

Dear Friends in Christ,

Norton Newsletter, September 2006

In trying to relate an experience that we have had this month my mind reaches for all kinds of superlatives. Extraordinary, eternally significant, rewarding, fulfilling, are just some of the adjectives I might use to describe the baptism of one of our students this week. This isn't the first baptism we've had here, so why should this one be so much more significant than the others? In point of fact, the surroundings were less than perfect. For reasons of persecution the baptism took place in a house on a Monday rather than during a Sunday morning worship service. One of the main leaders in training here was not able to be present because of an illness in his family. Still, what made this baptism so special to me was the culmination of witness and love that was represented.

To be sure, the main actor in this event was the LORD. It was He who called this soul out of darkness, and who worked faith in his heart. It was He who was cleansing the candidate from sin, and claiming him as His very own child. Nevertheless God used many people in many different places to bring this event about. Of course our local leader in training, Sacko Koulibaly, was one of the first and most persistent people witnessing to "S".

Sacko has spent countless hours explaining, persuading, and demonstrating the love of Christ to "S". Another person far across the ocean who played a great part in witnessing to our friend was Jack Carlos. Jack is a Director of Christian Outreach at Mt. Zion Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, MN. He came to Guinea earlier this year and spent some time with "S". Afterwards, he wrote him encouraging and challenging letters concerning the blessings of following Jesus and the consequences of rejecting him. Yet another who had no small role in announcing the gospel to "S" was Moussa Traore, a leader of a Lutheran church in Bamako, Mali who has made three visits here, but each one very powerful.

The service took place in the home of one of the new believers here, who is now an invalid because of a paralyzing illness. Nevertheless, he participated in the baptism as well, giving some very encouraging words to "S" which I'm sure will not soon be forgotten. God is still in the business of working miracles!

We rejoiced also at the end of last month to have a visit from Jon & Julie Muhly, Heidi's brother & sister-in-law, and their son David, who are serving as missionaries in Russia. They spent two weeks with us and we enjoyed great fellowship. Jon also went with me to a village 150 kms west of here where we have received an invitation to do evangelism and literacy training. It took us 8 hours to get there since the road was in such fine condition because of the rains! In any case, the time was quite good and plans were made to send an evangelist there for a month. They had to arrange some housing for the evangelist, who will go to spend a month with them, but now that is taken care of and he will be leaving in the next few days.

This happens to be one of the worst times of the year for people around here. The harvest is not yet in and last year's is either gone or dwindling. The rain brings mosquitos and with them illnesses. Lots of people have been affected but God is also using these hardships to draw people to him. One of our long-time acquaintances was recently evacuated to Bamako. The Christian friend from Bamako, whom I mentioned earlier (Moussa Traore) is helping him to get treatment and had the people in his church lay hands on and pray for the healing of our friend. He is hearing the gospel in word and deed, may God make it fruitful!

Please join us in praying for the following:

- Thank God for the baptism of "S" and his new life in Christ, that he may continue to walk the narrow road, and be a witness of God's saving grace.
- The evangelism in village "L" taking place all during the month of September, that God will open people's heart's and minds, and work faith through the hearing of his Word.
- For our friend "M" who was evacuated to Bamako, that God may heal him physically but also give him spiritual rebirth.

Thanks for your continued support.

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