



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

As you all know, this particular quarterly newsletter comes after a period of great transition and the gamut of emotions, pain, fear and hope that come with Natalie's diagnosis of Ewing Sarcoma. In this newsletter, we will forgo normal reflections on life and ministry in Senegal, and share our current situation, the future of our ministry in Senegal, and update you on the news from West Africa. Mostly, we want to send out a wave of thankfulness for God's faithfulness and your support.

Firstly, a few words on our journey. After months of aching in Natalie's knee, her pain became acute in mid-January. Shortly thereafter her orthopedic doctor in Senegal ordered an MRI, and discovered that a large tumor in her right tibia had fractured the plateau just under her knee. As it turns out, the months of aching was the tumor, and the acute pain was from the fracture. In some sense, thanks be to God for the break. Alhumdulilah as we say in Senegal. The break caused a focused investigation that quickly led to a course of treatment that has made all the difference to this point. Within forty-eight hours of the MRI, we were evacuated to North Carolina so that Natalie could have the biopsy which revealed the tumor was a malignant Ewing Sarcoma. Of course pain, shock and loss accompanied this news as we realized that we were not only dealing with the reality of a fight for her life, but also a large amount of uncertainty regarding our life, ministry, home and friends in Senegal that we were forced to leave so abruptly.

While Ewing Sarcoma is a rare pediatric cancer, thankfully it is one that generally responds well to chemotherapy. Given Natalie's otherwise great health, the doctors were able to prescribe the strongest possible protocol, including 51 weeks of chemotherapy (17 cycles), surgery to remove the tumor, and radiation at a later time. We are currently four cycles into this regimen. So far Natalie is managing the chemotherapy well, with only the predictable side effects of nausea and extreme fatigue. Again, Alhumdulilah. She is strong. She is brave. And she is faithful through it all. Every night I lay hands on her, visualize the nurturing healing Spirit of the Lord of Life in every tissue, and take great comfort in the fact that your prayers and presence, the communion of saints, accompanies us on this journey towards healing.

The first week of June, we will discuss a surgery plan with doctors to decide on the best way to remove what is left of the tumor and the best way to balance the salvage of her leg and the prevention of recurrence. For this difficult conversation and the healing that lies beyond a radical surgery of this kind, we ask for your prayers for peace and healing.

In terms of the family, we are doing well. The boys have born the trauma of leaving their home, their friends, and their life in Senegal for which they have



Dancing towards the altar with our offering in a 'calebasse', a Senegalese sign of thankfulness – theirs and ours.



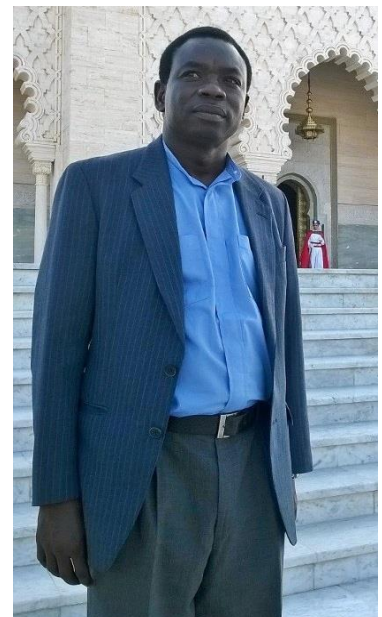
Eucharist at our national gathering in Fatick, Senegal

worked so hard. Of course, being third culture kids, landing in the US has brought an initial disorientation on top of having to navigate the new reality of helping their Mother fight cancer. While we have been taken away from our circle of support in Senegal, we have found another circle of support here, not only from our family and all the health professionals at Duke, but from St. Philip Lutheran Church in Raleigh, who has embraced a new role as our local community of faith.

