked closely with the Lobi people to learn the language and share the gospel in their native tongue. Opportunities to witness within the clinic abounded. As missionaries translated the Bible into the peoples' languages, Lee recorded them onto audio cassettes. As a result, both illiterate and literate Africans heard the Word of God in their own language.

In addition to their cassette ministry, the Lees shared the gospel in the Bouna prison. They were delighted to find men eager to learn. Inmates gathered around Sherwood to show him portions of books worn to fragments. "There is truly hunger for the Word," he observed. And he was happy to feed them the Truth.

During their third furlough, Sherwood earned an associate's degree

in nursing. Even better equipped than before, he returned to Doropo to help manage the ever-growing patient load. He also began a training program for nationals. His vision was to educate the Christian Ivoirians to one day take over the hospital and medical clinic. The Lees had to leave Africa before his vision became reality, but others saw trained Africans take over the responsibilities and successfully manage the hospital's operations.



LEFT: Sherwood Lee and a Lobi aide administer an IV to a patient.

# THY WILL BE DONE

## *The Jerry and Carol Pinkerton Story*

*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

M A T T H E W 6 : 9 - 1 0



*M*uch like other days, Jerry Pinkerton was riding in his car telling the two men with him about Jesus. The difference on that particular day in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, was the gun the

robbers were pointing at his head. “I knew that they wanted to steal and sell my car, but I had no idea what they were going to do with me,” Jerry said. “So I just told them about Christ.” By God’s grace, he was released without injury.

Jerry and Carol Pinkerton’s bravery stemmed from their unwavering focus on Jesus. Where they lived, what they did, and how they did it seemed inconsequential as long as they remained in the center of God’s will and work. Their sensitivity to God’s Spirit led the couple on adventures in numerous African regions. Their flexibility led to involvement in a variety of work with different people groups.

Both of the Pinkertons became Christians before their teen years. Both attended Free Will Baptist Bible College and Columbia Bible College. Carol earned a degree as an LPN, Jerry studied missions. They were completely committed to taking the gospel to the ends of the world.

Their first assignment began in Nassian, visiting villages and learning the language, customs, and habits of the people. Just when their work in Nassian was underway, God changed the Pinkertons’ plans. A great need developed at Ivory Coast Academy, the school for missionary children. The dorm parents had to leave unexpectedly for medical reasons. After prayer, Jerry and Carol sacrificed their agenda and ideas to follow God’s call to mentor 20 teen boys. In the end, God’s ways proved better for their family, as they were allowed to serve at ICA until their son graduated.

Later terms led them to Bondoukou, where they trained local leaders in the doctrines of the faith. Their next stop was Gouméré, followed by Tanda, where they labored to reestablish the local church. Time in Doropo followed, where they maintained equipment and buildings, freeing doctors to concentrate on medical needs. Eventually, the Pinkertons found themselves in Bouna, teaching at the Bible institute and happily serving in the rural villages.

Again, just as the Pinkertons acclimated to their latest home, God uprooted them and placed them in Abidjan, the economic and crime capital of Côte d’Ivoire. Though initially disheartened at leaving the rural region they loved, they joined the Bryans in an intense effort to build churches in the thriving metropolis. In all, four churches were planted in Abidjan before the Pinkertons retired.



RIGHT: Jerry Pinkerton gives a young boy an object lesson.





**LEFT:** Sherwood Lee shares the gospel in a Lobi village.

**MIDDLE:** General Director Raymond Riggs (right), Dan Merkh (left) and Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) missionary Gordon Timyan listen as the village chief (in white) explains he will donate land for a mission clinic.



**RIGHT:** Dan Merkh dons African garb and proudly displays an African musket.

**LOWER RIGHT:** Participants gather in front of the Bondoukou Free Will Baptist Church during an annual Côte d'Ivoire association meeting.





# THE WRITE OUTREACH

## *The Robert and Judy Bryan Story*

“If, by God’s grace, we can’t start a ministry that will seriously impact this city, neither the Pinkertons nor Judy and I want to waste our time,” Robert Bryan declared. “We want to change the face of Abidjan!”

