

Norton Newsletter, December 2005

Dear Friends and Family,

"I bring to you good news of great joy that will be for all people." (Luke 2:10) The good news is the same today, yesterday, and forever and continues to go out here in Guinea.

As we celebrate this season of joy we give thanks for what God has done in the lives of the believers here. We're continuing with our weekly meetings of discipleship and leadership development. Despite pressures from their families and neighbors, the Maninka believers are still coming regularly. The two people taking the baptism course have completed it and are entering final preparations for baptism in the coming weeks.

One of the greatest joys of this work is to see how God changes people's lives so much that they want others to share this joy. Many times in Africa for whatever reason the relationship that has developed between the missionary and the believer is that of employee and employer rather than the partners in the gospel that Scripture talks about. What a joy it was for me then to "catch" one of our main leaders sharing the gospel with his friend. They were already heavily engaged in the conversation by the time I arrived on the scene and our leader was sharing freely with a childhood friend how they had gone through a lot together, and they had seen the errors of their ways when they went astray, now it was time for them "to seek God together." Our leader was not trying to impress or fulfilling an obligation, rather he was genuinely sharing what had changed his life much like the Samaritan woman that Jesus encountered in John 4.

Another cause for rejoicing was that the fellowship that meets here in town organized itself to rent its own place of worship. All of this was done through the local people giving of themselves and their own resources. They also made an altar and benches. Indeed it was a small miracle because the carpenter who made them (an elder in the fellowship) was sick with what was probably hepatitis, but he still managed to complete them in a relatively short time.

Earlier this month my colleague Jon Oetting and I also went down to the forest region of Guinea for a meeting with our colleagues. Our team grew, with the Heiney family returning to the field after a couple of years in the U.S. We had an impromptu meeting with the two vicars recently returned from Togo and the president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Guinea. They expressed an eagerness to hear about our evangelistic endeavors in a systematic manner including reports. We are very thankful for the leadership of these men, and for their partnership in sharing the gospel among the Maninka.

In all of the hustle and preparations and celebrations of our Lord's birth, take time to thank Him for all his wonders, especially for giving good news of great joy for all people.

In Christ,

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