

International Teaching Ministry of Douglas Jacoby



JANUARY 2007 International Teaching Ministry Update AFRICAN TOUR / NEW WEBSITE

This is the first update for '07. Please note, we're moving from quarterly to monthly bulletins. As always, there's new material every day. You'll find it under the Q&As, in the articles, under What's New?, and in Quote of the Day. If you're enjoying the updates and the website, please spread the word. (If not, just click on [REMOVE](#).) And if your email address has changed, please send the new and the old address (so it may be deleted). If you didn't sign up for the updates, it is possible a friend gave us your email address. Hope you'll enjoy it.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Much has happened since the last update (autumn 2006). All the same, we have decided to keep the first bulletin of 2007 simple. Here you will find only two items: (1) a report on the recent visit to Africa, and (2) an introduction to the improved website. Please follow the link at the end of the email to see the new version of the website, and especially to view the short video intro. But first, Africa...



AFRICA REPORT

On 11 December I returned from a 5-nation teaching tour in Benin, Nigeria, Liberia, the Gambia, and Guinea. This trip was possible only because of the great generosity of many committed disciples -- you know who you are! -- and all the congregations I visited asked me to say thank you for your support. All these churches are in extremely poor nations, several are recovering from civil strife, and all but one (according to the US State Department) are dangerous and should be avoided. Not surprisingly, in four of these nations I was the only outside speaker in many years, and in some places, the only non-African preacher ever to visit. (Congregational age averages about 12 years.) Naturally, it feels good to bring some joy and extra meaning into lives so hard because of austere conditions and the effects of the wars in the past decade. The following is expanded from an email I sent home to Vicki. If you need help with the West African geography, you might visit <http://www.focusonforests.org/large/westafricamap.htm>.

LIBERIA

The nation that impacted me most was Liberia, and I would like to share about my 3 days there. To reach the capital city of Monrovia, I had to make 3 flights from Nigeria: Lagos-Accra, then Accra-Abidjan, then Abidjan-Monrovia. Tiny airport, UN planes and helicopters clearly visible, 15,000 troops present as peacekeepers, much appreciated by the local population, based on all my conversations. City devastated by 14 years of war (until 2003) -- not much left, really. I was shown the old congress building; during a military coup, a missile was fired from the airport (an hour away by car), and the bomb struck the building and burned it. Apparently the army, like many Liberian citizens, felt it was time for a change. Rubble everywhere, and bullet holes, and of course enormous potholes!

No one in the church (150 members) has electricity, including the preacher (who is self-supported). Open sewers, filled with rubbish and standing water. Serious malaria problem. (When I asked the church how many had had Malaria, nearly every hand went up.) Billboards prominently displayed spoke of Truth & Reconciliation, the need to report rape, Medecins Sans Frontieres, and much more. (Interestingly, a sign at the airport said drug dealers and other undesirables, like immoral actors and actresses, are not welcome in Liberia. In the background of the place where I am eating a late chicken lunch, Madonna is playing on the radio: doublemindedness. Western culture flows in, unstopably.) Average salaries in the capital are a few dollars a day. There is lots of razor wire in front of my hotel room window.

All in all, Liberia seems to be the poorest nation of the five I am visiting, though I know that if their government leaders were not mired down in corruption, the rich mineral and natural resources of the nation could drastically improve the lot in life of the common people. The people seem confident they will not slip back into civil war -- the UN troops here make a difference! And time heals. 4 Christians met me at the airport. I asked them to tell me how the war had affected them. Everyone had suffered, some more than others. Relatives killed, parents shot in front of children, houses burned down, with complete loss of possessions. Sad, but there is real heart in this place. Monrovia has even recently planted a church in the city of Gbarnga, a few hours' drive from the capital. The people are on the rebound. And as in all the African churches, visitors attend, men and women are baptized, people find hope.