We cannot thank St. Philip Lutheran enough for their welcome, their hospitality, and their immediate embrace of our family during this difficult period of uncertainty. Our thanks extends to you, our sponsors, whose care and outreach have been real, present, and powerful. We cannot fully express our gratitude for your support from our congregations in the Grand Canyon Synod, to the Susquehanna Synods, to Florida and three or four points in between. Between hospital stays and outpatient scans and treatments we have managed to get thank you cards mailed to some of you. But while some of your many cards and expressions of solidarity have not been properly thanked, please know that they have been fully and gratefully received. Your cards make us smile and feel known in our time of need. Your gifts of art and beauty add color to procedures that are often sterile and artificial. Your prayer shawls surround Natalie with warmth and prayer. Your emails and facebook messages are technological signs of a spiritual reality that makes whole healing possible. Know that healing is our constant goal as well as our present reality. Because after this season of healing, we will return to our beloved Senegal, and our friends in the Lutheran Church of Senegal.

Now let us share a brief description of our current work plan during this course of treatment, and some updates on the ministry in Senegal. Following Natalie's healing from surgery this summer, her chemotherapy will continue until the spring of '15. But beginning in the fall of this year, Chad is planning several trips back to Senegal to continue our relationships and support of the ministries of the SLDS and ELS. Most notably, Chad will continue to work on the opening of the PFP, the theological seminary in Senegal which is due to begin in January '15. So from time to time, until we return as a family next spring, Chad will be traveling back and forth to Senegal for preparation, collaboration and teaching. Also beginning this fall, we will begin our round of home mission assignment visits which we had planned for this summer.

Later this summer I will be in contact with you to arrange our visits, just as we did earlier this year. While our home assignment visits to you are delayed, this does mean that our visit with you can happen



ELS President, Pastor Thomas Diouf

during the autumn when people are home, and not away on summer vacation! So watch for that letter later this summer. Additionally, Chad will be travelling and speaking on behalf of Global Mission, YAGM, and our ministry in Senegal throughout the year.

And now, a few updates on our beloved Senegal. Since our last newsletter the Women of the ELS, *Femme pour Christ*, hosted an ecumenical Women's day of prayer and assembly in Dakar. The ELS also held its annual National Festival of the Church, where representatives of every parish gathered in Fatick to celebrate the Lutheran Church of Senegal, and share the harvest of gifts for the coming year. In March, the ELS hosted its National Assembly, and elected a new President (Bishop). We give thanks for the ministry of our former President, Pastor Abdou Thiam, and give thanks for our new President, Pastor Thomas Diouf. Pastor Diouf was Chad's closest colleague as the Director of the Department of Theological Formation. But now he will serve as the President of the ELS, along with our new Vice President, Pastor Adamah Faye, who is the Pastor of the parish of Linguere, which is the parish that grew up around the ELCA's animal husbandry, primary health care and literacy work with the SLDS. So we ask you to pray for the new leadership of the ELS. Especially during our celebration of Pentecost, remember them in your prayers that the Holy Spirit will come in its wild diversity to continue to nurture and unite this body which is made up of multiple people groups, languages and cultural expressions as one, national Lutheran Church of Senegal.

And of course, please remember us. Remember Chad as he continues to work and maintain relationships across two continents. Remember Paul Michael and Luke as they navigate the changes, losses, fears, and hope of this season ahead. And of course, remember Natalie. While her spirit is strong, her needs are many. Visualize healing, light, life and re-creation in her body. Pray for the healing, nurturing presence of the Lord of Life to breathe in her each day. And as you pray, breathe in the same for you, knowing that from Senegal to you, to us, we are participating together in the body of Christ for the healing of the World. Thank you again for your partnership, your accompaniment, and your solidarity through it all. It is a realization of the real presence of the living God who comes to abide with us.

Que la paix du Christ soit avec vous et nous tous,

Rev. Dr. Chad, Natalie, Paul Michael and Luke Rimmer



On Easter, we wore our 'boubous' to celebrate new life at St. Philip Lutheran. Natalie's skill in tying foulards (head wraps) now comes in handy.

p.s: Between our quarterly newsletters, you can continue to follow us more regularly on facebook as we try to post updates and photos, but also through our blogs on our family's website, www.therimmers.org. Natalie has begun to use our family blog, www.therimmers.org/family-blog, to post her own reflections on our journey. Thanks again, friends.