

# WBI Howell Ferguson Report

From a statement in my last newsletter, I realize that I intended to give an explanation of the WBI stateside extension program in this edition. However, the events of the past two months and the information I have received from two major overseas trips has compelled me to postpone that idea until a later time. Actually I have been exposed to more information than I probably need to include in a single newsletter. But I need to at least attempt to give a summary not only to keep you up-to-date but also to help me organize some of these thoughts and experiences. This newsletter will be divided into two parts: the first part is a summary of plans to begin a new extension school in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine; and the second part is an overview from the visits of four existing extension schools on the continent of Africa; in Ghana, Togo and Uganda. Please pardon me for the length of this report.

## World Bible Institute – Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine

From the time when I began initially working in Ukraine I frequently heard of the need for a preacher-training school in the western part. After the fall of the Soviet Union, most evangelistic efforts in the early '90s until recent times were concentrated in Russia and the eastern part of Ukraine. Receptivity was initially strong but gradually weakened even until the violent insurgency in 2014. Consequently, thousands of eastern Ukrainians were uprooted and fled to cities such as Kharkov, Dnipropetrovsk, Kiev, etc. This westward flood of displaced Ukrainian residents opened opportunities of benevolence and evangelism.

For a number of years, John Kachelman has been instrumental in coordinating and shipping hospital supplies and humanitarian aid to Ukraine and other countries. His emphasis in western Ukraine—particularly in the western city of Ivano-Frankivsk—has provided now an opportunity to further the spread of the gospel of Christ into that part of the country. Over a period of years, doctors, hospital staff, and government officials have come to recognize the good will the churches of Christ have provided to their people. We believe the providence of God has afforded us now the opportunity to multiply the spreading of the hope of salvation to this area. While the war has created hardships for many Ukrainians, we believe God can turn a dark situation into a bright one that glorifies Him and offers hope and salvation to the oppressed.



Ivan (director), Masha (secretary), Volodya (instructor)

A few months earlier, John Kachelman contacted David Hamrick about the possibility of coordinating our efforts together to begin a new preacher-training extension school in Ivano-Frankivsk. I was new to WBI when I heard of this new prospect. Favoring the idea, we planned a trip for September 26<sup>th</sup> – October 5<sup>th</sup>. After a number of meetings, we formed a small staff and have plans to recruit 7 – 10 students. Ivan Skoleba (BVBIU graduate) will serve as the

director as well as an instructor, Volodya Didukh (former BVBIU graduate) will also serve as an instructor, and Masha Skoleba (Masters in Economics) will serve as secretary. Due to the small teaching staff, initially we plan to send possibly ten American teachers in 2017. In time we want the teaching staff to become predominantly Ukrainian.

Temporarily, WBI-IF (World Bible Institute – Ivano-Frankivsk) will meet in the rented two flats that the church currently uses for worship and Bible classes. Due to a generous donation of property by a local community to the Ivano-Frankivsk church of Christ, approximately 1½ acres of property has been given in a highly desirable and fast-growing new-construction residential area about a couple of miles west of Ivano-Frankivsk.

The development of this lot consists of three phases:

- 1) A large storage warehouse to store supplies and to receive and distribute future shipping containers has already been completed with the generous donations of brethren;
- 2) The second stage will be the construction of a roomy two-level structure for student housing, Bible classrooms, a lecture and fellowship hall and supplementary rooms; and,
- 3) A large auditorium for the assembly of the Church will complete the building project.

Once phase two has been completed, both the Church and WBI-IF will relocate there. The Church will have ample room temporality to assemble for worship and conduct Bible classes.

If all goes according to schedule, WBI-IF will begin its first class in mid-January. My plans are to invite another American teacher and schedule at least one visit in 2017 to teach short courses.

This is an exciting time for Ukraine and for us as we begin this new cooperative endeavor in western Ukraine to train preachers, evangelists, church leaders, Bible teachers and kingdom workers.

There is so much more I wish I could report about this new undertaking. In time I am sure more will be said. For now, we all ask that you add WBI-IF to your prayers that God will increase His church in western Ukraine and beyond!

### **Volta Bible College – Ho, Ghana**

The spreading of the gospel of Christ according to Christ's Great Commission is a tremendous responsibility and a colossal task of the Lord's Church. It must be carried out here at home and abroad. The challenge is finding the best way possible to accomplish this mission. And there is probably no place on our planet where that challenge is more "challenging" than in Africa.

Experience has proven that the most effective long-term philosophy of missions is the indigenous approach. The scripture of 2 Timothy 2:2 validates this view. WBI's philosophy of preacher-training extensions strongly emphasizes assisting schools to become self-sustaining by such means as agriculture and vocational training. David Hamrick and I just recently returned from a whirlwind trip (October 18 – 28) to visit four preacher-training schools in Africa: two in Ghana, one in Togo, and one in Uganda. As with the Ukrainian trip, I can only give a very brief report of each school. Each of these schools is closely linked to agricultural sustainability.

After landing at the airport in Accra our first school visit was to the Volta Bible College in Ho, Ghana. This is probably our most successful and advanced WBI extension school in Africa.

A large building program has already completed a sizable two-level structure with future plans for an educational program. Fifty acres of farm land is currently used to finance the program including a tractor and several useful farming implements. The potential exists for a sizable income to operate

more than one school. Currently we are looking at crops besides corn such as cassava that produce good income and are in high demand.



