



RCA Missionary Update

from the Johnsons

The Evangelical Church of the Republic of Niger (EERN is its acronym in French) is the RCA's mission partner in Niger. Founded shortly after Niger's national independence in 1961, EERN is the oldest and largest Protestant denomination in this Muslim-majority (98 percent) country.

Located in the Sahara Desert, Niger is the world's poorest country (177th out of 177 on the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index, a composite measure of life expectancy, education, and living standard), and 50 percent of its population is under the age of 15. EERN ministries reflect this context: they focus on evangelization, education, health, and community development.

Tom Johnson, an international development specialist, and his wife, Aïchatou, represent RCA missions in Niger. They have two daughters, Marie-Florence and Laurey.

Niger facts:

- Population: 11,361,000
- Size: 1,266,700 square kilometers (slightly less than twice the size of Texas)
- Major religion: 98 percent Muslim



MINISTRY

Community Development

LOCATION

Niger

PARTNER

Evangelical Church of Niger, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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Dear Friends,

September 2006

Greetings from a rather wet Niger. We're getting toward the end of the rainy season in Niger and we've all been surprised by the quantity of rain which has fallen this year—particularly so because the rains started almost a full month later than normal. While it is still a bit early to predict a bountiful harvest (many local varieties of millet and sorghum require between 90 and 120 days of regular moisture to produce a crop), the rains have been particularly hard on the country's roads and mud-brick homes. Traveling has been made difficult because of washouts, huge potholes, and muddy conditions as the heavy rains beat up Niger's limited road system. Some downpours have literally "melted" away mud homes, which constitute the majority of Nigerien housing, since their intensity washed away the exterior facing and left the mud bricks exposed to the elements. In fact, in August residents of the Saharan oasis town of Bilma saw 90 percent of their homes disappear in an afternoon thunderstorm that brought more rain (two and a half inches) than the town had seen in the previous 10 years!

The rainy season has also brought many visitors! We hosted a variety of RCA members who have come to Niger this summer, as we facilitate mutual mission between the U.S. and Niger. Let us introduce them to you and tell you more about their visits and their contributions to the ministry in Niger.

Amanda M. of Grand Rapids, Michigan, is starting her sophomore year at North Park University in Chicago. A French major with an interest in African studies, Amanda came to us after I sent an email to RCA volunteer coordinator Jay Harsevoort expressing an interest in the possibility of hosting a college student who wanted to experience Africa, learn French, and help us out with our two girls. A few weeks later, Amanda came to



Marie and Amanda

our attention and we made the arrangements for her to stay with us for 10 weeks. She proved to be an invaluable help to our family and surprised us all by her ease in adjusting to life in Niger. Our girls really loved her. Amanda kept a blog of her time in and thoughts of Niger, which you can read at www.amandasusan.blogspot.com.

Katie H. and Stephanie H. of Sioux Center, Iowa, are cousins who wanted to do missionary health work in Africa. Although the RCA's partner in Niger, the EERN,

does not have any medical facilities, one of its members is the chief medical officer for a rural health district just outside of Niamey. Dr.

Habila arranged for the young women to stay at his government hospital (in an unused isolation



Katie and Stephanie

ward that had private rooms!) and to accompany and assist his team on a tetanus vaccination campaign. Along with Amanda, the girls saw other Nigerien sights such as giraffes, hippos, and rural villages during their three weeks here. They also brought much needed medical supplies for the rural hospital, some valuable office equipment for the Nigerien church, and a gift that allowed a Bible school classroom roof to be replaced days before the first rains came!

Ted and Eleanor V. of Battle Creek, Michigan, are making their second trip to Niger, but this time as workshop trainers! Since their first visit in 2004, these retired edu-



Eleanor and Ted

cators have devoted a great deal of time and resources to advance Christian education in Niger. They taught two two-week seminars on the fundamentals of a Christian worldview in education to Nigerien educators in both

Niamey and in Maradi. Also, the couple has been instrumental in promoting a new EERN primary school in Zinder. The school construction has just been completed and could open for the start of the new school year in October 2006.

A Words of Hope team of nine RCA members came for the grand opening of the Yusufu Garba Recording Studio in Maradi on September 2, 2006. The studio, named for a former EERN president, was built by WoH donor funds and will be supported by WoH gifts for the next five years. It allows EERN preachers to record messages in Hausa and in French and broadcast them on over a dozen private FM radio stations in Niger. This will result in Nigerien Christians explaining their faith to their Muslim countrymen and countrywomen on a medium



The Words of Hope team

(radio) that is almost ubiquitous throughout Niger. The team included the Rev. David Bast, WoH president; Lee DeYoung, WoH executive vice president; the father of Stephanie H. (see above); the Rev. Taylor H. of Hopewell Junction, New York (whom we first hosted in Niger in 2005); and Kevin P., also of Hopewell Junction, who took the time to introduce an international youth ministry "Sonlife" (www.sonlifeafrica.com) to Niger's young people.

Prayer and Praises

- Give thanks for all the visitors we've had and that they all left Niger in good health (although we had a lot more stomach problems than is normal). Give thanks for how God is sharing his heart for Niger with many other believers, who then offer prayers and support for the ministries (and missionaries) here.
- Give thanks for the opening of the Words of Hope studio, the completion of the school in Zinder, and the Christian education seminars. Pray that these will transform Niger.
- Pray for Aïchatou and Tom's studies. Aïchatou did not pass her last medical exam and will need to sit for it again in 2007. In the meantime, she can still practice under the supervision of other doctors. Tom must produce a research proposal by October to continue his Ph.D.

In Christ

Tom and Aïchatou
Tom and Aïchatou Johnson

Note: Dr. Addo Mamane, a Muslim convert, has been the EERN's education coordinator in addition to his responsibilities as a history professor in Niger. He recently joined his wife, Lydia, in the Washington, D.C. area where she is working with the Hausa language broadcast of Voice of America. The RCA Speaker's Bureau has added Dr. Addo to their list of mission speakers, and he would be pleased to visit your church to speak on the ministry in Niger or share his perspective on various Christian-Muslim topics.

To book Dr. Addo, please contact your stewardship office (staff names and numbers can be found on the Global Mission page of the 2006-2007 *RCA Directory and Plan Calendar*) or the supervisor of RCA mission in Africa, Derrick Jones (djones@rca.org, 800-228-3813).