



AWA FLASH UPDATE



Contact Verlin or Debbie at B.P. 607 Bondoukou, RCI, West Africa E-mail: vanderson@fwbgo.com Phone: 011.225.35.91.57.07

Send donations to Free Will Baptist International Missions, honor of Verlin Anderson P.O. Box 5002 Antioch, TN 37011-5002

Pursing God, living His call, putting all on the line to live out your understanding of His will puts an edge and gives thrill to life that even bungee cord jumpers can only dream of. Lynette Morgan recently shared R.C. Shannon's phrasing of the idea, "Never pity missionaries; envy them. They are where the real action is—where life and death, sin and grace, Heaven and Hell converge."

For the many who do not know, our rented home in Bondoukou has been the site of some real action over the past five years. Besides modeling some gardening techniques, moringa use, and malaria prevention through nature, we've experienced a different kind of "action." September 7 we were served a tax notice. We had ten days before the house could be seized by the state and its belongings sold for delinquent taxes. That did not surprise us; the timing did. Here is what followed.

In a God-sized organization of details and help, we packed and moved 50 years of mission history and 12 years of family memories in 10 days, leaving September 17. Christian, Muslim, and pagan neighbors helped. We informed leaders and defined the principles at stake. After considering options, we felt directed to move temporarily to Abidjan, and mission administration backed us. September 19 we informed the forewarned landlord that we were out of the house, although workers were there protecting the property. He had until October 31 to pay the arrear taxes, a three month extension of his contractual promise. He did not pay them. Finally on November 28, as legal process loomed, our landlord willingly agreed that his taxes could be paid out of upcoming rental income. That was significant. While it is in agreement with Ivorian law, if a renter does not have WRITTEN authorization, he often pays **both** the taxes and the agreed rental price. The owner's change of heart allowed the problem to be solved. He had consistently refused this offer since January 2007, dodging both correction of his tax records and paying

taxes. He once stated that he could take us to court, win, and impose penalties. Knowledgeable and just-in-time counsel informed us otherwise (*God is in the details!*). Tax officials following with us since 2006 came to the conclusion that the owner was using common ploys to evade civic responsibility.

Such ploys are common here because Cote d'Ivoire is a nation learning to live under common agreed law rather than personal relationships. They do not have more than 400 years of history in participating in civil society like the U.S. does; they have lived mostly in tribal and relational forms of governance for over 1,000 years. The Gospel message powerfully addresses this behavior with the power of the Spirit evident as we share. As Christian witnesses, we serve "to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception that is alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around it." (Walter Brueggeman)

On December 6, our landlord stated publicly before a tax official his responsibility to pay the taxes and then authorized in writing that the tax could be paid from his rental income. His tax burden was decreased by 25% rather than increased because of doing this before the year's end, and, in apparently humble confessions of appreciation, he thanked us for facilitating the meeting and making it possible for him to correct his errors. Because of the meeting that we insisted on, he will also pay less tax in the long run, and the government will not pursue having his salary garnished or their right to sell items from his property. We will have no increase to our negotiated rental contract. The good thing is, as a Pentecostal deacon, he now leads an NGO to improve Ivorian life. As he settled this affair, a major partner committed funding to grow their organizational impact. He recognized this as God's hand blessing in response to his increased obedience. Praise the Lord with us. Pray for our return, which we hope will be complete by mid-January.