Abidjan, sometimes referred to as the “Paris of Africa,” is a bustling city of skyscrapers and six-lane auto routes, home to more than three million people. The dichotomy of living standards is staggering. “Tar paper shacks border four-lane boulevards. A hundred yards from an expensive, four-star hotel, entire families crowd into one- and two-room apartments where the monthly rent is the same as one buffet meal at the hotel,” Robert explained. When they began, roughly one-third of the population was Roman Catholic, over a million were Muslims, and only a slim five percent claimed Christianity. Animism is predominant. Its fetish practices and rituals permeate lives, regardless of the religion claimed.

Robert and Judy Bryan spent their first term serving in Bouna, using their linguistic skills and Robert’s master’s degree in journalism to study, learn, and write literature for the Koulango and Lobi dialects. Within a relatively short time, they prepared evangelistic manuscripts in each language and photocopied them for circulation.

The Bryans’ emphasis on literature and relationship evangelism intensified. Robert edited *Champion* magazine, printed by the Evangelical Publishing Center (CPE), served on the CPE board, and as director for a time. Judy worked alongside Robert, designing book layouts on computer. She also worked extensively among Abidjan’s children. Neighborhood outreach coupled with relevant literature, films, and cassettes formed the Bryans’ primary evangelism strategy. By demonstrating God’s love to the people in tangible ways, darkened minds were opened to the light of truth.

Then, God called the Bryans to serve as temporary house parents at Ivory Coast Academy. In just a day, their family of four grew to include 17 teenaged boys! Monitoring and discipleship became a full-time job.

When their time at ICA was finished, the Bryans turned their focus to Abidjan once again. As the number of Christians in the city began to grow, they sought a centralized meeting place. By January of 1997, the first weekly service was held with 65 people attending. Even though most of the members were unemployed students, they pulled together \$1,800 to pay the bills—more than 10 months’ salary at minimum wage. What a testimony to God’s work of grace and provision!

The couple also continued work for CPE, including editorial oversight, administration, and book layouts. During those years, CPE published over 30 new books and maintained a list of more than 125 titles sold throughout French-speaking Africa. Through their diligence, God’s Word will continue to yield fruit for years to come.



**RIGHT:** Robert Bryan confers with African Christians concerning materials to be published.



# GOD'S SOLDIERS

## *The Mike and Deleen Cousineau Story*

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

MATTHEW 5:10



*H*e endured being pistol-whipped, interrogated, and bound. He watched in horror as the two armed burglars fatally shot the security guard dead. Then, turning to Mike, they ordered him into the car. An amalgam of Scripture, prayer, and adrenalin surged through him as he prepared himself for what might possibly be the last few minutes of his life. Mike Cousineau knew that serving as a missionary in Ivory Coast, West Africa, was a total commitment to Christ. He gladly answered the call, knowing that God's path is not always easy—or safe—but it was where Mike wanted to be.

Then the moment came. The attackers were distracted, and Mike flung the car door open, catapulting onto the jungle floor below. Running in a zigzag pattern, miraculously the hail of bullets firing from the enemies' semi-automatic weapons missed him. He escaped with injuries, but at least he had his life.

His wife Deleen, safely in another location, marveled at God's kindness and grace when she learned of her husband's harrowing encounter. They all gave praise that none of the students at the Ivory Coast Academy were present during the burglary attempt.

Of course, most days at ICA were filled with learning, Bible training, and evangelism. After Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College graduates Mike and Deleen Cousineau arrived in Bouaké, Ivory Coast, to help with the school for missionary kids, they labored in every capacity to further the ministry. Mike maintained the grounds and buildings, including painting and construction. He built two facilities to house ICA teachers. And he hosted mission teams who labored to build churches in other areas of Ivory Coast. Deleen worked diligently to establish a team of counselors to handle the various emotional and spiritual needs of students.

"The ministry at ICA is truly amazing," said Mike. "In one month alone, 105 messages were preached, 59 lessons were taught by students, and 36 people were saved." In some of their adventures, they came face-to-face with demonic opposition. Once again, their lives were spared through prayer and grace, but the evil surrounding them was still apparent. In spite of the village witch doctor, the gospel was preached and many seeds were planted.

