



# *buzz*

## **We are Deepening the River of God's People in Africa**

—by Alphonse Godonou, retired Benin Bible Institute Professor



“We can do nothing but give glory to God for what has happened at the Benin Bible Institute (BBI) in the past few years. What began as a small seed has grown into an enormous tree.

The prophet Hosea in Old Testament times said that the destruction of God's people will come through lack of knowledge. It has often been said that the spirituality and biblical knowledge of the rapidly growing church in Africa is like a river “one mile wide and one inch deep.” That was true in Benin for many years and would still be true without the important ministry of the BBI which grew up as a collaborative effort between the Mennonites and the church leaders of the many denominations here in Benin.

The most important thing that Mennonites did many decades ago was refuse to found their own church and instead give themselves to training the hundreds of church leaders who were already leading here in Benin, but who had virtually no

biblical formation. Today we see the result of that incredible commitment to building up the people of God across denominational boundaries.

I myself am a fruit of that important initiative, first as a student in the very first graduating class at BBI, and now for many years as the director of the systematic Bible training program. Who would ever have believed that such a thing would happen? I can only thank God for his blessings in giving me the opportunity to serve the church in this important way. We are deepening the river of God's people in Africa for many generations to come!”

(Citation from Unless a Grain of Wheat, pp.30-31, eds. Thomas Oduro, Jonathan Larson and James Krabill, Langham Global Library, 2021)

*Commentary: Alphonse Godonou visited Waterford Mennonite Church in 2009. We at Waterford continue a partnership with Benin Bible Institute, which began in 2003, through annual exchange visits (currently on hold because of COVID-19), mutual sharing of prayer requests, and financial contributions both to BBI's operating budget (through Mennonite Mission Network) and to the BBI New Generation Scholarship Fund, which supports further training for a new generation of professors.*

—submitted by Rod Hollinger-Janzen

## Transition Update

### Waterford Pastoral Transition Update

Your Ministry Leadership Council (MLC) met on Monday night and are blessed with consensus as we discern our transition plan. Marty Lehman, our Congregational Coach, continues to meet with us. Here is what we can share this week.

On December 4, MLC met individually with each pastor to listen to their experience, their dreams, and their concerns as they anticipate the changes ahead. Thank you to MLC members for giving much of their Saturday to these meetings; the perspectives of our pastors are essential in our planning.

The committee planning the recognition and celebration of Pastor Neil and Janette and their 17 years at Waterford is open to ideas. Lorraine Reinford is leading this planning. Feel free to give her a call.

We will celebrate Neil and Janette's 17 years at Waterford on January 30. Sharon Yoder (conference minister) will be our preacher and Nurture Hour will be a farewell celebration. More information to come.

We are grateful for the ways Pastor Neil has influenced our congregation over these last 17 years: Our relationships with Benin Bible Institute and Ecuador Two-Way Mission; Our awareness of peace and justice issues, including immigration; Fostering a collaborative pastoral team environment with our other gifted pastors. What other ways do you think of?

Our next MLC meeting is scheduled for January 4. We continue to welcome your input and your prayers as we discern direction for the future.

—Rachel Stoltzfus, for MLC

## Finances

### WMC Giving

As we approach the end of 2021, FFMT encourages you to consider Waterford in your year-end giving plans. The ministries that WMC supports both internally and externally can use your support. Thank you as always for your ongoing generosity to the ministries at Waterford.

—Facilities and Finance Ministry Team

#### Waterford

##### Mennonite Church

65975 State Road 15

Goshen, IN 46526

phone: 574 533-5642

fax: 574 533-0879

office@waterfordchurch.org

www.waterfordchurch.org

#### Staff Team

##### Administrative Ministry

· Karen Hostetler

*Secretary*

· Elvina Schmidt

*Bookkeeper*

· Janet Shoemaker

*Coordinator of Administrative Ministries*

· JD Smucker

*Worship Coordinator*

##### Facilities Ministry

· Jan Oostland

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*Pastoral Team Leader*

· Katie Misz

*Pastor of Family Life*

· Deron Brill Bergstresser

*Pastor of Senior Ministries*

· Cindy Voth

*Pastor of Community Life*

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Janet Shoemaker,  
Interim editor  
buzz@waterfordchurch.org

