

Engaging

Equipping for mission today

REACH
Renewing, Engaging
and Advocating Churches

Session 2

The Bench Under the Mango Tree: A Story from Ghana

Gary Luallin

Come, walk beside me and we will go to sit together in the shade under the Mango tree.

There is a Greek word that occurs in various forms 142 times in the New Testament: parakaleo (par-ak-al-eh-o). This word literally means to “call to one’s side.” The word picture is that of two people walking or sitting together. It is translated in various ways: call, comfort, exhort, entreat, but my favorite is “encourage.” The idea of helping someone overcome a lack of courage or fear in order to accomplish something is what encouragement is all about. How many times have you found you could rise to an occasion of doing something that seems daunting because someone said “I’ll go with you?”

There are several large Mango trees on the seminary campus here and many have these nice stone/cement benches under them where groups of people can sit in the refreshing shade. When I moved up the hill into one of the older missionary houses, I found this nice rectangular stone that I made into a bench under the Mango tree that sits by the house. It looked nice. Recently, however, I dismantled it because I realized that I have rarely sat there in all of my time in Africa. It was only big enough for one person. I sit on the other benches a lot, talking and laughing, encouraging and being encouraged.

Presence. It is not possible to call someone to your side if you are not present. Our presence together with partners is so important for the purpose of giving each other courage. Often simply having one another, side by side, gives us courage and makes ministry happen.



Gary Luallin, a member of Southside Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Jacksonville, Florida, serves with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, as a university professor at the Peki Seminary. His appointment is made possible by your gifts to Disciples' Mission Fund, Our Church's Wider Mission, and your special gifts.