

**James & LaNelle George**

P.O. Box 185, McDonough, GA 30253

Phone: 770-231-3198. Email: [thunder9image@gmail.com](mailto:thunder9image@gmail.com)

**Newsletter – June 2025**

Ivory Coast, West Africa

[www.gapmissionsafrica.org](http://www.gapmissionsafrica.org)

## **If You Could Only Imagine!** - Visualize a village situated nearly 500 miles from the bustling capitol city and airport

where you enter Ivory Coast. It has grown to become the center of activities for surrounding villages. There are now government offices where one could obtain a marriage license or record land ownership. But outside those offices the normal conversational language is tribal (Yacouba). It's not a written language. A child fortunate enough to be allowed to go to school will learn to speak French, but after school their mom and dad normally converse with them in their native tongue. Surrounding villages have elementary schools but this village has progressed enough to have a high school.

There are some small stores or boutiques for purchasing staples like salt, cooking oil, ground corn, flour, sugar, or maybe coffee, but no large grocery stores. There's a pharmacy, but medicine is expensive, so people often try traditional means of healing first. If that doesn't work, then family or friends are called on to help purchase medications. Some look to sorcery and blood sacrifices to ward off the sickness. Or, they call on a fetisher to give them an ornament to wear on their body or to place over their door or window to protect them from the evil spirit that they think is causing them misery.

There's a market once a week where umbrellas are set up along the roadside for shade from the hot African sun. Villagers come from all around to buy and sell the goods placed under the umbrella covers. You will find pots and pans, used clothing and shoes, fresh fruits and vegetables or peanuts, and maybe some cheap jewelry. Sometimes a handful of candy is divided up on a table for a dime a pile. There's smoked and dried fish for purchase. Ladies sit on short stools cooking over a wood or charcoal fire. Fried plantain or little cakes are favorites and cheap to buy. If you want to eat a meal, a sauce over rice is always available.

There are a few churches scattered about this grand village, but most folks don't attend, and even among those who do it's rare for them to hear the Gospel story. It's a land of animistic belief. People are held captive by superstition, sorcery, and everything imaginable that Satan has to offer. The people are not necessarily sad. There is laughter, and children are playing games. The youth love soccer, and almost every village has a field for the youth to play on. The ladies join together to talk about life and share stories. They teach their daughters household duties, and all the children go with moms or dads to help them tend to their small farms and gardens that they necessarily survive on. There are few jobs available. Survival is based on farm life just outside the village. Life is hard and tiresome, but it doesn't take a great deal of "things" to bring joy in the home. Health, food, shelter and clothes seem to be enough. One of our pastors... when asked what it would take to do ministry replied, "Enough oil in my lamp so I can read and have light at night, clothes to be presentable and respected, and enough food that I don't have to become a beggar." To him those were the necessities. Pastors, along with their families, work farms just like their congregations.

The Lord called LaNelle and me to the "hedges", as the Bible labels it in Luke 14:23, of Ivory Coast. Our heart has always been to reach out to remote villages. What a glorious experience to take the GOSPEL to unreached places. Mahapleu is not necessarily a hidden away village, it is on a main road, but it was missing this vital story. Many heard... some believed. Now, we have a thriving Yacouba Church in Mahapleu. For many years the church has met in make shift temporary buildings made of sticks covered with woven palm branches. Now they are rejoicing because they are about to have a permanent worship center planted on their own property. It's a rather large building because it's the center of many other smaller villages where we have established churches, and a place where they can all come together for various meetings.



We praise the Lord for all HE has done. First, for giving us opportunity to share the story of Jesus, and then for binding us together in love and friendship. Even though poor, these Christians have worked hard and given sacrificially. Young men have even hired themselves out to other farmers and donated what they earned to help construct this beautiful building. The church desires for you to see what the Lord is doing in their lives and in their village. And the same thing is happening in numerous other village churches. Thank you GAP supporters and CORE missions for all you have contributed to assist these dedicated Christians in their endeavors to build a worship center.

*Proverbs 19:17 "He that hath pity on the poor shall lend unto the Lord; and he will pay him what he has given."*

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