Prior to ICA duties, Mike helped establish the Bible institute in Bouna, serving as director and chief financial officer. During their time in the Ivory Coast, the Cousineaus learned about God's faithfulness through good and tough times. They pressed on to serve, because they knew the God who called them to the task is faithful to complete the work.



LEFT: Mike Cousineau discusses the Bible institute program with a student.

# LIFETIME FOCUS

## *The Clint and Lynette Morgan Story*

*Press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

PHILIPPIANS 3:14

God was relentless. Since his conversion at age eight, Clint Morgan was unable to elude God's distinct call in his heart toward missions. Fueled by godly parents and an upbringing characterized by youth camps and missionary conferences, he was driven to know Christ and make Him known in whatever capacity God chose. After time spent under the tutelage and example of missionaries at Free Will Baptist Bible College, Clint began to grasp the direction of God's leading.

Similarly, God burdened Lynette's heart, bringing her to a saving knowledge of Christ at age six. As the daughter of missionaries LaVerne and Lorene Miley she also grew under the influence of godly leaders with a bent toward missions. When she and Clint met, they knew they were God's answer to the other's prayers for a partner with a lifelong call to missions. Clint was ordained, and Lynette completed nursing school. Both waited for God's timing and direction for missionary assignment.

At last, the young couple was appointed to the Ivory Coast in 1976. Following a year of language study, they arrived in Doropo to assist with the medical station and local evangelism.

In addition to learning the difficult Lobi language, the Morgans encountered significant spiritual opposition among the tribes. "It seemed they had a lot of information about the fetish, but very little information about Christ," Clint noted. So he sought to build upon what little information they had, painting the full picture of hope offered by the gospel.

Working through special seminars, Bible studies, and even a soccer team, Clint worked diligently to distribute God's Word. Lynette labored faithfully in the medical station while also mothering the three boys and one girl God gave them.

Eventually, God developed a strong network of believers through the efforts of the Morgans and other missionaries. During a 1984 field council meeting, the missionaries noted that 30 Free Will Baptist churches were meeting throughout Côte d'Ivoire. Yet only two ordained pastors served those 30 churches. Lay laborers were heavily depended upon. It became clear Ivory Coast needed a place for training Christian workers.

Clint worked with the team to establish the Bouna Bible Institute, creating not only a centralized location for education, but also developing an adequate curriculum for even the remotest parts of Africa. Leadership training became available in the bush as well as in the cities.

Ten men enrolled in the first class at Bouna Bible Institute in 1987. Those 10 and many others since that time graduated to become influential leaders in the churches of Côte d'Ivoire. "Now these trained servants are laboring alongside missionaries," Clint said with a smile. "It's God's plan, come to fruition."



**ABOVE:** Lynette Morgan enjoys playing with the child of an African Christian.

**BOTTOM:** Dr. Mark Paschall, Clint Morgan, and Dr. Kenneth Eagleton discuss the hospital ministry.



# YOUNG AT HEART

## *The Eddie and Sandra Payne Story*

*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

I T I M O T H Y 4 : 1 2

Though most of boys his age were dreaming of becoming professional athletes or top executives, Eddie wanted to preach. Since his conversion at age 13, he knew God was more important than anything else. By age 15, he declared himself a preacher for life, and set his focus toward fulfilling his calling.

Sandra also heard the call in her early years, responding to Christ's salvation at age 12. At age 15, she, too, made a commitment to missions. While at Free Will Baptist Bible College, the two godly young people met and married. Eddie graduated from FWBBC in 1962 and attended Wycliffe Summer Institute of Linguistics that same summer. Sandra graduated from St. Luke's School of Nursing in Jacksonville, Florida, hoping to use her skills to further God's work on the mission field.

