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Vibrant, growing congregations changing lives and reshaping futures for Jesus Christ

Texas Methodists deliver nearly 1 million nets and even more hope

By Eleanor L. Colvin

The gift of a long-lasting, insecticide treated mosquito net was a welcome relief for 5-year-old Wilfried Kouakou Konan, who was struggling with an outbreak of painful, malaria-induced pimples on the day he waited in line to receive a net in the West African village of Adiáke.

His aunt, Martine Kamenan, walked her 3- and 5-year-old nephews to the distribution site, knowing that their lives depended on it.

"These two often have malaria – especially, this one," she said, through an interpreter, as she motioned to her oldest nephew. "He always refuses to eat when this happens, because he vomits everything."

Their aunt accompanied the boys, and waited with them for hours, because their mother was

home sick with malaria. She received medical treatment at a hospital, but, her sister said, she was not recovering well since returning home. Further evidence, that the best treatment for

malaria is prevention, especially in children under age five whose immune systems are not yet strong enough to battle the formidable disease.

Young Konan was one of more than 700,000 children served November 11-15 during an integrated health campaign led by the Texas and Côte d'Ivoire Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church, in partnership with the United Nations Foundation's Nothing But Nets campaign; the United Methodist Communications Global Health Initiative; and the denomination's General Board of Global Ministry that includes the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

While malaria has largely been eradicated in the United States, between 350 and 500 million people are still infected

each year, mostly in Africa. More than 1 million of those infected die from the disease, and 75 percent of those deaths are children under the age of five.

This partnership was a unique endeavor in that it also utilized the expertise of critical players who do not have ties to the Methodist church. Partners such as the Côte d'Ivoire Ministry of Health, Measles Initiative, UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO), Care International, PSI (which manufactures the nets), and others assisted in the on-the-ground delivery of nets, measles vaccines, Vitamin A supplements to boost immunity and de-worming medication.



Young Ivorians welcome the Texas Conference delegation to Alepe village on the first day of net distribution.



Wilfried Kouakou Konan, age 5, scratches malaria-induced pimples.

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Ivorian volunteers lend strength to health campaign

By Eleanor L. Colvin

The life-saving works accomplished through the recent integrated health campaign would not have been possible without the army of Ivorian volunteers mobilized in service across the country.

The 35 members of the Texas Annual Conference delegation worked in concert with Ivorian volunteers at sites throughout the delegation's 5-district service area. The blessings were multiplied throughout an addition 13 districts that were served only by those who call Côte d'Ivoire home.

"You have mobilized for a great activity," said Beatrice Nandjui, who represented the Côte d'Ivoire Annual

Conference in the planning phases of the campaign, during the last volunteer training for the Texas team. "Know that you are pioneers in this field ... This is the first step of our health program – we do not have the right to miss the goal."

Texans joined the UMCOR-trained doctors, nurses, public health workers and concerned Methodists who comprised the ranks of 1,000-member volunteer army. Rev. Cynthia Harvey, director of the TAC Center for Missional Excellence, found this to be a reason to rejoice.

"I also celebrate that you'll be working hand-in-hand with a partner – a brother or sister from the Ivory Coast," Harvey said. "I pray that the net becomes a symbol of God's

love and grace to all people."

Dr. Kouadio Blaisse of Care International, who has worked in public health for eight years through UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the U.S. Center for Disease Control, said he was honored to serve as a volunteer. Blaisse agreed that the nets were a symbol of new life.

"Our purpose is not to distribute long-lasting nets; it is to get people to sleep under the nets to save lives," Blaisse said. "If people really sleep under it, it will reduce the cases of malaria."

The community education component of which Blaisse spoke was dependent upon multi-lingual volunteers who could translate the proper use of

the mosquitare – mosquito nets – in English, French and the native languages of Côte d'Ivoire.

Among those volunteering to serve as team interpreters was 24-year-old Julianna Abe.

Not a stranger to the power of the connection, Abe previously served through the General Board of Global Ministries as an Ethnic Young Adult Intern in Washington D.C. Public policy, social justice advocacy and social change are the emphases of the internship. This is in tune with Julianna's focus: the economics of human resources, particularly health, labor and education.

