



Fourth Quarter 2002  
Volume 11 Issue 4

What's Inside:

- ◆ A Year In Review
- ◆ Personal Profile: Jacques Atoukui, Shepherd
- ◆ Prayer Clipboard

A newsletter of the team harvesting souls among the people of southern Togo

## A Dream Realized: *Tabligbo Elders Installed*

Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference between obtainable reality and wishful thinking. Coming to Togo as a bunch of bright-eyed young couples, we hadn't been disillusioned too often. We dreamed big and prayed for God to do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine. One of our dreams and prayers has been that the churches not only be planted, but grow in number and maturity so that they one day have elders guiding them.

Our strategy has revolved around lay-leaders. Seeing, in scripture, common people raised into holy and powerful instruments of the Lord made us hungry to see the same work of the Holy Spirit among the people of Togo. We centered much of our energy on whole congregations and the whole leadership of the churches instead of simply trying to form a few preachers or evangelists. Our goal was to start churches with a mentality of shared leadership and progress towards elderships.

The road to elderships has been difficult at times. A problem that we encountered is that people traditionally follow the chief system. One man rules many. With that, leadership is often equated with

power in Togo. Over the years, many churches have been hurt by leaders desiring power and too much authority. Tabligbo was affected by this on more than occasion.

In October, after realizing that the Tabligbo congregation was stable and ready to be self-led, we started teaching about elders. Over several



weeks, the role and work of elders was taught. Characteristics of elders shown in Titus and I Timothy were also explained. The congregation then began the process of designating elders. The first step was prayer and fasting so

that the Holy Spirit would help the congregation select God's choices.

Men who desired the position were asked to present themselves to a missionary. The missionary made sure each was qualified. Seven men desired the position, but two were not qualified. The five accepted were presented to the congregation and the church members then were asked to privately make known to the missionary any reasons concerning why a person was or was not qualified as an elder. Many affirming remarks and concerns were made known about each

man, but none was disqualified. The church then made a vote of confidence. Every person voted yes or no for each of the five men. This was to ensure that those desiring the position were actually respected and would be followed. All five

Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. John 4:35



## The Bunner Family

Frank, Jenna,  
Aaron, Joshua & Corrie

[bunner@watchiharvest.com](mailto:bunner@watchiharvest.com)

Clarksville Highway church of Christ  
RR 2, Box 2382 Joelton, TN 37080



## The Crowson Family

Murphy, Christine,  
Stephen & Matthew

[crowson@watchiharvest.com](mailto:crowson@watchiharvest.com)

Homewood church of Christ  
265 W. Oxmor Rd. Birmingham, AL 35209



## The Holland Family

Jeff, Brenda,  
Josiah

[togodude@watchiharvest.com](mailto:togodude@watchiharvest.com)

West Erwin church of Christ  
420 West Erwin Tyler, TX 75702



## The Koonce Family

Marty, Louise,  
Tucker, Taylor,  
Tanner & Trevor

[koonce@watchiharvest.com](mailto:koonce@watchiharvest.com)

Warrenton church of Christ  
6398 Lee Hwy. Acc. Rd. Warrenton, VA 26187



## The Parker Family

Anthony, Maureen,  
Jeremy & Jonathan

[parker@watchiharvest.com](mailto:parker@watchiharvest.com)

Homewood church of Christ  
265 W. Oxmor Rd. Birmingham, AL 35209

# A Year In Review

*"Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done..." 1 Chronicles 16.11-12*

Our hearts are filled with praise and thanksgiving as we look back to the wonders God did in 2002. It was a great year of growth as we saw many churches planted and new clusters formed. All of the church clusters experienced growth with either new church plants or internal growth. We were especially excited to see the first Watchi supported missionary sent out to the Nyinume area to begin a new church in the village of Kpetsu.

It was a year of maturation for the churches as well as leadership in the movement. The Lord raised up five men in the Tabligbo church to be the first elders among all of the Watchi churches. The first all-church evangelism conference was planned and hosted by the Vogan church with over 450 in attendance. It was a wonderful time of praise, fellowship and equipping as Watchi Christians were encouraged by fellow Watchi Christians to shine their light. The Watchi churches also continued to assume more and more responsibility in terms of evangelism, communication, and finances.

It was a year of coming and going as the Crowson's arrived in January, the Parkers returned from the States in March, the Bunners returned from their time as visiting missionaries at Harding University, Jana Treadway relocated back to the States in the spring, and we hosted 10 interns from Harding during the summer. God also blessed our team through Tom Moore's visit in August by using him to bring us to a deeper level of intimacy, commitment and appreciation for each other.

The Kingdom grew, churches were planted, people were freed from darkness, the Word of Life was held out for all to see and lives were touched for eternity as God worked through all of us as we prayed, preached, encouraged, and fought the battle for Watchi souls. Thank you for joining us in prayer and support. God is listening and He is working. Join us in praise as we remember all "the wonders he has done."  
*-by Murphy Crowson*



## Prayer Clipboard

*Please join us daily in prayer.*

- ✓ **Sunday** - The newly selected elders of the Tabligbo church
- ✓ **Monday** - Preaching points in Ndo Kope, Avastedome, Logome, Lakoto, Adzaveme, Gbatoe and Kpeyidzi
- ✓ **Tuesday** - Open doors soon in Agbeku, Boja and Avedze
- ✓ **Wednesday** - Praise for the safe return of the Crowsons and Koonces from furloughs
- ✓ **Thursday** - Safety and refreshment for the Hollands while on furlough
- ✓ **Friday** - Culture and language development for the Parkers and Crowsons
- ✓ **Saturday** - Maturity and spiritual growth for all the churches

