

December was a very eventful month, perhaps that's why it's taken me until January 11 to write a newsletter!! Belated New Year's greetings to everyone. Our month started with an occasion of great joy as K.B., the man I wrote about in the last two newsletters, was baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, and new life in Him. Following his baptism, K.B. visited our friends and colleagues in God's mission in Bamako, Mali. Our friend, Musa Traore, was his host and guided him with some practical teaching about his new life in Christ. K.B. came back strengthened and enthusiastic about prayer, worship and sharing the forgiveness of sins, offered by Jesus, with others.

We also went to Bamako, Mali early in the month to meet with our colleagues Tim and Beth Heiney. We had some time for prayer and Bible study, and also discussed about their possible move to Bamako. Our mission leadership has suggested this to the Heiney family, and since we were familiar with the area we showed them around. They are still considering whether or not to move, but now have more information to make a decision.

During our time in Bamako we also met up with Heidi's parents, Tom & Denise Muhly, who flew in for a visit. They spent the holidays with us and enjoyed time with the grandchildren, as well as learning what our life is like and seeing some of the things that go on with the ministry. One of the highlights was that during their visit K.B.'s wife (one of three) gave birth to a son. K.B. gave him the name of Thomas, and he was baptized on December 30. Tom & Denise visited K.B.'s village (Tom came twice) and saw some of what life is like for him. The cost of transportation has risen recently and K.B. also sees a real need to raise his family in the faith. Since there is also another believer in a village about 5 kilometers away from his own home, K.B. decided that he would start worshipping at home rather than make the 30 kilometer journey to town each Sunday. We're praying that this will not only strengthen his own faith, but become a strong outreach to his community.

On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day we had many visitors, quite a few of whom were not believers. Most all of K.B.'s children came which nearly doubled the size of our small fellowship. We were grateful for this opportunity to share the gospel, and we pray that the seeds planted may one day bear fruit. Immediately after Christmas we started working on radio broadcasts. . . The local radio station by law must give 20 minutes each week to different confessions (Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim) for religious broadcasting. The time was sitting vacant save for the Muslim slot. We encouraged our Catholic brothers to make use of the time. At first we hoped we could do something in collaboration with them, using the same method of evangelism we have in the villages (chronological Bible storying). It seems that they prefer a different style, but we did at least share ideas and materials. Missionary Dale Ramsey, who serves with Ripe for the Harvest, prepared the lessons, and evangelist Sacko Koulibaly and I worked together to make a readable broadcast, that would capture the attention of Maninka listeners. Sacko then recorded the lessons we had prepared. We worked hard to get five lessons recorded before December 31. There was no new year's deadline, but Sacko Koulibaly had been accepted into a Bible school in Mali, and the start of classes was the 3rd of January. He left with his wife and young daughter on January 1. The place is quite far (about a 12 hour train ride from Bamako) but our friends there tell us he arrived fine, and his presence is a blessing on campus. The first radio broadcast went on air the 5th of January. We're praying that many people who otherwise would not give us a hearing, will be able to hear and believe the Word of God.

We said goodbye to Heidi's parents on the 8th of January, and are looking forward to a full month ahead. We are having visits from Delano and Linda Meyer, agricultural missionaries who have visited the past three years. They will be following up on their teaching of soil improvement, and managing the resources God has given each individual. Another visitor is Pastor Samuel Camara from a Maninka town in Mali. Pastor Camara has gone through intense persecution, but continues to be a leader who shines the light of Christ in his life. He will be teaching our believers about Christian family life, and helping with evangelism in the villages where we've started work.

While much of what happened last month we can rejoice in, there have also been serious trials. One of our young believers went to Kankan to participate in an evangelistic program there, and receive training in operating film equipment in order to show the Jesus film. Unfortunately he was caught in adultery while he was there, and instead of asking forgiveness, he insisted that he was falsely accused (more than one person witnessed inappropriate behavior on more than one occasion). K.B., while seeming to take great strides in his faith, showed that he has much to learn about God's role for him as a Christian husband and father. Also early this month, there were rumblings of another nationwide strike. Two dates for this past week were proposed, but last minute negotiations won out. The threat still hangs over the country because the civilians are not happy with the way the president makes decisions, the new deadline we've heard is March 15. We pray that by then things will have worked out.

In all of these things good and bad, we rejoice that God has allowed us to continue to serve here. It is all through the financial and prayer support of you, our partners in this ministry. Please lift these things to the throne of grace with us:

- ◆ Join us in thanking and praising God for the new birth in the waters of baptism of "K.B." on December 2nd. Pray that God would sustain him in his faith, and give him courage to use the many gifts the LORD has given him. Pray also for his son Thomas baptized on December 30, that God would give many people who will instruct him in the faith.
- ◆ Pray that K.B.'s desire to worship in his village would bear fruit, and be a blessing to his family and the community.
- ◆ Thanksgiving and praise for the commencement of our radio evangelism program. That it would be a blessing to the hearers, and by hearing they would believe.
- ◆ Pray for evangelist Sacko Koulibaly and his studies in the Bible school in Mali; we are excited by opportunities for further training. Pray that he would learn not only book knowledge but would grow in his walk with the Lord.
- ◆ Pray for "A.S." a believer who was baptized in early 2006 but has fallen into sin, and refuses to repent. This has caused a lot of heartache and trouble, but we pray that God can also turn him back in repentance.
- ◆ Pray for the visits of Samuel Camara and Delano & Linda Meyer, that what they have to teach would meet with receptive ears and minds.
- ◆ Pray for stability in Guinea, and for good governance for the people.

In Christ,  
Tim, Heidi, Philip & Leslie Norton  
LCMS World Mission  
Guinea, West Africa