"I chose to study economics, because I think that's my way to change things in Africa," she said. "If I can research and suggest right policies to the government, I can change something ... In Africa, we have natural resources and many human beings as resources. You just need research to put them together."

The doctoral student, who is a member of the United Methodist Church of Plateau in

Abidjan, said she would like to supplement her research with ongoing field work similar to what was happening through the integrated health campaign.

The integrated health campaign and net delivery proved

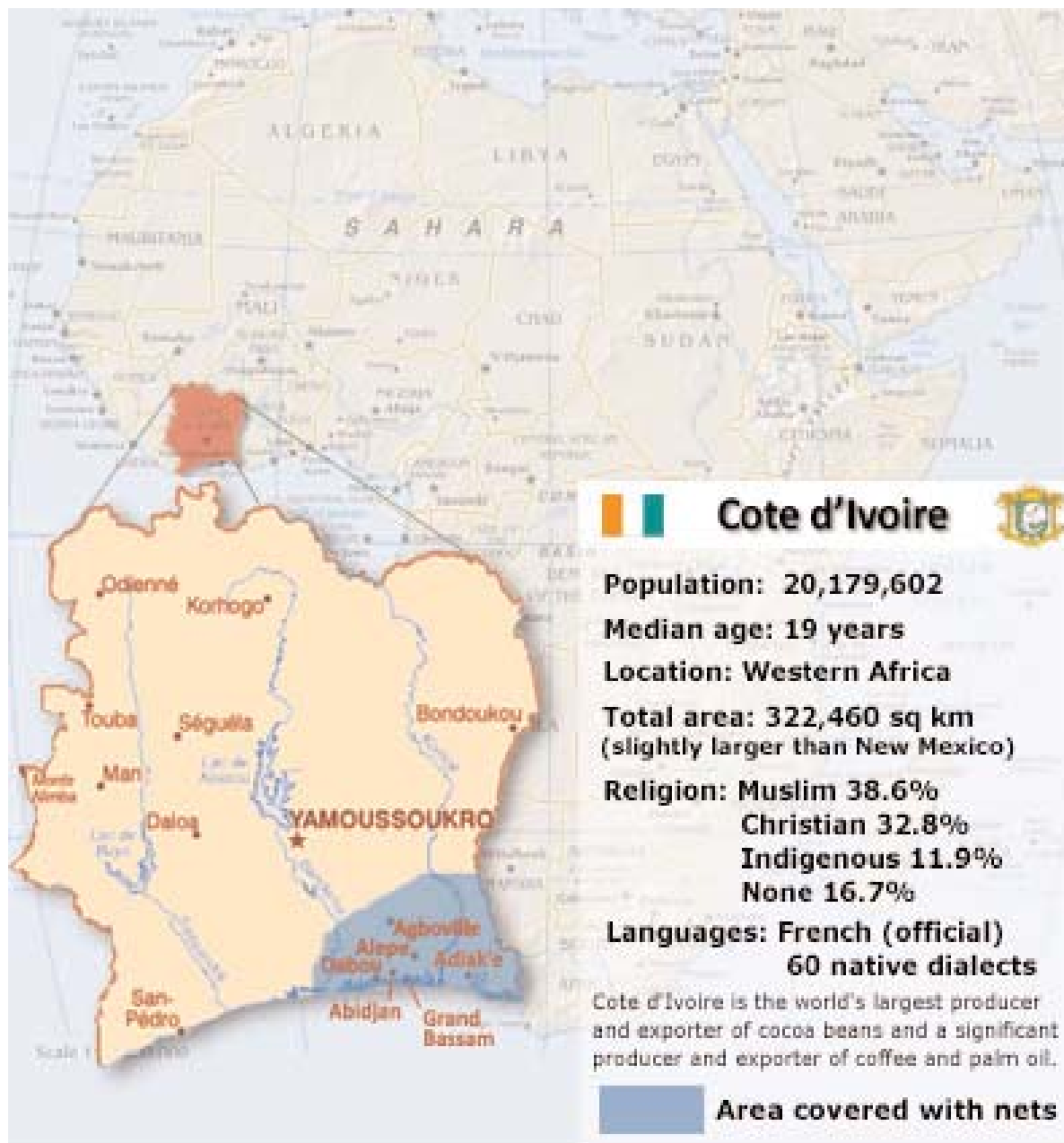
I also celebrate that you'll be working hand-in-hand with a partner – a brother or sister from the Ivory Coast. I pray that the net becomes a symbol of God's love and grace to all people.

