

Focus

Sunday, January 27, 2008

NEW JERSEY SUNDAY HERALD

C-1



Bernard Ugwuoke, a missionary from Nigeria who lives in Sparta, talks of his work in Africa.

MAN OF FAITH

Sparta missionary
jailed 9 times in Africa
because of religion

Editor's note: Bernard Ugwuoke, a missionary in Africa, lives in Sparta with his wife and two children and is preparing for a new assignment in Gambia. His supervisors described the 39-year-old as "a very compassionate man" concerned for others with "a strong, persevering faith" while working in remote villages in Nigeria.

"They have sacrificed and suffered much to do what they do, yet they continue to do it joyfully," wrote one supervisor in an e-mail.

Born in Enugu state in Nigeria, Ugwuoke joined the staff of a mission organization, the international branch of Campus Crusade for Christ, in 1995 after working for Exxon-Mobil.

The Herald talked with him recently about his experiences.

Question: You've been in jail because of your faith?

Answer: Yes, nine times. Always related to my faith and work. I have slept in jail six times and been detained nine times. Nigeria is a very corrupt country.

Q: You've told of being stripped naked and imprisoned in a room with criminals.

A: (After being accused by a passing driver of stealing the Jeep he was driving up to a police checkpoint), they

hurried me to the station. I spent the night in jail, in a converted toilet facility. It was so dirty, bed bugs all crawling around. I was in with three other guys, so I preached the Gospel to them.

The next morning, the commissioner of police ordered me into the worst jail in the city (the accuser was a friend of the commissioner), where they have tortured people to confess to anything, and some have died.

When the guards were putting me in, they told me to have some money in my pockets, because the prisoners would beat me, but if I had some money they wouldn't beat me as much.

When I entered the room, I was the 21st person in a 10-foot-by-5-foot room. It was 100 degrees-plus, and I couldn't even sit down. There was no room.

There was no window, no ventilation, just slits in the ceiling. Everyone was naked, and the odor was horrible. They all stood up to beat me.

They stripped me. But one criminal, who had served the longest and was the leader, said, "Let's hear what brought him here."

I said, "I know God has sent me here because of you. I know God will touch some of you here." It was my first time preaching to the naked, but 16 of the 20 gave their life to Christ.

Q: How did the charge end?

A: The police actually did an investigation and tracked the car all the way back to Hamburg, Germany, and all the information was in order and it rightfully belonged to our agency.

When the guards came to release me, they said the man (the accuser) had bribed them to come and torture me so I would confess, but they wouldn't.

Q: Any other run-ins with police?

A: Police accused me of stealing the generator we were using and took our generator. They were looking for bribes, (but) I never give a bribe.

For five months we were doing nothing with the "Jesus" film. (The generator is used in remote villages to power the film projector for open-air showings of the movie, a film based on the Gospel of Luke that has been translated into more than 1,000 languages worldwide.)

The (seizure of the generator) went on appeal. They would not release it.

Then one day, the police (chief) said, "Come and show us what you do with the generator. Set it up in the police barracks."

Before I wouldn't even go there to ask permission for such a thing. That night, 1,500 came to watch from all around the neighborhood of the police

See FAITH, Page C2



Ugwuoke said that while he was in jail in Africa, he told the prisoners, "I know God has sent me here because of you. I know God will touch some of you here."



Ugwuoke tells a story of how a blind 20 year-old man was cleaning a residence that he was staying in, and he regained his vision.

PHOTOS BY KELLY HILL
THE NEW JERSEY HERALD

FOCUS



Bernard Ugwuoke said that Nigeria has 500 languages.



Photo By Kelly Hill/New Jersey Herald

Ugwuoke talks about a close call with death in an African village where an angry mob with machetes surrounded a house he was staying in.

Faith

Continued from Page C1

station, and 1,000 came to Christ. The police said, "We've never seen this before. Will you come back?" The next night, double the number same, and 2,000 received Christ.

Q: You talk about outreach to people. How do you do that?

