

January 2008 — CALL TO PRAYER — Andrea Herman

“Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens.” (Psalm 68:19)

The beginning of 2008 has felt rather burdensome to me. Guinea was once again gearing up for a national strike, scheduled for Jan 10. The strike was postponed only hours before it was scheduled to begin, but after I had already made the all too familiar trip to Bamako, to wait out the trouble. Three of my closest friends here have moved away this month (which literally cuts the number of close friends I have here in half). My language helper may be getting a government job, which may mean she can no longer be my language helper. Also, there are now rumors that the strike that was officially postponed until March 31 might happen a lot sooner, like mid-February. The horrible post-election violence in Kenya is a reminder of how quickly things can deteriorate, even in a “stable” country. Those are just a few of the challenging things that I have encountered in the last month. Praise God that He is with all of us in our struggles and that He is the one shouldering the burden so we aren’t crushed by the weight of our problems and discouragements.

God is still busy working in hearts and lives here, and seeing His work also brings encouragement and hope for good things to come. We’ve had visits this month from Delano and Linda Meyer, agricultural missionaries, based in Sierra Leone. They came to teach some of our church leaders about how we can care for God’s creation, and better feed our families by properly caring for the soil. I thoroughly enjoyed the seminar and appreciated how the Meyer’s expertise helped us deal holistically with practical issues, based on spiritual principles. They also provided a valuable real life example of how a husband and wife serving and working together as a team can be a blessing to each other and those with whom they are working. The concept of “teamwork” in marriage in among the Maninka has yet to be discovered.

Another exciting development this month is that we have started radio broadcasts IN MANINKA, on the local radio station. The radio station is legally required to give the Christians a 20 minute slot on the radio each week, for free! They do the same for the Muslims, but until this month our time wasn’t being used. Several believers have volunteered to do the monologue of what is basically “Chronological Bible Storying,” along with a few minutes of health education for each broadcast. I am only involved in the technological side of things, providing the digital recorder and computer program to edit the recordings, but I’m excited to be even a tiny part of such a valuable ministry. There are other Christian programs that are played on the radio, but as far as we know, they are all in French (which is not widely spoken or understood in our region). So, having a radio outreach in Maninka is a huge blessing with amazing potential because most people have radios and enjoy listening to them often. Please pray that God would open hearts to the truth of His Word, and that these programs would be for His glory.

The family that was formerly living at my place (July-October) just moved back earlier this month, now with a healthy newborn (Ibrehim). Abou (the father) is a very effective evangelist, and has done a great job of witnessing to anyone who comes for a visit. Their stay will only be temporary, as they have bought some land and are building their own place out where they can also do a little farming. However, my landlord doesn’t want them here at all, even as a temporary arrangement. Please pray that he will be merciful and allow them to stay until they’re able to finish construction on their house, and that this situation would not harm my relationship with the landlord (housing is VERY difficult to come by here).

There is a large extended family in town that I believe God is specifically preparing to come to faith in Him. God has brought various members of this family into my colleagues' life for several years, and now also mine. Those in the family that I know well are quite devout in their practice of Islam. However, it often seems that those who are serious about their current belief system tend to be the ones who are the most sincere when they hear the truth of God's word, and follow His Son, Jesus because they are serious about seeking God. When they finally find what they've been looking for, they don't let it go easily. Please keep the "S" family in your prayers. May God continue to give us occasions to understand their specific spiritual needs, so that we can shine God's word of hope into the injured places in their hearts and lives.

Please join me in thanking God for:

- the new weekly Christian radio broadcasts in Maninka!
- the blessing of starting a weekly Bible study with Heidi Norton
- a few of my friends opening up and sharing their hearts with me
- visits from the Meyers and Pastor Camara from Mali & the blessing of their fellowship, encouragement, and partnership in the Gospel
- a good month of language learning
- averting the strike in January
- making it through my first year in Guinea, by God's grace

Please join me in asking God to provide:

- wisdom and the right words (Maninka and/or French) to share God's word , which is the only thing that can heal the hurts of my friends here
- a long lasting peace in Guinea (a permanent solution to quell the cause of all the unrest)
- spiritual renewal and refreshment
- His blessing on my ability to comprehend and speak the language
- wisdom about when to go to the village, and how long to stay
- grace for the hot season which is just starting
- water in my well (it's almost dry and the rains won't come for another 4-5 months)
- a productive language learning schedule
- God's peace, protection and forgiveness as a friend leaves her life here because after 5 years of being gone from his family, her husband has come for her & their 4 kids. They have to move out to his village, far out of town and away from her family & friends.
- deepening of relationships with a few of my acquaintances so that friendships can grow
- an end to the violence in Kenya and reconciliation between the tribal factions
- wisdom for those who are responsible for deciding what to do about our all-Africa conference that is scheduled for mid-March, in Kenya

Andrea