**Rev. Cynthia Harvey,
Director of the
Center for Missional
Excellence**

to be a dynamic convergence of the diverse gifts and talents of Methodists worldwide – for which Bishop Benjamin Boni of the Côte d'Ivoire Annual Conference often gave thanks.

"It is a joy to see the brothers and sisters from the United States and church agencies here to express their love," Boni said during the opening worship service. "We don't have words to express our gratitude."

Nor did the Texas Methodists have the words to express their sincerest appreciation and thanks for the Ivorian volunteers whose friendship and partnership made this work possible.



Graphic created by: Brant Mills, TAC Web Content Manager



One of 1,000 Ivorian volunteers gives a child a dose of medicine.



The hands and feet of Jesus...



Clockwise: Rev. Will Reed helps Alepe residents hang their new net to protect area children; Jan Ervin distracts patients with kisses, as Rev. Cynthia Harvey handles the shots; Rev. Mark Bunch and Rev. Carmen Rickel serve the residents of Grand Bassam district; Kathie Mann shares nets and encouragement in the village of Samo; One of the many angels, who made it all worthwhile; Rev. Nancy Kellond shares the sacred gift of a life-saving net. Linda Marr gives a healthy dose of Vitamin A at a market in the Samo village.





Texas Methodists deliver nearly 1



An Ivorian volunteer, left, administers a measles vaccine in the village of Alépé. Above right: Bishop Benjamin Boni is prepared to distribute nets on the campaign launch day.

More than 1,000 UMCOR-trained Ivorian volunteers staffed the 3,000 sites used as distribution points in the 18 neediest districts of the West African nation.

Thirty-five volunteers from the Texas Conference served sites in five of those districts – Adiáke, Agboville, Alépé, Dabou and Grand Bassam. The teams often established mobile distribution units, when service in one location was complete. This was no easy feat, as the lines of people ranged from 100 to more than 500 parents and children each day – many of whom waited more than six hours in the scorching sun.

The Rev. Nancy Kellond of Montgomery UMC worked at sites throughout the Dabou district of Côte d'Ivoire, which is home to the only Methodist Hospital in the country.

“Giving each child a net was like the first time I ever served communion,” Kellond said. “I knew the nets, in some way, represented the gift of Christ for every child, and I never wanted to stop. I handed it to the child as if it were something sacred. As they looked at me with those big eyes and arms outstretched, they seemed to know, indeed,

that it was sacred, and they received it that way.”

Launching new life

The 5-day health campaign was launched in the village of Alépé on Tuesday, November 11, before a crowd of more than 1,200 people. The assembly included hundreds of school children who sang and danced in the town square prior to receiving life-saving medicines and nets.

“As United Methodists, we believe we are called not only to speak, but – by our actions – demonstrate God’s love,” Bishop Janice Riggle Huie said to the launch-day crowd. “We are grateful for Bishop Benjamin Boni and the United Methodist Church in Côte d'Ivoire for this new partnership and new possibilities for life here in Côte d'Ivoire.”

Among those celebrating the widespread impact of the partnership was Dr. Komla Siamevi, Côte d'Ivoire’s representative to the WHO.

“This is the first time such a big event has taken place in the Ivory Coast,” said Siamevi in French. “All you are doing will contribute to the healthiness of children in Côte d'Ivoire.”

In 2006, the WHO reported that 91 percent of children infected with malaria die, Siamevi said.

“Why are we waiting for a malaria vaccine?” he asked. “One of the best ways to prevent malaria in children under five and pregnant women is to enable them to sleep under an insecticide-treated net.”

In Côte d'Ivoire, the WHO estimates that less than 3 percent of children sleep under insecticide-treated mosquito nets. The country’s Minister of Health Dr. Allah Kouadio Remi said, during an April 2008 visit to Houston, that it would take 7 million nets to cover all the children of Cote d'Ivoire.

No time to spare

Within moments of receiving nets, many employed an array of tactics to install them. One group of women took down a clothesline to use as a means of securing the net. In other villages, people tore scraps of fabric to tie the nets to their home’s bamboo ceiling.

