



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.



My Christmas celebration with a family from church

Updates from Fatick

Hello again! Thank you for reading this! It's really heartening to know that there are people out there curious about what I've been up to. Since my last newsletter, I've settled into my role in Fatick a lot more. Although every day brings its own challenges, I'm far more used to life here.

A belated Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I was eager to see what the holiday season would look like in Senegal, and as I suspected, it was a lot different than what I'm used to. Despite the differences, I really enjoyed seeing what the period looked like. While I wasn't expecting it to feel like Christmas in America, I think I was still a little caught off guard by how different things felt. The vast majority of people are Muslims who don't celebrate the holiday, and even in church throughout Advent I didn't notice much difference in the liturgy. This changed on Christmas Eve. We had worship at 10pm, and as I approached the church I could see lights from a distance—the first time I'd seen Christmas lights in Senegal. Before the start of worship, the children of the church put on a short pageant they had prepared, with all the charming missed cues, awkward pauses and giggles one would expect from a Christmas pageant in the US. Worship proceeded as usual, but after worship the church took time to dance



What's the Weather?

I was excited to see what exactly winter in Senegal looks like- although I wasn't expecting a Minnesota winter by any means, any reprieve from the heat would be nice. Things did cool down for a while: through much of December we had daily highs down to the mid-80s, with a surprising day of rain on Christmas Eve- a rare occurrence in the dry season. Since then, the temps have gotten higher again, with this past week seeing a return to the high 90s and 100s. Since it is the dry season, we've started to have dusty days, as you can see in the above picture. You may not be able to see it, but the "arm of the sea" which goes through Fatick is right on the other side of the road. All the dust means that masks are super helpful on particularly bad days- definitely not weather I've experienced in January before!

together, the space filled with the sounds of drums and shouts of joy.

Since the church met on Christmas Eve, I wasn't expecting to do very much on Christmas Day beyond calling my family at some point. This changed when a family at church that night invited me to their home for dinner on Christmas. This was a really wonderful surprise, and I enjoyed getting to know the family, who actually immigrated to Senegal from Cameroon. They had a small tree and Christmas decorations up, and getting to see the kids open up their gifts was super fun. Their generosity in inviting me made Christmas a really special day.



The chicks on the roof

I've gotten to make myself useful around the house every once in a while, helping to feed and water the chickens on occasion. The chicks are kept in an enclosed area on the roof, while chickens closer to becoming dinner are kept in the backyard enclosure (along with ducks, sheep, turkeys, and several very mean-spirited geese).

My work continues to be a source of joy and challenges. Throughout January, there has been very little for me to do. The funding that my department receives at the start of the New Year took a long time to arrive, only coming this past week, and greatly limiting what we were able to get done while waiting for that money to arrive. As someone who can put a lot of pressure on himself to work hard and stay busy, this definitely felt frustrating at times. Throughout our orientation for YAGM, we were reminded (many times over) that there would be moments like these,



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

Thank you for your support!

moments where we would feel like we weren't doing enough. I think that I understood I would probably feel this way at points, but understanding is different than actually feeling. Although it's been challenging not being able to do as much as I'd like to, I've been focusing on being present, trying to get to know people (which remains a challenge with my limited Serer), and soaking in as much as I can of life in Fatick.

As mentioned, that funding came at long last this past week, and we've begun putting it to use; yesterday several of my coworkers and I drove to a nearby town to buy couscous- a lot of couscous. We bought 1,100 kg, which is about 2,425 pounds. After spending so long feeling frustrated about not doing enough, a day of physical labor



Our trusty truck, fully loaded with couscous.

moving heavy things around felt very rewarding, and I'm looking forward to delivering the couscous to the preschools over the next few weeks. Couscous is an important food item for the Serer people, often when I'm meeting new people and they find out I'm learning Serer, they'll ask me, "Ndax ñaamaa saaê ke?" (Do you eat couscous?) By saying that I do eat couscous, I'm able to prove I know at least a little bit about the Serer way of life.

That about does it for now- looking forward, in February, Fatick will host the Lutheran Church of Senegal's Harvest Festival, a gathering for church members across the country, and a day I'm really excited for. As always, reach out if you have any questions about anything I've written about, feel free to reach out! Thank you for reading!