Newly constructed facility – Volta Bible College

David Hamrick and I spent a couple of days at VBC surveying the farm as well as participating in a preacher's seminar where we spoke on assigned subjects and fielded questions from more than 50 preachers and students. As is our custom we held meetings with the staff to discuss the progress, successes, and challenges of the schools. One of our recent staff additions, Stephen, is preparing a budget

with an expense report and account balance. He also is responsible for sending the course schedule and curriculum for approval. Sem Akumia is the director.

There are also many needs. We need additional staff. There is the need for a secretary, janitor, and farm supervisor. As the construction continues, a construction supervisor will be sought. Book shelves will need to be built for the new library and additional volumes that are coming. Shelves are needed for the student dorms, and ID cards are needed for the students. We are looking at clearing 10 more acres of land to increase the farming production.

Lord willing, we plan to start a graduate program in 2017. We are anticipating starting a new weekend evangelism program on the last Saturday of each month.

### **East Coast Bible Institute – Dzodze, Ghana**



Dzodze church of Christ – home of East Coast Bible

Another extension school in Ghana is the result of the beginning and growth of a Church in a city in the Volta Region called Dzodze. A preacher named John Morkli wanted for years to build a big church building and promised he could fill it up. For years his wish was unfulfilled although he eventually built a wooden building as best as he could. It was not long before he packed that building with new converts. With a strong faith, a small Church in Ore City, TX built a permanent Church building. Today it is the largest congregation in the Volta Region averaging a 400 Sunday attendance with as many as 1,000 attending. John Morkli finally got his wish.



Today this same facility is home to the East Coast Bible Institute. Mac Thompson Gbeti is the director, Desire Gbedivloh is a teacher and administrator, and John Morkli is a teacher and the preacher for the Dzodze church of Christ. There will be four students graduate in December with around 10 students enrolling in February. In addition to the Church and preacher school, John Morkli also started a very successful primary school as a personal business, conducts a radio program, and established a health clinic which generates money for evangelism. In the interest of following the pathway of self-reliance, ECBI will also share in the farming and harvesting of the 50-acre farm. They will also benefit from biblical reference books being shipped for their library.

### **Togo Bible College – Noepe, Togo**

Just across the eastern border of Ghana is the French-speaking country of Togo. The city of Noepe is just on the Ghana/Togo border. The Togo Bible College (TBC) is the result of another evangelistic effort of John Morkli who also teaches courses at TBC. This new extension school operates out of a recently built blue building and is basically a shell of a building. They need electricity (possibly solar power), a water well, a printer, beds, shelves, chairs and other items (a more complete list will be sent). They are also in need of a teacher and French Bible material.



New facility – Togo Bible College

Before I left for Africa, Barry Bagget—former West African missionary who works with the Crieve Hall congregation—sent me French material which I delivered to the school. We owe Barry a great debt for donating class material on many books of the Bible which he authored and translated into French. To become self-supporting, we are investigating the purchase of land for agricultural use.

### **Rwenzori School of Preaching – Kasese, Uganda**



Facility for Rwenzori School of Preaching

Our last visit took us to the more eastern country of Uganda in the small city of Kasese. Kasese is on the equator and just across the mountains to the Republic of Congo. It is a work initially begun by the efforts of Jonathan Crowell, Gage Coldwater, and Gregg Knight. Mbusa Benard is the school's director.

This institute is brand new and built upon the premise of becoming a self-sustaining preacher-training extension school. The school is situated on a small three-acre farm which currently grows

corn and also raises pigs, chickens, rabbits, and guinea pigs. They have just recently installed a septic system and added a water collection system supplied by rainwater. In addition their electrical needs are provided by a solar panel system.

While this school is perhaps one of our more challenging of the four schools, there are many positives:

1. Five new churches have been established as a result of their efforts.
2. Students are preaching in each of these new churches.
3. The school has helped needy families and orphans with their own funds.
4. Crime in area has greatly decreased since the establishment of the school.
5. People are bringing their children to the school for counseling.
6. They have had over 170 baptisms and 10 restorations this year so far.
7. The teachers are learning a lot by teaching classes.

And I saved the best for last! Yona Muhindo—the first convert in Uganda—fell away from the Church and started 150 denominational Pentecostal churches. However, Yona has been recently restored after a three-day Bible study. Feeling a strong sense of responsibility, Yona now wants our instructors to teach in all of these denominational churches in an effort to convert them to the faith he had earlier forsaken. He is willing to make the contacts; and already, six of the denominational preachers are ready to enroll in the school. By God's grace, we see a great opportunity to potentially convert hundreds of people through converted denominations. I think this is exciting and it demonstrates the power the gospel has to restore the fallen and use that occasion to bring forth fruits of repentance. Please pray that Yona's desire comes true!

There is so much more I could say about this school as well as the others. They need more land—3 acres immediately behind their current property which, by the way, is in danger of being bought-out-from-under them by a local denomination who has learned of the property's increased value and desirability. They need glass windows to keep rain out, plaster for the walls and floors, a school van, a PA system, and a new farm supervisor. All of these schools have their own successes, needs, and challenges. But from the observation of my visits, God's blessings are demonstrated in these schools and the good that they do.

If you would like to assist in the needs of any of these extensions please contact me for specific details, or you may send funds directly to:

World Bible Institute  
400 Lake Dow Rd.  
McDonough, GA 30252

Please indicate exactly the purpose of the donation so that the treasurer will be able to comply with your request.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report.

Please remember our brethren who are serving God faithfully around the world!

In His service,

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