God answered her hopes and Eddie's desires. God called the couple to Ivory Coast, where they served in Doropo assisting the medical station, studying the Lobi language, and evangelizing surrounding areas. During their first term, Eddie concentrated on construction, building their own home and other buildings needed for meeting space. They also participated in the rapidly growing youth ministry, assisting the national pastor with work in the local church. Whenever time allowed, Eddie penned the beloved "Payne's People" cartoons for *Heartbeat* magazine, sharing his humor and life lessons with supporters at home and around the globe.

Over time, Eddie and others were able to translate books of the Bible into the Lobi language and record them on audio cassettes. Armed with cassette players and tapes, Eddie took the gospel into Lobi homes where the Bible was not known. Thanks to the cassette ministry, Eddie was able to leave copies for the families and villages to hear the gospel message over and over. It became an integral part of African evangelism, offering the people an incredible opportunity to hear God's Word in their own language as often as they needed to hear it to understand.

Then God intensified Eddie's evangelism trips even more.

Inspired by the people's needs, Eddie asked Dr. Laverne Miley to travel with him once a week into the villages. As a team, Eddie preached to reach the villagers' spiritual needs. Dr. Miley addressed their physical concerns. When the villagers realized the missionaries truly cared for all their needs, they responded in ever-increasing numbers.

In addition to raising their two daughters, Eddie and Sandra parented hundreds of God's children, as new believers were added to the kingdom regularly. God used their efforts to produce lasting fruit that continues to yield dedicated laborers for the Lord.



ABOVE: Dr. Miley and nurse Sandra Payne discuss a medical procedure.

# LABORERS TOGETHER

## *The Norman and Bessie Richards Story*

*For we are laborers together with God.*

I CORINTHIANS 3:9

Norman and Bessie Richards swept into Côte d'Ivoire in 1969 with a fervent desire to reach Ivorians with the gospel. Since Dr. and Mrs. LaVerne Miley were ministering alone in Doropo, the northern-most region of the country, the Richards joined them for a short time in village evangelism. Soon, they headed south to the area of Koun-Mao to work among the Agni-speaking people.

Norman and Bessie met in 1963 when Norman officiated the wedding of Norman's brother and Bessie's sister in Searcy, Arkansas, their hometown. Norman graduated from Free Will Baptist Bible College in 1961, and went on to Columbia Bible College for further study. The two were attracted to each other and married on September 28, 1963. Bessie enrolled at FWBBC and Norman began pastoring a nearby church.

The Richards were appointed to missionary service in March of 1966 and studied the French language in Switzerland, prior to proceeding to Côte d'Ivoire. The short ministry in Doropo led them toward village evangelism in Koun-Abronso. They began evangelizing through various means, including the use of filmstrips and films. Laboring alone, they carried the gospel to many villages throughout two terms.

In 1979, the couple moved to Agnibilekrou where their ministry flourished. They anxiously sought means to expand and meet the needs of the growing number of believers. On one occasion a crowd of nearly 3,000 watched the *JESUS* film. With the numerical growth, Norman sensed the need for training leaders in addition to pastoring the church and extending village evangelism. Bessie was busy pouring her life into the women and children as well as home-schooling their two sons. Alice Smith joined the Richards in Agnibilekrou in 1982 and helped in the reading room, teaching the women, children, and public school classes.

When Norman faced a serious medical crisis with diabetes and a severe kidney infection in 1994, the couple returned to the States. Norman underwent surgery to correct a kidney problem. Due to an ensuing infection which severely damaged his kidneys, Norman and Bessie were unable to return to the field. They resigned in December 1994 after 27 years with Foreign Missions. In 1995, they were accepted for service with Home Missions to start a church in Louisiana.

Although the Richards left Côte d'Ivoire before seeing their dream of a church building in Agnibilekrou, they helped raise funds and were able to return in 1997 for the dedication of the new building constructed under supervision and labor of missionary Darrel Nichols. They praised the Lord for His continued blessings on the church under the leadership of Pastor Jérôme Kambou.



RIGHT: Norman Richards and Bill Jones speak with villagers in a street meeting.