# Personal Profile:

## ***Jacques Atoukui, Shepherd***

If the ultimate goal of missionaries is to work themselves out of a job, the Watchi team has just taken a huge stride in that direction. In January, five elders were appointed to serve the Tabligbo church. These are the first elders among churches of Christ in Togo. During the ordination ceremony, the five new elders and the five missionary men were seated before the packed assembly, filled not only with members of the Tabligbo church, but with visitors from all over southern Togo. After exhortations and pledges from both the new elders and the congregation, the missionaries moved their chairs front and center, and asked the new elders to sit in them. Each missionary stood behind one of the elders, placed their hands on their shoulders, as Jeff Holland led us in prayer for them. Only after the ceremony did someone point out to us the rich symbolism of the elders taking the missionaries' chairs. This occasion is truly a landmark in the work of our team.

For this quarter's personal profile, I have chosen one of the new elders, Jacques Atoukui. Although I knew of Jacques' reputation for quiet wisdom and integrity, he was the least known to me personally among the five elders chosen. Despite his young age—he is thirty-three—he displayed a desire to serve as an elder and the congregation considered him qualified.

Jacques has been a member of the Tabligbo church since its beginning, and it is evident that God was working in his life even before that. He attended a Catholic primary school where he first learned about God "in a general way." Still, God did not become real in his life until he reached a crisis point.

In 1995, he was plying the sometimes-dangerous trade of "international business," bringing goods from Accra, Ghana, to sell in

Togo's capital, Lome. On one occasion, as he was about to cross the border into Togo, he was robbed of all of his merchandise, in which he had invested his life's savings. Desperate, he knew of nothing to do but look to God for help. Having surrendered his future to God, and with less than a dollar to his name, he crossed into Togo. He spent his remaining money on



**Jacques with his wife  
on ordination Sunday.**

some food to eat, and then went to where he was working as an apprentice to a mechanic. That very day, someone hired him to do a job, and this allowed him to get back on his feet. He knew that God had provided for him.

Jacques began attending an evangelical church in Lome, and first came into contact with the Church of Christ while living in Ghana for four months. The

outpouring of Christian love in the church overwhelmed him. The Christian with whom he was staying selflessly provided for him in a way that he had never before seen. When he returned to live in Tabligbo, he found that a new team of Church of Christ missionaries had just moved to town. He sought them out, and began attending the first congregation in Ahepe, twelve kilometers from Tabligbo. He also started taking World Bible School courses. He shared with his teachers his need for a job and they promised to pray for him. Soon afterwards he was hired to work as a broiler operator at the cement factory. In 1996 he was baptized at the home of Scott and Lisa Harris. Today, Jacques brings a level of stability to the church, being one of the few members of the church who earns a consistent salary. He is considered well paid, earning a little over \$100 a month at the local cement factory.

I asked Jacques what prompted his desire to be an elder. He said, "One day the missionaries must leave; we must have leaders. The house of God is good to live in. I decided to commit to work for God, whatever the price to pay, because he has done many things for me."

Asked about his vision for the church, Jacques replied, "To find a place where the flock can be nourished in peace. I want the church to be free of everyone looking out for his or her own interest. I'm dreaming about how we can spiritually and physically reach this place. Our church has suffered from division in the past. Now we have found peace, and I pray that this peace will always be there."

He sees his greatest challenge as an elder as his own need to grow in his understanding of the Bible. "I am not yet strong spiritually," he says. "I need those who will help me."

You can help Jacques and the other new elders in Tabligbo—Anku, Antoine, Koffi, and Samuel—by lifting them up in prayer.

*-by Anthony Parker*

## A Dream Realized: **Tabligbo Elders Installed**

*(continued on back)*  
*(continued from front page)* men had far more than a majority support them as elders. The men were presented to the congregation and the congregation had another two weeks of prayer and fasting.

Finally, on January 12, 2003, the Tabligbo congregation ordained their five elders. Congregations throughout southern Togo were invited to see how the elders were ordained since this was the first ordination in churches of Christ in Togo. The missionaries charged the congregation to respect and follow their leaders. The elders were charged to be serving shepherds. The elders presented their goals for the congregation and promised to serve Christ and the congregation. The missionaries then presented

each of the elders with a Bible. Then, after a time of celebratory singing and praise, the church watched the missionaries lay hands on the elders and bless them in prayer. After that the church came to shake the hands of the elders and welcome them to their new role. The celebration continued with a meal provided to all the members and visitors.

It was an exciting time for the congregation as they took another step of maturity. It was exciting for the other congregations in Togo as they see that biblical elderships can

and should be selected in the churches. And it was exciting for us, the missionaries to see another of our dreams fulfilled by the Lord. We praise God for this grace and ask that He bestow it on many other congregations in the near future.  
*-by Jeff Holland*

**Anku reads a pledge of commitment to the congregation on behalf of the elders.**



*In the Harvest Fields* is a newsletter of the team harvesting souls among the people of southern Togo.



church of Christ  
6398 Lee Highway Access Road  
Warrenton, VA 20187

NONPROFIT  
US POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT #6  
WARRENTON, VA

Mailing label here

Return Service Requested