The timing of the net delivery was significant as well. On the Texas team’s first day in Africa, sporadic, but heavy rains left standing puddles of water

on the roads that are littered with crater-like potholes. (Some say the potholes are remnants from the civil war that plagued the country at the first part of this century.)

“Those are ideal breeding places for mosquitoes,” said Adrianna Logalbo, deputy director of partnership alliances for the UN Foundation, who participated in the net distribution. “That’s what makes our timing none too soon.”

Melissa Crutchfield, the UMCOR assistant general secretary for International Disaster Response, added that the biggest reports of malaria cases occur after each rainy season. In Côte d'Ivoire, the most significant rainy season hits in the spring, from April to June. The integrated health campaign took place during the “petite rainy season” of the fall.

This historic trip marks the first time that churches have participated in the on-the-ground delivery of nets.

“When I saw the faces of those children today, it was like an answered prayer,” said volunteer Mary Ellen Riley, who is a lay member of First UMC Livingston.

Why nets?

Long-lasting, insecticide-treated mosquito nets work to stop the spread of malaria in two ways. They stop mosquitoes from biting during the night, and the insecticide on the net kills the mosquitoes when they land on it.

While there are medicines used to treat and prevent the disease, they are often expensive and not widely available. Adjara Ouatarara, who learned of the campaign at her mosque, can testify to that.

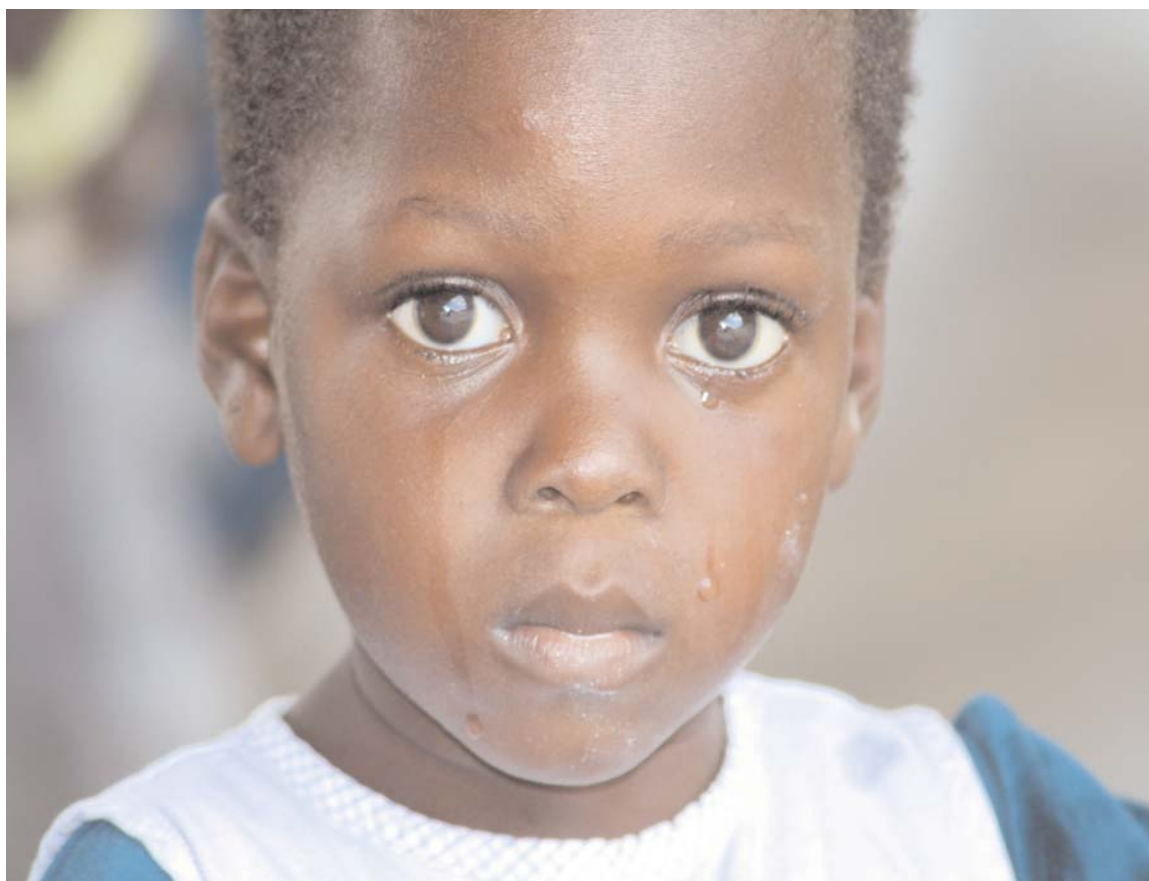
“No, we would not be able to pay for the nets or vaccines if they cost,” she said through an interpreter.

