

Dear Friends in Christ,

Norton Newsletter, April 2007

Jesus Christ is risen today! Alleluia! Our triumphant Holy Day! Alleluia!

Although Easter is more than a week and a half past we experience the resurrection joy every day. Truly we have many things to rejoice about in Guinea. After our departure in February due to the strike and severe unrest we were able to come back on March 9. I wrote just before we returned from Bamako because I knew that once we hit the ground here, there would be quite a lot of things to keep me occupied. Although I can't honestly report that things went wonderfully here for the believers while the strike was going on and we were absent, I can at least say that the people who had started a faith journey here are continuing on that path.

You may recall that in my February letter I mentioned 7 people were baptized on Christmas Day and I expressed concern for what would happen to them. Although times have been hard, and growth in faith has been difficult for them (with no one to teach or lead them) they have at least clung on to what they professed publicly on Christmas Day. We would've liked to have seen all of them participate in a camp for Maninka believers that was held in Mali at the end of March, but because we weren't able to give them sufficient advance notice, only one person from that place attended.

Even so the camp was a great blessing to him as well as the two other people from Siguiri who participated. They came back filled with excitement after worshipping with more than 200 other Maninka men & women who have also left the slavery and hopelessness of Islam for the liberty and joy which is found in Jesus. The teaching they received blessed and encouraged them, but getting to know other Christians from their own background was an even bigger eye opener for them. Many of the believers came from villages where they are the only one who has confessed Christ. Still they hold to the faith, and not only that, share it with others. Our small group was asking whether or not we could organize such a camp here in Guinea one day as well. The Malians said they would be very keen on attending should that come about.

While the camp was taking place we had a visit from our Area Director, Rev. Paul Mueller, his wife Joy, our Africa project manager, and our new Area Facilitator, Rev. Fred Reinhardt. They could only stay a couple of days, but we did enjoy a good chance to chat with one other, share strategies, goals, and they answered our many questions. Soon after they left, I went to visit village "L" where the seven new believers live. While I did not see all seven of them (some had left town to visit family, and another had moved), the ones who were there were still holding on. They are interested in starting evangelism all around the area, but realize that they would like a little more training before they themselves engage in it. We visited three of the villages that have invited us to come and teach and basically had to tell them, "please be patient, we'll come as soon as we can". They all seemed to understand, but while we visited we also took the chance to bring up topics for reflection centered around Jesus.

After the camp, Sacko, the evangelist who had first taught in village "L" said that he would like to move out there with his family for three months, so that the people in that place can be taught and firmly grounded in what they believe. St. Paul said "I am not ashamed because I know whom I believe". (2 Tim 1:12). Many people would like to shame these young men because of what they believe; by knowing more, we hope and pray that they will trust their Savior more. We pray that they will learn to experience the resurrection joy daily, by knowing the One who has risen.

Please pray with us:

- Thanksgiving that we were able to return to Guinea, and for positive steps on the path to stability. There were many days we feared we would never be able to continue our work here!
- For Evangelist Sacko Koulibaly and his three month stay in village "L", that he will be able to train three of the men who want to be teachers, and that all of them (those in training and those not) will trust more and learn more of their LORD.
- For the villages where we have standing invitations for evangelism, that the Holy Spirit would open their ears and hearts to the message of salvation found in no other name but Jesus'.
- Thanksgiving for the camp for Maninka believers held in Mali last month and what an encouragement it was to those who participated.
- For Mr. Abduramane Sano, an evangelist originally from Mali but living now in Kankan, who is hoping to move here to Siguiro to assist us in our work here.

In His resurrection joy,

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