# A SERVANT HEART

## *The Alice Smith Story*

*Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child,  
the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

MATTHEW 18:4



A country girl from West Virginia, Alice Smith was saved as a 15-year-old and, just a few months later, responded to a missionary's challenge. She surrendered to God's call and set out to do His will. Alice attended Free Will Baptist Bible College, graduating in 1973. She ministered in a hospital and nursing home during college, so she returned to her home area and began working with a Christian doctor.

After her appointment to missionary service in 1975, Alice studied French in Albertville, France. From there, she proceeded to Ivory Coast in September of 1977. She began her ministry in Doropo, working with Dr. LaVerne Miley and Sherwood Lee at the hospital. She also taught Sunday school, worked with the church's children's choir, and taught in vacation Bible school programs.

Alice moved to Agnibilekrou in 1982 and began working with Ledgel and Sharon Ferguson who were filling in for Norman and Bessie Richards. She taught Sunday school and women's Bible studies in addition to working in a Christian reading room. Opportunity also opened to teach Bible classes in public schools in Agnibilekrou. This ministry grew and, in 1985, Alice taught in four primary schools with over 150 students enrolled in her classes. At one point, she indicated that one-third of those enrolled had accepted Jesus Christ as Savior.

Working with the Richards and then with Darrel and Lila Nichols, Alice was able to expand the children's ministries. Together they reached into surrounding villages and more distant areas with special VBS programs. God blessed these efforts with many converts.

In 1995, working with Pastor Jérôme Kambou, Alice broadened her ministry to include teaching new convert and baptism classes for girls and women. She also assisted in counseling sessions.

Following stateside assignment, Alice returned to Agnibilekrou and worked part-time in the reading room ministry while helping Pastor Kambou organize departments in the church. When missionaries adopted the Community Health and Evangelism (CHE)

program, Alice assisted Dr. Kenneth Eagleton and Verlin Anderson in launching it in the areas of Bouna and Gouméré. Before they could make much progress, civil war broke out in 2002. Missionaries were forced to leave the unstable country.

In May 2004, Alice returned to Ivory Coast, with Verlin and Debbie Anderson and resumed CHE efforts in several areas of the country.



ABOVE LEFT: Alice Smith helps a young girl deliver a Sunday school lesson.

LEFT: Alice (left) and Carol Pinkerton (kneeling, right) participate in the annual Côte d'Ivoire women's meeting.

# THE MUSTARD SEED

*The Kenneth and Rejane Eagleton Jr. Story*

*If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed...nothing shall be impossible unto you.*

MATTHEW 17:20B (ABRIDGED)

Dr. Miley was tired. As the only doctor, he served more than 100 patients every day in his Doropo, Ivory Coast clinic. He knew he was unable to continue such a heavy load. But who else was willing to accept such a daunting task? Was another qualified physician willing to sacrifice money and prestige to serve in the African bush?

Years earlier, God gave Brazilian missionaries Ken and Marvis Eagleton a son who grew to become a godly man. With a heart bent on missions, Kenneth Jr. began praying for God's direction. Even while Dr. Miley was working in Africa to train natives in preventive medicine, Kenneth Eagleton Jr. was training in Brazil to become a doctor. As a practicing physician, young Eagleton learned about the great needs among the Ivorians. With wife Rejane and their three boys in agreement, the family pulled up their roots and replanted themselves on Doropo's mission field, immediately feeling the weight that burdened Dr. Miley for so long.

"The needs were overwhelming. We could have kept five doctors busy," Eagleton lamented. "It was frustrating to only be able to spend about five minutes with each patient." But they served as many as the hours in each day afforded them—averaging around 11,000 patients each year—binding wounds and souls as they ministered the gospel to each patient.

As the medical needs grew, Dr. Eagleton labored to meet them. Through stateside donations, they were able to purchase desperately needed x-ray equipment and build a facility to house it. But who was qualified to set it up? Dr. Eagleton was trained to read x-rays, not wire the machines. So again, they prayed. In a short while, Kenneth learned of a lab technician who was servicing another area. He quickly located him and convinced him to set up the x-ray lab in Doropo.