A resident of a small fishing village, Ouatarara brought her child and her sister’s three children, with whom she shares a home, to receive a net and vaccines. Like Kamenan, Ouatarara brought her nieces and nephews, because their mother has been sick with malaria for three months.

The free insecticide-treated bed nets have been identified as the most cost effective way to prevent the spread of malaria. When purchased through Nothing But Nets, treated bed nets cost \$10 to manufacture,



million nets and even more hope



Healthy, but happy. A young girl is tearful after receiving vaccines and other medicines at the Methodist Hospital in Dabou.

distribute and educate people on the usage of the nets, which are effective for approximately five years.

The people of the United Methodist Church are founding partners of Nothing But Nets, along with National Basketball Association's NBA Cares and Sports Illustrated. The United Nations Foundation created the Nothing But Nets campaign in 2006. Other partners include VH1, The Mark J. Gordon Foundation, AOL Black Voices, The Wasserman Foundation, Major League Soccer's MLS W.O.R.K.S., the Women's National Basketball Association, and Rotarians' Action Group on Malaria.

"This is more than a partnership," said the Rev. Cynthia Harvey, director of the Texas Conference Center for Missional Excellence. "It's a beautiful connection created by God – brothers and sisters, hand-in-hand across the globe to bring new life to Côte d'Ivoire."

Harvey, who co-led the

Texas delegation along with the Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Rick Goodrich, shared how God's blessings exceeded her expectations in a sermon at Marcory UMC in the Treischville district on the last day of the journey.

"Never would we have imagined that we would be brought to tears as we approached a site with more people than we could count," Harvey said. "I know Jesus never doubted he could feed [the 5,000], but I must confess that I wondered whether we had enough – enough nets, enough vaccine. But, I was reminded we had a special gift, the greatest gift we brought that we could never run out of – the love of Christ."

And, as in the scripture, the resources did not run out. When the distribution was completed on Saturday, the surplus of nets was shipped to Methodist boarding schools and to the Methodist Hospital at Dabou for continued protection of its vulnerable patients and for routine

distributions.

"For me it's a dream come true," said Bishop Huie. "I didn't know – and neither did Bishop Boni – that this partnership would ever be this big, this wonderful, this life-giving, this expansive and blessed by God.

"We started out with a seed. First it sprouted branches and now it's bearing fruit. It's come to symbolize new possibilities for the United Methodist Church."

Eleanor Colvin is the director of communications for the Texas Annual Conference of the UMC.

Above right: A launch-day demonstration shows the crowd how to hang a net.

Middle: Participating in the praise are Texas laity Lara Routon, Ann Byrd, Marty Vaughn and Mona Avalos.

Right: Schoolchildren dance and sing prior to the launch festivities.





Texas team blog* provides on-the-ground

Millennium technology such as blogs -- "web logs" -- enabled widespread

The following excerpts were taken from the team blog site at www.txcumc.org/africablog. During the 5-day campaign, nearly 800 unique visitors logged onto the blog site and read 4,185 pages.

09 Nov 2008

Their Lives Are Worth It

Author: Eleanor Colvin

Their lives are worth a \$10 net. A life-saving sacrifice that roughly equals the 2 venti lattes I won't have this week.

Their lives are worth the 16-hour plane ride, the 3 hours you spent at the 3-on-3 game or the 30 minutes you dedicated to your church's dribble-thon or basketball lock-in.

Their lives are worth every cent you spent on spaghetti suppers, pancake breakfasts, popcorn or any other means to an end that ended up raising the \$1 million to make this trip possible.

