



Arbre de vie
Lebensbaum / Tree of life
Den Bedürftigen eine Zukunft geben.

ARBRE DE VIE - BENIN

MAY 2010

A multicultural team on a mission for the poor in Benin

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“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Gal. 6,2

Our May News have the motto “Serve the poor as a multicultural team”. We believe that we should carry our neighbor’s burdens. What a challenge! The ONE that gave the commandment has modeled this love for the neighbor, and he, the love-giver, enables us to do fruitful work.

A sacrifice for „the least“

Ashley and Jon from Dayton, OH, gave up everything: house, job, family. Friends and all that is familiar to them. And all that “just” to become parents for a few dozens of children in an orphanage in Benin. What motivated them to make this huge sacrifice?



Here is Jon’s testimony:

In Feb of 2008 I had the opportunity to travel to Benin on a trip with people from BCN. I knew that my wife Ashley had a strong passion and love for the children at ADV, but I had not travelled there yet. When I went that year, I saw why my wife had fallen in love with these children so much. As I grew in my faith, I realized that partnering with ADV was one of many ways in which I was able to live out the gospel in a way that Christ modelled while he was here on earth. I have always had a heart for the marginalized and those who were overlooked in many realms. Christ came for the sick, for the poor, for the orphans and widows, for the “least of these”. I feel that as a follower of Christ, we have a huge responsibility to care for orphans. Travelling to Benin was an experience that I have had and we feel that there is a need here. We feel that moving to Benin and living with these children is the best way to make an impact on these children and show the radical love that Christ has shown to us. We feel that being in a true relationship with them and providing them with love on an everyday basis as parents to them will hopefully help them not only physically, but also spiritually, and psychologically. We love them very much and decided that moving there was what we needed to do rather than just visiting them once or twice a year for a couple weeks. There is no doubt to us that we love them like they are our own children.



We form a multicultural team!

With Ashley and Jon joining us, our team became multicultural which means it is enriching as well as challenging. For the first time, the children went on an Easter egg hunt. One set of eggs had some objects hidden inside which served as tools to explain the resurrection of Jesus Christ and its meaning for us.



Being a multicultural team means an enormous broadening of the children’s horizon. They learn to use “Thank you” and “Please”, to use the trash bins on the center, and Jon showed them how an American hunter butchers rabbits. During the last mission trips, the kids have already learnt how to play baseball, and who knows maybe this summer, they will learn how to play American Football?! Everybody is in his element when it comes to playing football (soccer) or handball. However, flexibility is most important when it comes to rules! By listening and teaching each other, we can be so blessed, even in the midst of differences of opinion and disputes. If we respect our neighbor more than ourselves we can gain a lot.

Ashley and Jon have returned to the USA for 2 months. Ashley’s twin sister was expecting a baby, and they wanted to be there to welcome little Carson upon arrival. Although the volcano Eyjafjöll in Iceland almost prevented them from being there on time!



Cultural richness and challenges in a multicultural team

One of my most enriching experiences have been the collaboration with people from other cultures. It makes me constantly aware that “my” way is not the only right way, that it’s not necessarily “normal”, and that the others may just be “different”. I have the advantage to have lived in various cultures. Most of our co-workers do not have this experience. It needs the more raising awareness for cultural difference, and explaining of our western cultural values, and vice versa. Here in Benin, some of the most important values are greetings, showing respect and patience. Whereas, in our western cultures honesty, punctuality, organization and transparency are very important. The challenge we are facing is to focus on the common vision and on the

well-being of the population we are serving.

Honoré’s trip to France and Germany

At Arbre de vie and Lebensbaum in Germany, we are facing some radical changes. The Faton family is preparing to return to Germany in order to take the direction of our German association. The board of directors, which was elected 3 years ago finishes its term this year. However, they have agreed to carry on with the work one more year. This situation was the main reason of my trip to Germany. When I left I was rather discouraged and exhausted. I didn’t have any great expectations, but God surprised me. Through many of our friends, and the positive talks, I have been encouraged and blessed. I am very thankful for every single encounter. My trip took me to Strasbourg (France), Hessen, NRW and Hamburg in Germany. I want to take the opportunity to say thank you for each of you who have assisted me or offered lodging.

When we came back to Benin six years ago, our goal was to start the projects of Arbre de vie and to make them independent so that if we had to return to Germany, they could be carried on. We believe that by God’s grace this goal has been achieved.

New family in our social assistance program

Edwige, 7, suffers from sickle cell anemia which is a hereditary illness. People suffering from this illness have a low life expectancy. They need rich aliments and frequent medical check-ups. Léontine, Edwige’s mother, is a widow. Her step sons have chased her from her husbands house after his death. She went to live with her parents. Her four children go to kindergarten or primary school. We are very thankful for a sponsor for Edwige. In order to accompany her and provide for regular medical check-ups, we think that the best would be to take her into the orphanage for a while. In addition, we will give her mother counsel as to the activities she could undertake to earn her living other than with the sale of homemade Whisky (“Sodabi”).



Coming up:

- Seminaries with Daniel Freidinger (France) in Sakété and its surroundings
- Jon and Ashley return to Benin for a 2-year term
- Mission trip of a team from the BCN (Ohio) in July
- Various American and French volunteers will come for a short term to help us out (June-August)
- Gabi and the girls’ holiday in Germany (August)

Prayer requests:

- May God speak through Daniel to many people in Benin
- For the partnership development activities of Ashley and Jon; may they find enough support to be able to come on a long term mission
- May lives on both sides be transformed during the mission trips and stay of the volunteers
- The transition time for our new orphanage parents, and for their French learning
- For new sponsors and project funding organizations

Bank account information

USA

Recipient: BCN

In the memo line write: „African child sponsorship, (name of the child if known)”

Address: c/o Ashley Barchus, 1850, N. Fairfield Road, Beavercreek, OH 45432

Arbre de vie - Benin

Société Générale de Banques au Bénin

Avenue Clozel

01 BP 585

Cotonou

Bank code: B0104

Counter (guichet): 01000

Account no.: 10460923001

RIB 52, IBAN : B0104 001001046092300152

SWIFT: SOGEBJBJ