



Greetings in the name of Christ, to you, our Global Mission partners and sponsors.

Here in Senegal, greetings are perhaps the most important social interaction. The care with which you greet someone shows that you respect them, and that you honor them as a fellow child of God. The greetings are highly ritualized, and well-rehearsed. However, rather than being rote, your ability to participate in these ritualized greetings reveals the depth of your appreciation to be with them at that moment. I have always loved the experience of these warm greetings, and the repetition of peace, or “Jamm” in Wolof. However, there was always one response that puzzled me.



When asked about life, the response is, “Mangi fi,” which means, “I am here.” At the debut of our life and ministry in Senegal, I always thought, that seems a bit truncated. There is so much to say about life, and it always felt so understated to simply reply, “Well, I’m here.” I always wanted to say more. But trying to be a good missionary, I trained myself to reply simply and respectfully, “Mangi fi.” “I am here.”

The Return

Well friends, after our medical evacuation to the US, Natalie’s battle with cancer, the struggle to come to terms with suffering, a life turned upside down for a long season, and the miracle that is healing, we have returned to our life and ministry in Senegal. Each time that we reconnect with parishes, ministries and friends, we start with that familiar ritual greeting, “Mangi fi.” “I’m here.” But now I understand that this is no understatement. This is no truncated response. I appreciate now the depth of this simple Wolof phrase, “Mangi fi.” Because thanks be to God, we are here.

Thanks be to God for Natalie’s health that makes it all possible to be here. Thanks be to God for your care, support, and prayers that contributed to our season of healing. Thanks be to God for your partnership in our Global Mission that helps make this ministry in Senegal possible. Because simply being here allows everything else to be possible. Being here embodies the communion of the global Church. Being here forms relationships in which the Holy Spirit can inspire and enliven a ministry. Being here incarnates solidarity in a radical way that gives comfort and the hope of the Gospel. And at its most basic level, just being here is the heart of the Gospel.

Presence is the core of the Gospel that Jesus came to proclaim. “The Kingdom of God has come near.” If he spoke Wolof, he would have said “Mungi fi!” It was the greeting of the Angels at his incarnation, Emmanuel, God is with us. It is the climax of Revelation, God is



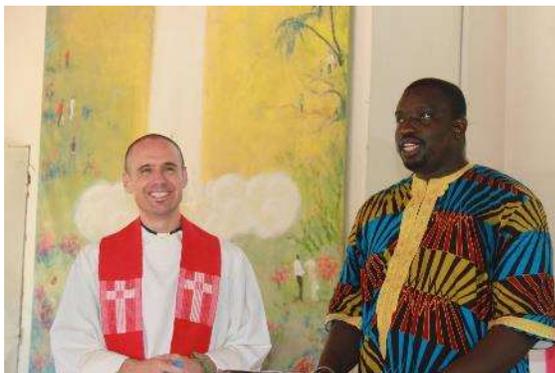
Making Attaya with Tidiane

here to dwell among creation. It is the simple heart of the Theology of the Cross, our Lutheran witness – God came, Mungi fi, He is here. Far from being understated, that simple news of God’s presence is the beginning of new life. And for our family, simply being here is the beginning of new life.



The Chorale of Diop-Ndoffane Parish

There is much to share about life in the three months since we have returned. Natalie has begun teaching. While her convalescence continues, she gains more strength and energy (and hair!) each day. The boys have returned to their school and friends, the tastes of Senegalese food, and of course the warmth of the Senegalese sun. And gladly, we have continued serving in the Lutheran Church of Senegal.



Reformation Sunday with Edward Ndong

At the end of October, we traveled to the parish of Diop-Ndoffane to share in the weekend long Reformation Festival. And what a festival it was! I led a short course on Lutheranism, and we talked about our Lutheran identity here in Senegal. The choirs of the Lutheran Parish and the Roman Catholic Parish held a unity concert Saturday night. Sunday saw a worship centered on the theme of the Reformation. We sang, we communed, we prayed, and of course, we ate. We are making plans to continue the formation and conversation about Lutheran identity here in Senegal in anticipation of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.

Perhaps the greatest announcement is that we have now opened our seminary, l’Institute de la Théologie Luthérienne du Sénégal (the Lutheran Institute of Theology in Senegal)! We have begun with six students, one woman and five men, who are being formed as theologians and leaders of the church. We opened the three year program, with a great fête. We invited the leaders of the Lutheran Church of Senegal, and the Lutheran Services for the Development of Senegal (SLDS). We encouraged our students, prayed for one another, and began the year by sharing Holy Communion. I began their formation with a month long course in Systematic Theology, and trust me, that is an uphill climb. But these students are so eager and overjoyed to be engaged in their theological studies for the sake of their church that they are doing everything to rise to every challenge.

For some, it is the first time they have used a computer. For most, it is the first time to have access to theological



With our Theology Students at ILTS, and Pastor Dib Ndong



Intro to Systematic Theology

material outside of the Bible. For all of them, it is exciting. And for me, it is a pure joy. Equipping leaders through an active pedagogy, with the tools to deepen their theological understanding of the Gospel and grow their capacity to lead the church in their context is challenging. But it is life giving. Among the stories of our learning, praying, forming and teaching, I want to share one quote that sums it up. After a particularly in depth exploration of

Trinitarian Theology, I paused to gauge the reception (and the spirit) of the group. One student named Michel breathed deeply, then said, “Well, Pastor...I now understand how the concept of the Trinity can help me teach about God’s love in my context. What once seemed far off now seems really close.” I thanked Michel and we prayed, because with that good news, the course was over. The love of God is really close. The Trinity is here. Mungi fi.

We want you to know that it is the ELCA’s commitment to being here that helps realize the closeness of God through theological education and so many other ministries. Because of your participation in ELCA Global Church Sponsorship, “Nungi fi,” “We are here.” Through our partnership, “Yangi fi,” “You are here.” And it is through our ministry of presence with the Lutheran Church of Senegal that we embody the solidarity and communion of God’s love that is here. So, on behalf of the Lutheran Church of Senegal, and particularly her theological students, we thank you. For your continued prayers for Natalie’s health and your support of our family, we thank you.

Finally, we rejoice in saying simply and profoundly, “Mangi fi.” We look forward to speaking these words to many of you next summer on our Home Mission Assignment. But before then, never underestimate the power of greeting each other with the highly ritualized and deeply meaningful words of our Christian tradition, because they realize the hope of life giving communion. ***May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all!*** And give thanks to God each time that you are simply there to say them to one another.

la Paix du Christ soit avec vous,

Pastor Chad, Natalie, Paul Michael and Luke Rimmer

p.s.: Between our quarterly newsletters, you can continue to follow us more regularly on Facebook as we post updates and photos, or through our blogs on our family’s website, www.therimmers.squarespace.com

Thanks again, friends.



We are here, walking together, always in Accompaniment