If you ever doubted for a single second (and I doubt you doubted) that your sacrifice was needed, look in their eyes, with your heart, and I know you'll see that their lives are worth it.

10 Nov 2008

More Than I Ever Imagined

Author: Cynthia Harvey

United Methodists talk a lot about connection and what I have witnessed the last week in Côte d'Ivoire is not talk about connection but the power of "being" connected. Remember when you set out to build a castle or a space ship with your favorite Lego set? You would begin by carefully choosing the right colors and as you connected one with the other you imagined what it might look like when you finished. Throughout the preparation for this time in Côte d'Ivoire as we have carefully worked to choose the perfect pieces and began to connect one with the other I have so often imagined what it might look like in the end.

The team working in Côte d'Ivoire today is not talking about connection but they are "being" in connection. I have a



Ivorian children heading home after worship are told to come back for nets later in the week.

good friend who always reminds me that being precedes doing ...

I don't yet know what this final masterpiece will look like but I have a hunch that it will be better than any castle or space ship or anything else I could have ever asked or imagined.

10 Nov 2008

Juxtaposition

Author: Josh Hale

It's one of my favorite 25-cent words: juxtaposition: what happens when you place two things side by side. You can't escape it in Côte d'Ivoire (CI). Take our lodging: the Hotel Ivoire was built as a swanky Intercontinental Hotel, with a winding swimming pool (the largest in Africa at one time?), casino, bowling alley, movie theater. But the aging hotel overlooking the Eberie Lagoon is shadow of its former self: few patrons, pool drained, casino - bowling alley - theater all closed. Still regarded as one of the best hotels in the country, the President of Togo stayed here the week before we arrived.

But for me, the interesting thing is the expectation, the foresight

that building such a place in Abidjan reveals--set alongside its current state of disrepair and emptiness.

It's the sense of inexpressible joy at worshipping on a Sunday morning in a language you know 10 words in. It's the heartbreak of having a luxurious meal, filled with the finest fruits and vegetables available, with expensive meats &

fish covered in rich sauces...in a walled-in compound, doors locked to keep out the rest of the interested, hungry, unbelievably poor villagers.

Juxtaposition isn't just about "compare and contrast," though; the idea is that by putting two things next to each other, a third, different thing occurs...something new emerges. A mosquito net juxtaposed against a family creates the possibility for a vibrant life beyond childhood; nets and a village means sustainability and better health for the whole population; nets and a country? It unleashes a torrent of possibilities! Without malaria, more money can be spent on facing other challenges, more people are healthy and alive to lead such a charge, and more opportunities are had to live into a future with hope. As the hymn says, "strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow--blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!"

11 Nov 2008

Priorities

Author: Josh Hale

What kind of priorities do

we set for ourselves? What kind do we set as a community, a people, a nation, a world?

What priorities does it take to bring together Methodists and Mormons, governments and organizations, sports fans and philanthropists...and try to save some lives?

The priorities which we set and the way in which we go about fulfilling them say a lot about our own character, our own values, our own faith. The integrity and responsibility of hundreds of Ivorian volunteers, the patience and good spirits of thousands of Ivorian parents and children, the hospitality and genuine warmth of more hosts than I could count...all these teach me about the kind of priorities which I need in my life and we need in our world.

What are your priorities?

13 Nov 2008

1,000 Holy Moments

Author: Nancy Kellond

Remember when I said I would be delivering 300 nets a day in the villages? Well, yesterday, I handed out 1,000 nets in one day in one village. I now have a new image of Jesus feeding the 5,000 people.

Giving each child a net was like the first time I ever served communion. I knew the nets, in some way, represented the gift of Christ for every child, and I never wanted to stop. I handed it

to the child as if it were something sacred.

As they looked at me with those big eyes and arms outstretched, they seemed to know, indeed, that it was sacred, and they received it that way. Can you imagine 1,000 holy moments in one day?

13 Nov 2008

Put Flesh on Your Faith

Author: Leah Taylor

At my site, which was located in the town center, the line snaked several blocks down the street. Mom's stood patiently -- some for hours ... it was hot, it was loud, it was crowded...oh, did I mention it was hot? But somehow, it felt like a little glimpse of God's kingdom here on earth. As we tickled the little one's tummy to soothe the hurt; when we saw the dimples in those tiny smiling cheeks; when that mom looked me in the eyes, held my hand and said, "Merci, Madame," -- I knew that for once, for real, my faith and my works were in complete accord -- and for once, for real, God was guiding my work, not me!