In time, the clinic added surgical facilities and established routine vaccinations for the villagers. Through the years the hospital experienced a number of setbacks, including a devastating fire. But the ministry continued, and the hospital was rebuilt. A Christian Ivorian doctor trained in family medicine and surgery was added to the staff. In God's time, the hospital was fully transferred to national workers.

Concerning the transition Dr. Eagleton stated, "From 1960 until 1998, Free Will Baptists in the USA sent medical and support missionaries to the hospital in Doropo. These missionaries treated the sick, trained national workers, and opened up an unreached area to the Good News of salvation in Christ. Now, our converts are carrying on the work that was begun."

The harvest of souls, reaped from decades of love and labor, continues to multiply and grow.



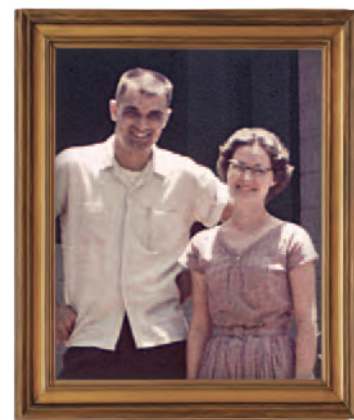
RIGHT: Dr. Kenneth examines a child at the Doropo clinic.



# A TWO-PRONGED ATTACK

## *The Bill and Joy Jones Story*

It was no ordinary day. For the first time in history, the people and tribal leaders of Koun, Ivory Coast, were presented with the gospel in the Agni language. It was a singular moment of God's revealed glory, the result of literally years of effort transforming the difficult, tonal language into written form. Bill and Joy Jones, Free Will Baptist missionaries and linguistic experts, marveled at God's goodness.



But they were not surprised. God called them to reach the world with the good news of Christ. Bill felt the call to missions just two years after his conversion as a youth. His soul was stirred following a Billy Graham crusade in which a missionary secretary spoke on the need in France. Both Bill and Joy were attending Free Will Baptist Bible College when they met. Joy was certain about Bill, but unsure about missions. God changed her heart, though, and they were soon united in marriage and purpose. They both wanted to bring God's Word to people in their own dialect. So they obtained special training in linguistics to enable them to translate the Bible into tribal languages.

Because of their efforts, the Agni people of Africa can read God's Word in their native tongue. Stories come to life for them in their own dialect, warming their hearts and minds to God's truth. The Jones translated Scriptures and literature into both French and tribal languages, hoping to reach both old and new generations of Ivorians. A French literature center was also opened in Abidjan to produce and promote the type of literature the missionaries needed most. "Producing literature on two fronts," Bill explained "strengthens our work, giving us a solid foundation. It makes possible a double-pronged attack on the bastions of darkness. The two languages complement each other, and together they will get the job done."

The African climate took its toll and Joy's health demanded a return to the States in 1969. This did not end the dedicated couple's service however. Bill joined the Mission staff as the director of communications and editor of *Heartbeat* magazine from 1970-1971. In 1980 he was elected to the mission board, serving 12 years. After a one-year hiatus, he was reelected and served another 12 years, many as chairman. This diligent couple extended their effective ministry overseas by meaningful service stateside. Another two-pronged approach.



### RON & LINDA MOORE

served as church planters in Bondoukou from 1986-1995. They live in South Carolina where Ron pastors.

### DR. PAUL & TAMMY GENTUSO

worked in Doropo as medical staff and church planters from 1991-2000. They live in Tennessee where Paul is a family practitioner.



### FRANK & MARIE COUSINEAU

were church-planters in Gouméré and Nassian from 1968-1973. Marie lives in Texas; Frank is deceased.



### VERLIN & DEBBIE ANDERSON

use CHE (Community Health and Evangelism) to plant churches. Since 1997 the family has worked in Gouméré and Bouna and are currently based in Bondoukou.



### TANYA HART

taught at ICA in Bouaké from 1993-1997. She lives in North Carolina.



### ALLAN & LARUE CROWSON

were church planters in Bondoukou and Nassian from 1975-1980. They transferred to France in 1982 where they served until 1995. They now live in Tennessee.



