

Happy Easter!

NEW BEGINNINGS

“Praise be to the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you.” 1 Peter 1:3-4

As we celebrate the new life we have this Easter, we remember that this gift that has given us freedom from fear and death was a costly gift. We have all made mistakes. We have all hurt our friends, family and neighbors, whether intentionally or not. God knows every sin of every person we have ever done or ever will do. Despite our disobedience, God intervened and saved us from the eternal punishment we deserve.

God sent the only perfect sacrifice, His Son, Jesus, to pay the price that none of us could pay. Jesus gave up His perfect life as an act of obedience and sacrifice so that we would not be forever separated from God because of our sin. Jesus’ innocent blood saved us because he paid what we owed, but could never pay. As God’s children, He loved us so much that He wanted to give us a way out from what should have been our punishment. The gift that cost Jesus everything, is freely offered to us. We celebrate the greatest gift we could ever receive this and every Easter and we rejoice that through Jesus’ death and resurrection He conquered death to give us life. This gift is freely given to all who believe this promise. What a loving and merciful God!

A FRESH START IN GUINEA

So much has happened since my last newsletter! The Norton family and I drove back to Guinea (from Bamako, Mali where we were waiting out the unrest) March 9 without any problems. Thank you for your prayers! The Nortons graciously hosted me in their home in Siguiri until my house was ready for me to move in. I’ve been in my house now for a few weeks. We’re still getting some of the kinks worked out, like getting a reliable water source, but that is all in progress and we have other temporary solutions in the meantime.

Though it was certainly exciting to move into my new house, it has also been encouraging to see the new developments in Guinea. The new Prime Minister that was named to reshape the government of Guinea has taken bold steps to put Guinea on the right track. All previous government ministers were fired, and he also eliminated over 10 ministerial positions. The Prime Minister has named the new government ministers and the President appears to be allowing all of these changes, even though they are quite drastic. The prices of some basic goods have been reduced and people seem content and hopeful that these recent changes will bring more good things in the future. I am hopeful as well. Please pray that peace and positive changes in Guinea continue.

We had a quick visit from my boss and a few other colleagues at the end of March. Paul Mueller, the Area Director for Africa (who I also worked for at Concordia University, St. Paul), Paul’s wife Joy, who is the Project Management Director for Africa, and the new Regional Director for French-speaking West Africa, Fred Reinhardt. They just got a little taste of Siguiri, but it was great to visit with them while they were here. I got to drive them up to the airport in Bamako, Mali at the end of their visit. I was a little nervous doing the border crossing since Maninka is the preferred language to use and I have virtually no Maninka language skills. However, God is merciful and we made it through all 5 stops at the border with no bribes demanded or other sorts of hassling, and we made it through in record time. Actually, the 2 requests I got were a prayer request (that a guy would get a promotion) and a request for a New Testament. Glad they’re keeping things on a spiritual level! On the way back through to Guinea it went even faster, again, with no hassling. God knew I needed a good first run through to feel good about making future trips alone. It is no longer something which I dread, which is a great blessing.

Now that I am back in Guinea, job #1 is language learning. I’ve been hanging out with some of the market ladies for the last week to try to be in an environment where a lot of Maninka is spoken; this will help me develop a vocabulary. The idea is to attempt to learn how children learn—first by listening. However, since

greetings are SO important here, I'm not allowed to only listen. There are always questions by the passers by, so I am obligated to try to talk more than I would like at this stage. However, since I can't understand most questions other than "What is your name?" our conversations aren't usually very long, which allows me to go back to listening. The women enjoy teasing me, but always rejoice with me when I learn a new word, so God is providing encouragement through them on the language learning front.

Just last night I met a woman who might be my language helper, her name is Natalie. We met very briefly, and though she seems nice, I'm not sure she has the patience to work with me on language, though it is difficult to say because I met her in a group. Please pray that either God would enable her to be patient with me or that He would provide another French speaking woman with whom I can work on language.

There are other Guineans who I work with on a daily basis, or see often: Yaya, Fanta, Abu, Sekou (Say-ku) & Daye. Please keep these folks in your prayers. Several of them have had relatives die in the past week or two. It is always sad to lose a loved one. However, knowing that their loved ones died without knowing about the eternal life that Jesus offers freely through His death and resurrection grieves me too. Please pray that these friends would understand the free gift we celebrate each Easter and that they would someday celebrate that gift with us.

My apologies for the "plain" newsletter this month. Since this will be the first newsletter I send from our satellite modem, I want to make sure the file isn't too big to send. If all goes well, hopefully next month will be the more graphically pleasing edition once again.

Please join me in thanking God for:

- the gift of His precious Son, Jesus, and the eternal life in heaven I have as a result
- a safe return to Guinea and peace in Siguiri
- being able to move into my new house
- friendly market ladies that are trying to help me learn their language
- the Nortons hospitality
- a problem-free border crossing (both ways!)

Please join me in praying for:

- continued peace and stability in Guinea during these governmental changes
- my well to be deepened so I can have water year-round (it's dry/hot season now)
- the leaky pipe under my house to be fixed so that when city water comes, it doesn't get wasted
- that Natalie would work out well as a language helper and have patience with my limited vocabulary
- a quick fix for my computer battery problem
- healing from a sinus infection
- lots of energy and motivation for language learning in spite of the oppressive heat
- for my actions to be a strong witness of the love of Jesus to those around me

May God grant us the willingness to love others in the same way He loved us, that we may give sacrificially in order to share with someone the hope and the life we have in Christ Jesus.

Resting in God's grace,
Andrea

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