13 Nov 2008

Non Fini

Author: Eleanor Colvin

Yesterday, I cried. I cried because I had to leave the work site. "It's time to go," our translator, Juliana, whispered in her



Families flood a small clinic in the Grand Bassam district.



ound updates from Côte d'Ivoire

spread and diverse coverage of net delivery campaign

sweet French that broke my heart wide open. Time to go? There are at least 200 mothers still waiting to protect their babies from diseases that never threatened me or my beloved nieces...

I cried because never in my life have I worked so swiftly, so eagerly, so gently, so lovingly, so meaningfully. Never.

My heart cried out when a mother saw me leaving and asked with sad, sad eyes, "Madame, es fini? Es fini?" I attempted to reassure her, "No, Madame. Non fini." It is not finished ...

Yesterday, I cried. Today, I rejoiced. Sailing along calm lagoon waters, within eyesight of where they meet the chaotic Atlantic Ocean, I heard God saying, "Peace, be still." There's so much work to be done. There are countless people to serve at home and abroad. Some days we will cry together. Some days we will rejoice together. My prayer is that every day, God's peace and grace will strengthen and empower us to join together in service that is as powerful and sure as his joining of the lagoon to the sea.

15 Nov 2008

Quelles sont les nouvelles?

Author: Josh Hale

What is the news? This question (I hope I got it right!) is the first one asked upon arriving in a village, especially for an official visit to the chief or the church. It's apparently protocol for "What are you doing here? What's your business?" Our interpreter would share back about the importance of using the mosquitare (mosquito nets) properly. The leader would then share that the news in the village is also good, and we can continue with our visit...

The news is good! That God has taken on human flesh, become incarnate, and lives and moves and breathes and blesses and works and saves through Jesus Christ, and Christ's church, is very good news indeed! Through the healing ministry of Jesus Christ in which we are called to participate, the children and families and all the people of Côte d'Ivoire have seen in plain sight the return of God to his people, to this holy place.

15 Nov 2008 Converting Hearts and Health

Author: Linda Marr

Today was a wonderful way to end the week. We went back to Grand Bassam where we had been all week and visited families' homes to be sure they had hung their mosquito nets correctly ... There was one man who was anxious to show us his hung net. He already had one untreated net where his



An Ivorian boy in the Adiake district demands a kiss from his mother, who is wearing a Côte d'Ivoire T-shirt.

family had been sleeping and he told us that since he had only one child he was letting other children in the area sleep under the new treated net. What an example of radical hospitality!

Before we left our interpreter for the week, Juliana, told me that there was someone to see Susan Silvas and I. It was one of the Ivorian volunteers who worked with us for 2 days ... He had brought us each a vase that his brother had made that was triangular in shape and he told us that the 3 sides represented the trinity. He felt God had brought us to Côte d'Ivoire to distribute nets to the children of his country. He also said that a Muslim man came to get a net and told him that he was planning to convert to Christianity because of what the Methodist churches in the two countries had done to help the people of Côte d'Ivoire. I had thought from the beginning that this trip was God's trip and I certainly knew it at that point.

16 Nov 2008 Worship

Author: Josh Hale

Well kids, the word of the day is "worship." Why? Well, because so many Sunday mornings even we pastors just go through the motions, follow the

established routine, and rarely sense the Spirit breaking through into the life of the church.

This is not a problem in Cote d'Ivoire! ... There are no words to describe the experience of worship that felt like 20 minutes rather than more than two hours! However, I will try.

Surrounded by song and prayer we entered into the beginning of the service: laity ushered to front-row seats and clergy processing in with the lively choir. We heard a powerful sermon from our Missional Excellence director, Rev. Cynthia Harvey. (Let me just say that in my house, I'm not the cryer. Not the case in this sermon.) ... And then, the words of thanks from several clergy and lay leaders and Bishop Benjamin Boni.

