

The Messer Message

December 7, 2007

Dear Praying Friends and Family,

It's my favorite time of the year! I have so many memories of our nice "green" Christmases in Liberia, West Africa. Most of them have my Dad right smack in the middle! He was always so full of cheer and fun. I do still miss him after nearly 15 years. I'm thankful that Jesus came, died and rose again. This gives me the sure hope that I will see my dad again—maybe before next Christmas!

So, what are the Messer's doing for Christmas this year? First, we have a tree up and decorated. We are enjoying the Christmas music and we are trying to finish up school so we can have a nice break. Our last day will be Dec. 14th.

Tonight we are having a Christmas party with the missionary kids. They will be doing a silly gift exchange—this allows even the babies to participate. There will be prizes for the silliest, the simplest, the ugliest, the prettiest... gifts. I'm hoping to find a category for each gift, so that each kid will get a prize. We also plan to make Pizza after the children find their toppings on a treasure hunt. The real treat will be the Rice Krispy treats that I was able to make with some 'hard to come by' marshmallows. So, don't feel sorry for these MKs—they are having a wonderful time, and they are not even cold!

This year our church (EGLISE BAPTISTE BIBLIQUE) is once again working on a Christmas program video presentation. We are working with some other Baptist Churches to put this together. Our church is providing the shepherds and the angels. Dan and Joan's church will bring the wise men. Other churches are sending Mary and Joseph, Anna and Simeon... When each part is filmed, it will be put together with a narrator reading the Christmas story from the Bible. Then several copies will be made. Each church will receive a copy of the "movie" to show on Christmas, or whenever it fits into their program. This helps our churches which are too small to do a whole Christmas program alone.

We are planning to have normal morning services on the Sunday before Christmas. Then we will come back in the evening for a meal, and to watch the movie. We are still working on the details for the meal. It never seems to work well to have the ladies bring food (they usually do not bring enough and many go without—we get so many extra "guests" when a meal is served!) We are thinking this year to have the church just prepare all the food (get a couple of lady volunteers to cook it at our house, and then take it over to the church). What is on the menu? A huge pot of rice. A huge pot of Peanut Butter Soup (really, it is yummy and not sweet! You use unsweetened peanut butter, seasonings and usually fish—try it at home with chicken.) A huge pot of "Sauce Claire" (clear soup—made with seasonings, fish and pork, some vegetables and lots of water and African peppers.) The main seasonings out here are Maggi, (like bullion cubes) and of course, pepper. The church loves to have these meals, and it is a lot of fun (though a lot of work).

Andy was able to have another film night at the church. The people enjoy these events, but we seem to run into so many snags. First the electricity likes to go off on the weekends (the film nights are usually on Saturday). Second, some of the DVDs don't work well—they get scratched or dirty very easily out here. Third, some of the movies that we have are hard for the people to understand. They are in French, but it is different from the Ivorian French. The main ones that they can understand, and do enjoy, are the Jesus Film, Pilgrim's Progress and La Solution (about Christ's power over fetishes...) We got some new ones (The Hiding Place—about Corrie ten Boom, and Joni—about Joni Erikson Tada) but the French is really hard to understand for the average Ivorian. Anyhow, it is good to get the believers together and to have a chance to invite unsaved friends to come and hear the Gospel. There have been several decisions for Christ following the films. This is a valid outreach, but as with most things out here, it usually feels like you are pulling up hill to get something accomplished.

The family is surviving. We are battling colds at the moment. The season is changing from rainy to dry—lots of dust... It is the time of the cough. One day can be cool with rain and the next scorching hot with lots of dust. We call this the "Harmattan" time. Last year it was worse. I'm just glad we are not in the desert where it is like this to a much greater degree.

Andy is very busy with house projects—our house is STILL not finished! We are working on the driveway, back yard and getting a fence up to keep the dogs from going in the back. The funny (and weird) thing is when the dogs get up on the roof. They can also go from our roof to the neighbor's roof. It is a scary thing to hear a dog running on your roof in the middle of the night. It could help out with the whole "Santa Cause" "reindeer" story I guess. Anyhow, the neighbors were not happy about it. We have blocked the dogs for the time being, but are working on a more permanent solution (good solid fence!) There are also many projects inside that are calling to Andy for his time and attention. Some doors have not yet been made or put on certain rooms, some tile jobs still remain, one bathroom needs a sink... In addition to all of these house projects, he continues the weekly Sunday and Wednesday preaching/teaching, Bible School every Saturday morning, counseling each Monday morning from 9AM-12PM, and visitation each Sunday afternoon. Andy will be busy till the cows come home. J I must add that he still makes time to play with us in the evenings (when he can) and read to the kids from time to time. We know he has to work, but he is a terrific husband and daddy.