### DR. RUBY GRIFFIN

served as a medical missionary from 1965 to 1968. She lives in Mississippi.



### NEIL & SHEILA GILLILAND

served as ICA dorm parents from 1980-1988. After receiving his doctorate in psychology, Neil was hired to serve as director of member care for the Mission, a role he continues as a consultant. Sheila is a pediatric nurse and they live in Tennessee.



### DAVID & SHARON FILKINS

served from 1983-1987 as church planters in Tanda. They are divorced.



### ARILLA WODE

ministered to children, youth, and women in Doropo and Agnibilekrou from 1976-1989. Her 1992 resignation followed an extended medical leave as she sought to recover from a strain of tuberculosis indigenous to Ivory Coast. She lives in Oklahoma.



### GLENNDA LEATHERBURY

served as a medical missionary in Doropo from 1985-1994. She died and is buried in Ivory Coast.



### PAUL & RHODA CREECH

served as dorm parents at ICA in Bouaké from 1989-2001. They reside in Georgia where Paul pastors.





### DARREL & LILA NICHOLS

were appointed in 1983. The couple centered their work in Agnibilekrou and Gouméré, establishing outreach to villages near these towns. Working with African Christians, they saw several new churches begun. Following the coup in Ivory Coast, they transferred to Panama in 2003. They resigned from the Mission in 2009 and live in Oklahoma.



### TRACI EPPS

taught from 1995-2001 at ICA in Bouaké. She lives in Oklahoma.



### KIM ZEGELIEN

served as a teacher at ICA in 1995-1999. She lives in North Carolina.



### LYNN & RAMONA MILEY

served as church planters in Doropo from 1973-1980. They transferred to France where they served from 1980-1986. They reside in Alabama.



### TERRY & D.D. VANDIVORT

were dorm parents at ICA from 2000-2002. D.D. lives in Tennessee.



### DR. MARK & KATHY PASCHALL

served as medical and church-planting missionaries from 1992-1998 in Doropo. They live in Michigan.



### MARK & DONNA DANIEL

were church planters from 1983-1992. They moved to Kentucky after resigning.



### PATRICK & SUSAN DICKENS

served in Bondoukou and Damé as church planters from 1975-1985. They minister to the elderly in Arkansas.



### HOWARD & JOAN FILKINS

served from 1972-1982 as ICA dorm parents in Bouaké and as builders in Doropo. They live in Oklahoma.





### LEDGEL & SHARON FERGUSON

served in Gouméré, Tanda, and Agnibilekrou as church planters from 1977-1989. The couple are currently involved in a short-term ministry in France.



### JALAYN MARTENS

served as a medical missionary and worked with women, children, and youth ministries from 1985-1994 in Doropo and Bondoukou. She resigned in 1994 and lives in California.



### GINGER HARRISON

was approved as a medical missionary in 1996. She pursued training in tropical medicine, but due to unrest in Ivory Coast never made it to the field. She lives in Missouri.



### LONNIE & BERNICE PALMER

were church planters from 1963 to 1977. After resigning, they moved to Arkansas.



### ROBERT & PAM WEST

were initially appointed as maintenance missionaries responsible for maintaining the buildings, equipment, and vehicles at the Doropo hospital compound. Pam also served as bookkeeper and administrative assistant for the hospital.

In 1999, they moved to the unreached bush village of Kafalo to focus on evangelism, planting a church, and training leaders to continue the work.

They resigned in 2003. After an extended battle with cancer, Robert died in 2009. Pam lives in North Carolina.



### ERNEST & ELAINE HOLLAND

began missionary service as a married couple in 1984. Prior to that, Elaine served as a nurse at the Doropo medical station from 1979-1983.

After serving four years together in Doropo, the couple moved to Bondoukou to help form an organized, national youth program. They also took responsibility for the youth center in Bondoukou and Ernest assisted in leadership training. They resigned in 2004 and now live in Oklahoma.



### DAN & NINA HUDDLESTON

served as maintenance missionaries in Doropo from 1989-1990. They live in Oklahoma.