OTHER NATIONS

On this 11-day trip I also spoke (with translators) in French speaking Guinea and Benin (the Christians in Togo crossing the border to be there). In Nigeria I spoke to two regions of the Lagos church, taught AIM classes for two days, and also brought in Joseph Harris, fellow teacher in Augusta GA. He spoke in Ghana, Nigeria, and Cote D'Ivoire (he's fluent in French). The Gambia has been through a very challenging time. My visit came about because of transit. I spoke to the church in Banjul 10:00-11:30 pm. (They were having an all-night prayer meeting anyway.) The Gambia was the next to last stop of my trip. In Conakry, Guinea (final stop), the fellowship was wonderful. Contrary to expectation, there are no guinea pigs here! Nor does the dreaded Guinea Worm plague this nation.

Fellowship meal

The bottom right photo (in the pictures below) is the fellowship meal, just a few hours before my return to the US. To get to the house, we had to walk in darkness down a road so rough that our driver's car could not handle it. Kovana, who serves as the administrator for the church, will be married in a few weeks. His brother currently lives with him, lame and scarcely able to walk, because of an inoculation received in his childhood. The generator got going after a half hour, but failed soon after, so we ate most of our dinner in darkness. The dinner consisted of "rice and leaves." In truth, the cassava leaves and rice were not the only things on the plate.. There was also a little bit of beef (very rare and not often affordable for most Africans). As we ate in the pitch black, I answered Bible questions, questions about the ministry, and how the fellowship is doing worldwide. (Such questions seem to fill most of my trips!) People were truly grateful, esp. as this was their first guest speaker in a decade, and the only one to come from another continent. The begged for me to come back. I was very touched, and of course would like to return, time and funding allowing.

RESPONSES

1. Jerry Koroma of Guinea: "Dear Doug, I am very excited to hear that you had a good time with the church in Monrovia. Surely we should be giving God the glory for you going through our churches considering all the African difficulties. Power failure, noise, dust, criminal attacks, violence and ignorant actions by most people. Now, not only for you, but also those you work with like Joey Harris. I and my family/church mostly remember all that you have done for us. Your presence in Conakry I believe has given us much, and reminded us about the great difference between true Christianity and all the religious churches in our nation. Thanks for doing what you did to bring back to life the International church of Christ in Conakry in the Republic of Guinea. You brought us knowledge of God and his wisdom and love. Every faithful disciple who heard your teaching was grateful, as well as all the outsiders who attended the meetings."



2. Blaise Feumba of Cote D'Ivoire: "Thanks for sending Joey Harris. He did very well with his French. The church really enjoyed him, and the staff too. He is easy to work with, humble and vulnerable, and a great preacher, too! We definitely want him back next year." (See Joey's photo at left.)

3. Stella Osagie of Nigeria: "Thank you very very much for all you did for us in Lagos, taking out time to travel all the way from the States. Thank you also for all the books and CDs you gave us! The US Christians are very generous. May God continue to bless you and your family."

4. Thomas Sesay of Guinea: "All I have to say is, To God be the Glory! It was great spending time with you too, and I must say that the things I have been learning about the Americans are true. One of them is that they make you feel at ease, which facilitates easy communication. You are the first American I have ever interacted with. Thanks for connecting me with my fellow countryman (Brima Sesay) in Maryland. Lots of love..."

This was my 3rd trip to West Africa in less than 2 years. Following are some photographs to prove I was really there!



RENEWED WEBSITE

The entire website has been rebuilt! It is now better organized, and much easier to search. There will undoubtedly still be some glitches for a month or two, so if you would like to help us iron the wrinkles out, don't hesitate to contact us!

Please click on the link to watch the new video introduction, which is not much more than 90 seconds long. Click here: <http://www.douglasjacoby.com/intro.php>. Note: If this only takes you to the old website, you may need to go to "internet options" and "clear history." In the new website, the top of the homepage features a starfield in motion.

FAREWELL TILL FEBRUARY

For some of you, I am sure I owe an apology. A massive server crash led to a loss of over 100 emails -- sorry if I did not reply to your question or note! If you were affected, I would appreciate it if you would check the Q&As to see if your question has already been answered; if not, please resend it. Thank you all so much for your prayers, donations, ideas, and friendship in 2006. And again, Happy 2007. --DJ

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