



# News of Nathan

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### About Me:

My name is Nathan Buegler, and I am from Owatonna, Minnesota. In May of 2024 I graduated from Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, where I majored in Environmental Studies and Religion. I am a member of the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) cohort for 2024-2025. I will be living and working in Fatick, Senegal through July of 2025. Through a model of accompaniment, I hope to learn from and be a part of the community I'm living with. This means that my primary call in Senegal is to listen and learn, sharing God's love through my presence.



*The view from my home in Fatick's roof*

## It's been a while!

Hello again to all those reading. When I think about the time that's passed from writing my first newsletter until now, it's strange how it feels both so long ago and just like yesterday. A lot has happened over the past ~2 months- I've gotten settled into my home in Fatick and I've started my job with L'Eglise Lutherienne du Senegal (ELS), the Lutheran Church of Senegal. I'm living with a host family, and I'm amazed at their hospitality in welcoming a stranger into their home for such a long period of time. My family here is smaller than is typical for Senegal, with a mother, father, and only two children, ages 13 and 15. Although everyone has their own schedule with work and school, I've enjoyed getting to know them and spend time with them when we can.

I've also enjoyed the chance to find my place within my workplace- ELS is headquartered in Fatick, and the church operates preschools in the villages surrounding the city. Senegalese public schools started in early October, and the preschools started later in the month. Before the schools started, I helped the church in hosting a curriculum training conference over a few days, meeting the teachers working at the village preschools. Since then, my job has



## Saint Louis

I'm finishing the process of writing this newsletter from the city of Saint Louis, the former colonial French capital of Senegal, along the coast near the border with Mauritania. I'm here for my cohort's fall retreat, which has been a chance to relax, catch up with the other members of my cohort, and do some sightseeing. A highlight of the retreat for me was the chance to take a boat tour, heading to where the Senegal River meets the Atlantic Ocean, seeing an incredible amount of birds along the way- pelicans, cormorants, ibises, egrets spoonbills, and more. It's been a great chance to recharge before returning to Fatick as we enter the holiday season (as strange as that feels when the daily temperature is in the high 90s). Despite the heat, I'm excited to see what Christmas looks like in Senegal!

been split between helping out with various administrative tasks in the church office, and travelling out to the preschools in the villages to deliver school supplies. There are seven preschools in the area around Fatick, each around a 30-60 minute drive away.

When heading out on deliveries, I've gotten to see a lot of the countryside surrounding Fatick- the town itself is situated on a coastal delta, as the Sine river approaches the Atlantic. Salt production is a significant part of the local economy, and salt marshes make up a lot of the area that isn't being used for agriculture. Although I have a lot to learn, I've enjoyed seeing some of the local ecology!



*The sanctuary at the church in Fatick, where I attend worship*

I've also attended worship at the town's Lutheran church, part of the same facility where I work. The liturgy of the service is in Serer, and as I've (very gradually) become more familiar with the language, little pieces of what is being said during the service are starting to make more sense to me. It's a cool feeling to be able to understand the common elements between the services here and the ones I'm more familiar with in the United States. I've also enjoyed getting to know members of the congregation, and seeing them around town outside of church every once in a while.

Learning a new language is hard. I'm extremely thankful to be able to continue studying Serer beyond just the crash course I had while in Dakar. While I learned a lot during that time, I've been able to continue having lessons with a teacher here in Fatick. These have been good, even while being challenging- my teacher here is able to speak





## How To Support Me

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about my time here or finding ways to support me, reach out! I would love to talk and share more about my experience. In addition, feel free to share this and future newsletters with others curious about my experience, I hope that you will keep me in your thoughts and prayers as I continue on this journey. In addition, if you or someone you know is interested in financially supporting my year in Senegal or the program as a whole, check out:

[support.elca.org/goto/nathan-buegler](https://support.elca.org/goto/nathan-buegler)

**Thank you for your support!**

about as much English as I can speak French- that is to say, not much. Despite that hurdle, through acting words out and the occasional assist via French to English Google Translate, we've been able to figure out how to communicate.

A persistent theme through my time in Fatick so far has been trusting that things will take time. It can feel pretty isolating being so far from what I'm used to, and the language barrier makes that harder. Despite that, I know that connections will come with time. I'm in the process of finding my place in a new community, and that requires trust, both from myself and from the rest of my community. That trust takes time to build. I've gotten the chance to get to know some of my neighbors, speaking with them nearly



*The inside of a preschool classroom in one of the villages*

every day on my walk to work. As I've gotten to know them further, they've invited me to come, sit, and talk with them, offering me tea to drink and a place in the shade to rest. That invitation, the feeling of being welcomed despite being so new to and unfamiliar with the culture that surrounds me, has been an incredible blessing to receive.

The past two months have had many challenges, and I don't expect that to change. Although I'm feeling more comfortable with both the language and parts of the culture here, I know that more challenges will come as time passes. Despite that, I'm grateful for the chance to be here; I've learned much from my time so far. Thank you for reading, and feel free to reach out if you want to hear more about anything I've mentioned!