I am trying to stay focused with school. Only 5 more days of it till Christmas break. YEA! I also work on housekeeping, meal preparation, laundry, child training, health care... My ladies' class is doing well and growing. The girls class that meets once a month usually

has a good turnout. The worst part for me is teaching it on Sunday afternoon when I feel so sleepy. Our choir is doing better. We now have practice on Sunday after church instead of Saturday. The choir has grown because of this change. More people are there on Sunday and willing to stay for practice. This also frees up my Saturdays which is a terrific blessing. Two of our choir members were recently baptized—we rejoiced with them!

Leah (age 10) is growing fast. She loves to write stories and make up poems. She is pretty good at it. She is still very dramatic, and loves to make up plays and songs (which the whole family then gets the privilege of watching.) She is doing well in school, but does not like History or Science or Math. She enjoys language and reading.

David (age 9) is a fast, hard worker when it comes to school. He likes to get an early start and finish up as quickly as possible. He is coming to grips with being the only boy in our family. The girls are slowly coming to grips with him. J They do tend to bicker, but deep down (WAY deep down!) they do love each other.

Nadia (age 7) is plugging along with 2nd grade. She has very pretty handwriting! She loves to draw and color. We think she is quite artistic. She is also one of my most tidy children. She is a good big sister to Lexie, Prisca and Hadassah.

Lexie (age 5) is working hard at Kindergarten. She goes up to my sister, Joan's house for school each Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Joan says that Lexie is doing VERY well with reading and math. Lexie also loves to color and make things with paper. She used to have a lot of trouble pronouncing certain letters, but has been doing much better with that as well.

Prisca (age 3) is growing up more each day. She is much better about putting things away and doing what she is asked to do. She is a good little eater, but is still quite petite. She has blond curly hair and lovely, big brown eyes. She likes to sing and play Barbies.

Hadassah (age 2) is doing extremely well with potty training. No more diapers during the day and most of the time she is dry in the morning. We are super thrilled about this! Most of the credit goes to Nadege (the Ivorian girl who lives with us) for taking "Chowie" (as we call Hadassah) to the potty throughout the day. Hadassah is talking more and more and becoming a real part of the family (having an opinion and letting us know what it is!)

Nadege (age 13?) is doing well. She has faced some struggles this past month. I think she may be dealing with hormones, and it's a bit of a pre-taste of what we will be facing with 5 daughters! YIKES! She keeps working on learning to read (some very slow progress has been seen) and learning to fit in with our American ways. Last week she had a bad case of "boutons" (rash?) and we had to go to the Dr. for a special soap, cream... Thankfully the rash is cleared up and also, thankfully it was not contagious. We appreciate your prayers for Nadege as she continues to grow and learn. She does show a real zeal for witnessing and sharing Christ with others. She is also faithful at church, and working on memorizing Scripture.

We would be seriously remiss not to mention to you that we are so thankful for all of you who pray for us and support us. We do not take you for granted and we depend on your generosity to live out here. God always meets our needs, but we are fully aware that He does it through your obedience to and love for Him. Things have been extremely tight for us financially (the main reason is the continual dropping of the exchange rate—it was 775 cfa per U.S. dollar and now it is about 442 cfa per U.S. dollar) but we have survived. We have food to eat, and a clean home to live in. We have enough to help others around us. We are very blessed. Thank you so much for your part in our blessings! May God bless and reward you according to HIS riches in glory!

We trust that you will have a good Christmas Season and will not forget to spend some time thinking about our wonderful Savior who came so we could have life! His death brings us Salvation and His resurrection brings us eternal life. May we trust Him more fully and may we love Him more wholly! Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

Love in Christ,

Andy and Becky Messer

Missionaries to San-Pedro, Cote d'Ivoire
Serving with World Wide New Testament Baptist Missions