Several of us were talking on the bus ride back, and Morris remarked that it's not your ordinary worship service where the high point is the offering. And yet it was – the glorious singing and dancing, the true joy with which all the people came to the sacks at the front of the church to share of their blessings from God.

After worship ... we headed to the bus for lunch at the church who has hosted us all

week: Jubile Church in the Cocody neighborhood where our hotel is. But when we got there almost every square inch of grass was covered in tents for probably 1,000 people, hosted by the general of the entire Ivorian army. And we dined again with excellent hospitality from a people we didn't even know the week before. As I sat in my chair and looked around at the tables, the sharing, the love, the communion of saints gathered, I couldn't help but think that worship had spilled over into our meal, that the joyful gratitude to a God who has given us everything could not be contained by a time slot or a building but permeated down to the core of our being and was now everywhere that we were.

18 Nov 2008

Rise and Shine!

Author: Eleanor Colvin

The past 11 days of service have rewired my system. The body clock will eventually fall back into sync with my old self. But there are some things that I hope are never rewired back to the old.

Gratitude is one of those things. When I awoke just now, I knew this wouldn't be a typical "roll-over-check-the-clock-drift-back-off" type of waking. So, I got on up and brushed my teeth. I brushed my teeth with tap water. I haven't done that in 11 days. In Côte d'Ivoire, the tap water is not potable – meaning it's not drinkable or usable. So, since our departure, we've brushed our teeth with bottled water. Every day, I've thanked God that I have the luxury of usable water at home, as well as having the luxury of options like bottled water. While brushing my teeth, I've also prayed for those in Africa and other forgotten places of the world that don't have the same luxuries. I hope my body's wiring is never regulated in such a way that I forget to consciously thank God for the easily-overlooked blessings, such as clean water.



A Muslim mother waits to receive care for her child at the Methodist



“What’s the news?”

Quelles sont les nouvelles? (What’s the news?) This is the first question asked upon arriving in a village. The Texas Net Delivery Delegation also chose to make it the last question of the day. Each night, after a full day of service and just prior to devotion, individuals would share their most moving moments of the day.

Out of 14 years of nursing, this was the most rewarding day of my nursing career. As a mother, to be able to help these mothers - they love their kids, just like I love my kids - to help them means a lot.

Lara Routon,
Marvin UMC Tyler

For me, it was an humbling experience to see the level at which a pastor and family live.

Rev. Will Reed,
Servants of Christ Parish, Houston.

We had the most "far out" location. Remote. No concrete to be found. Huts.... We arrived and found masses of humanity waiting for us.

Rev. Morris Matthis, Christ UMC Sugar Land

I was amazed at the older siblings bringing their younger siblings - caring for them and even carrying them on their backs like their mother's would ... We had to stop distribution for an hour and wait for more nets and no one complained. I kept thinking: in America, people would be killing each other.

Rev. Carmen Rickel, St. Paul UMC Henderson

There’s good pain and there’s bad pain ... If you have pain in your life in America, you buy a drug or pill to get rid of it as soon as possible. This is good pain, because these children will not die from measles. Whatever they face in life, they will not die of measles, will not face blindness because of the Vitamin A, or complications from worms.

Rev. Todd Jordan, Caldwell UMC

I did not want to leave Côte d'Ivoire without putting nets in our Methodist hospital. That's going to be done...All in all, more than 1 million nets will be distributed, and you were responsible for [hand delivering] about 50 percent of that.

Rev. Cynthia Harvey, Director of the Center for Missional Excellence

To see little ones, 2 year olds, holding one another after receiving a vaccine - to see them comforting one another was just so moving. Afterward, we prayed hand in hand and we left the orphanage in tears.

Rev. Kalamba Kilumba,
Prairie View A&M Wesley Foundation

You can't ever give enough, because they're going to give you more back.

Leah Taylor, Conference Lay Leader

We make babies cry today, so that one day they can cry at their own wedding, at the birth of their first child and when they hold their grandchildren in their arms for the first time.

Rev. Rick Goodrich, Assistant to the Bishop

This partnership is a friendship. Friendships - true friendships - don't go away. There may be geographic distance, but they grow deeper over time. The United Methodist Church is fortunate to welcome Côte d'Ivoire into the denomination. We will be blessed by their presence and the gifts they bring.

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, Texas Annual Conference