A: In Nigeria, the typical way is to survey an area that has no church and very few Christians. We go village to village, ones with 2,000 to 5,000 people.

The staff will go to the traditional kings, chiefs, the ones recognized by their people as the leader. If they know what we are doing, they will protect us. They will mobilize the community by spreading information about our work.

When we get to the chief, we tell the chief about the "Jesus"

film: This is the time for his community to benefit from it. It's a good thing, and he (Jesus in the film) speaks in your language ... Some chiefs demand a bribe, which we don't pay...

They often ask, "What do you want?" We only want people to be aware of it... Our goal is to plant a church (in the village).

Q: How difficult is that?

A: Nigeria has 500 languages, not dialects but languages.

Q: You mention the "Jesus" film?

A: It's a movie about the life of Jesus translated into the languages of the people.

Q: Some places you've run into danger?

A: One place, Iggah, was very idolatrous. I had never seen people worship idols like this. In every household, the father had a god, a

wooden figure with a small house for it.

The mother had a god, the children had gods ... There was no church at all.

The first time we went in we met with the chief, and he said, "You're free to do whatever you want."

We spent three days showing the film, and nobody came out, not even a child, unlike any other place. Usually just the generator with a florescent bulb is enough to attract a crowd. But there, not even a child out of curiosity. For three days we prayed. This is just not ordinary.

On the fourth day at the showing of the film, I said (aloud in the empty street of the village), "You will not claim that you have not heard the Gospel of Christ."

Then I saw someone walking down the street. It was the chief. He said, "I have heard everything you have had to say, and I came to give my life to Christ." ... Within 15 minutes people were running to us from all directions ... In 30 minutes, the whole village was there.

It was the first time for me seeing miracles. I was praying, not even praying for healing but just for the people, and a 21-year-old man started seeing. He came to me and told me, "When you were praying, my eyeballs just popped."

We had such a good experience in this village, and we were about to plant a church. But for two months we didn't go. I learned that you must follow up within 24 to 48 hours.

The community became a totally different one.

When we went back, 300 young men surrounded us. They came with whips and machetes. They started flogging us and said we must leave.

I asked, "What is the reason?" They said, "This is the man who destroyed our gods."

The following day we went back and went to the chief. He summoned the community by beating on a gong to call a meeting and asked for the ringleader and said they had offended the law of the land and invited us into the village.

The chief told us to stay with him and pass the night at his house.

But then things got worse. That night an angry mob surrounded the chief's house and said we must die, from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m.

We were praying and singing to God. At 6 a.m., there was finally no noise, so we said we (would) go.



Ugwuoke folds his hands as he tells of his missionary work.

Q: What brought you to America?

A: The only way to come to America is to file for immigration. And if we file in Nigeria, the wait is much longer ...

The law in the United States helps to unite families, so if we file they advise us to separate.

(Wife Rawn) was pregnant, so she came here in September 2005 to give birth here.

She was with her mother in California, then after the birth (of the couple's daughter) she went to stay with her father in

Boston. Then when I came, we stayed in Newark.

Q: What brought you to Sparta?

A: We had friends in Sparta ... Coupled with that Rawn (was) pregnant (and gave birth in January to the couple's second child, a son).

We will get the papers (birth certificate and passport) for the baby and complete our fundraising.

Then we will go to Gambia in West Africa.

LOOKING UP AS RATES GO DOWN MATTERS.

CHASE HOME EQUITY LINE OF CREDIT
With our new 0.75% rate cut, it's the perfect time to consolidate your bills into one low monthly payment.¹

To Apply:
Call 1-800-800-LOAN
Stop by a branch
Visit Chase.com

CHASE WHAT MATTERSSM

NEW LOWER RATES:

VARIABLE RATES AS LOW AS
5.49% APR²
PRIME MINUS 1.01%
FOR QUALIFYING LINES

- Great low rates
- Free to apply
- Credit decision in minutes
- Interest may be tax deductible³



Subject to credit and property approval. Program terms and conditions are subject to change at any time without notice. Not all products are available in all states or for all amounts. Other restrictions and limitations apply. Property insurance is required; collateral in special flood hazards areas requires flood insurance.
¹ Since a home equity line may have a longer term than bills being consolidated, you may not realize savings over the entire term of your new line. Federally Guaranteed Student Loans should not be consolidated because you will lose important federal benefits.
² The Best Rate Line of Credit features variable rates based on the Prime Rate (as published in *The Wall Street Journal*) which, as of 1/24/08, range from 5.99% APR to 8.30% APR for line amounts of \$50,000 up to \$149,999 and from 5.49% APR to 7.79% APR for line amounts of \$150,000 to \$500,000. Stated rate ranges require an 80% or less combined-loan-to-value (CLTV) ratio and apply to lines secured by CT, IL, MI or NJ owner-occupied collateral. Please call about rates on lines below \$50,000 and above \$500,000, for lines with a CLTV above 80%, and for lines secured by collateral located outside of CT, IL, MI or NJ. Advertised rates include a 25% rate discount which requires a new or existing Chase checking account, is good only on new home equity lines, and cannot be combined with any other offer. Lifetime APR will not exceed 21%. The product requires an Origination Fee of \$399, which may be financed. Borrower is responsible for a \$50 annual fee after the first year. If you close your line of credit within 36 months of the date upon which it is opened, you will be required to pay an early account closure fee, equal to the lesser of 1% of the line amount, or \$400. Purchase money lines are excluded from this offer.
³ If your line exceeds fair market value of the property, the interest may not be tax deductible. Consult your tax advisor regarding the deductibility of interest.
Deposit products provided by JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. Member FDIC. © 2008 JPMorgan Chase & Co.

YESTERYEAR KITCHEN & BATH
Where Customer Service is our main priority.

Family Owned & Operated Since 1969

Wood-Mode FINE CUSTOM CABINETS | BROOKHAVEN CABINETS | Candlelight Cabinetry

Call for an appointment NKBA Member

414 Route 94 • Newton, New Jersey 07860
Tel: 973•383•1919 • Fax: 973•383•1142 • yesteryearkitchens.com

Big Brothers Big Sisters
Little Moments. Big Magic.SM

Spending a few hours a month with a child simply having fun can have a powerful positive impact on his life and enrich yours at the same time!
**BECOME A MENTOR
MAKE A FRIEND!**

be a part of something Big

Volunteer or donate to Big Brothers Big Sisters throughout New Jersey!

1.888.412.BIGS (2447) / www.bbbsa.org

Death toll in Kenya reaches 25

By ELIZABETH A. KENNEDY
Associated Press Writer

NAKURU, Kenya — Men sobbed as police unloaded 16 charred bodies at a mortuary in this western Kenyan city. People with machete and arrow wounds overwhelmed the main hospital and were forced to share beds. Hundreds of homeless took shelter at a church.

And even as Nakuru struggled to recover from an explosion of political violence, there were signs Saturday that it was far from over. Those whose homes were burned vowed revenge. Gunshots rang out, and youths with sticks manned roadblocks.

At least 25 people were killed when the turmoil over Kenya's deeply flawed presidential election finally reached Nakuru, the country's fourth-largest city that had largely been spared the unrest. Men fought street battles with homemade guns, machetes and bow and arrows, while mobs torched hundreds of homes.

At the city mortuary, police wearing rubber gloves unloaded 16 burned bodies. Men standing by broke down in tears.

"I have never experienced this in my country," one man said, his face marked with grief. "I just pray that our leaders end this thing immediately."

Riots and ethnic fighting following the Dec. 27 vote have killed more than 700 people nationwide and forced 255,000 from their homes.

Much of the violence has pitted ethnic groups who support the opposition against President Mwai Kibaki's Kikuyu tribe, long dominant in Kenyan politics and the economy. Opposition leader Raila Odinga accuses Kibaki of stealing the election, and local and foreign observers have said the vote tally was rigged.

Kibaki and Odinga remain far apart on the question of who won the election. Both men are under international pressure to find a way to share power.