

# The Stadlander Story

*A newsletter of a missionary family in West Africa*

Volume 5, Issue 1

March 2010

## *Where have all the newsletters gone?*

### **We Pray:**

- For strength, perseverance, and wisdom to discern faithful steps even in trying times.
- For the Pulaar-speaking Christian Community's new relationship with the Lutheran Church of Senegal.
- For President Abdou Thiam and Vice President Joseph Senghor as they begin their new calls in the ELS.
- For new life and the joy it brings to life together.
- For a "Faith Comes by Hearing" recording of the New Testament in Pulaar happening now in Linguere!

**Hear us, O God.  
Your mercy is great.**

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Well we think it's safe to say that we fell off the "newsletter wagon" somewhere around our last home assignment. Why? There are probably various causes, including being really busy all the time. Perhaps it also had something to do with a reluctance to share some of the less positive sides of our life and work here. Not keeping our prayer support informed of our needs when we need it most probably isn't the best course of action, but we hope you'll understand that sometimes it's hard to sit down to write a newsletter to the people supporting you when you have to search for good things to say.

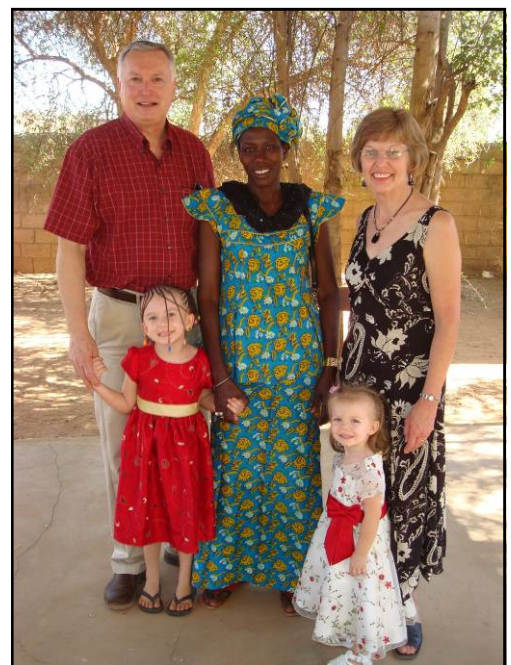
So now you're all wondering... what happened!?!? The short story is that we had a lot of unfortunate events pile up after our return to Linguere following home assignment, including: a break-in and theft of computers from the translation and evangelism offices on the church property, alcoholism and related circumstances with some members of the Christian community, the firing of the administrative and financial assistant in Linguere (i.e. increased workload for every-

Eva and Ellen are all smiles on Christmas Day as Sarah's parents, Tom and Lois Long, surround Nene GADIO, who cooks and cleans at our home.

one else who works in Linguere), and various other things that add up.

The good news is that though these things continue to be issues, life in Linguere goes on and has been a lot more positive lately. And we're starting to write newsletters again! We had a great but very busy home assignment. We visited most of our covenanting congregations and saw family and friends. Eva even did a month of kindergarten in Iowa City before she returned to start school in Linguere. Eva loved being a Lemme Leopard! Sarah's parents' visit over Christmas was a wonderful time to reconnect for all and gave them the

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*Pastor Dirk, Sarah, Eva, & Ellen Stadlander are ELCA Missionaries serving with the Lutheran Church of Senegal*

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opportunity to see and experience our life first-hand. Lois made a quilt for the girls which provided the impetus to a very charming make-over to their room. After the Longs' departure, Sarah continued with new curtains. The make-over was completed through the efforts of our dear friend Pastor Alison Boomer-shine and her "co-visitors" to Senegal who added a stenciled and free-handed border on the walls! Ellen is 2½ and is starting to talk up a storm. Eva turned 6 on March 19 and is just dying to lose a tooth.

### *Life and ministry continue...*

Dirk continues his work as a pastor of the Lutheran Church in Senegal (ELS) and is now a parish pastor (see related article!). He works with the evangelism program for the ELS and travels a lot for meetings in Fatick (church headquarters) and Dakar. He also traveled to Niger to represent the ELCA at the JCMWA (Joint Christian Ministries of West Africa) standing committee meeting. Dirk is also involved with the transition process creating a sustaining structure surrounding the ELCA's community development efforts. And amid all that, he's trying to continue

Pulaar study.

Sarah is mostly at home still, and is looking forward to Ellen starting preschool next year! She is also attempting to learn Pulaar and is learning some of the computer-minded administrative tasks for the work in Linguere connected to the Health Project and Milk Production Project, *Fedannde Jolof*.

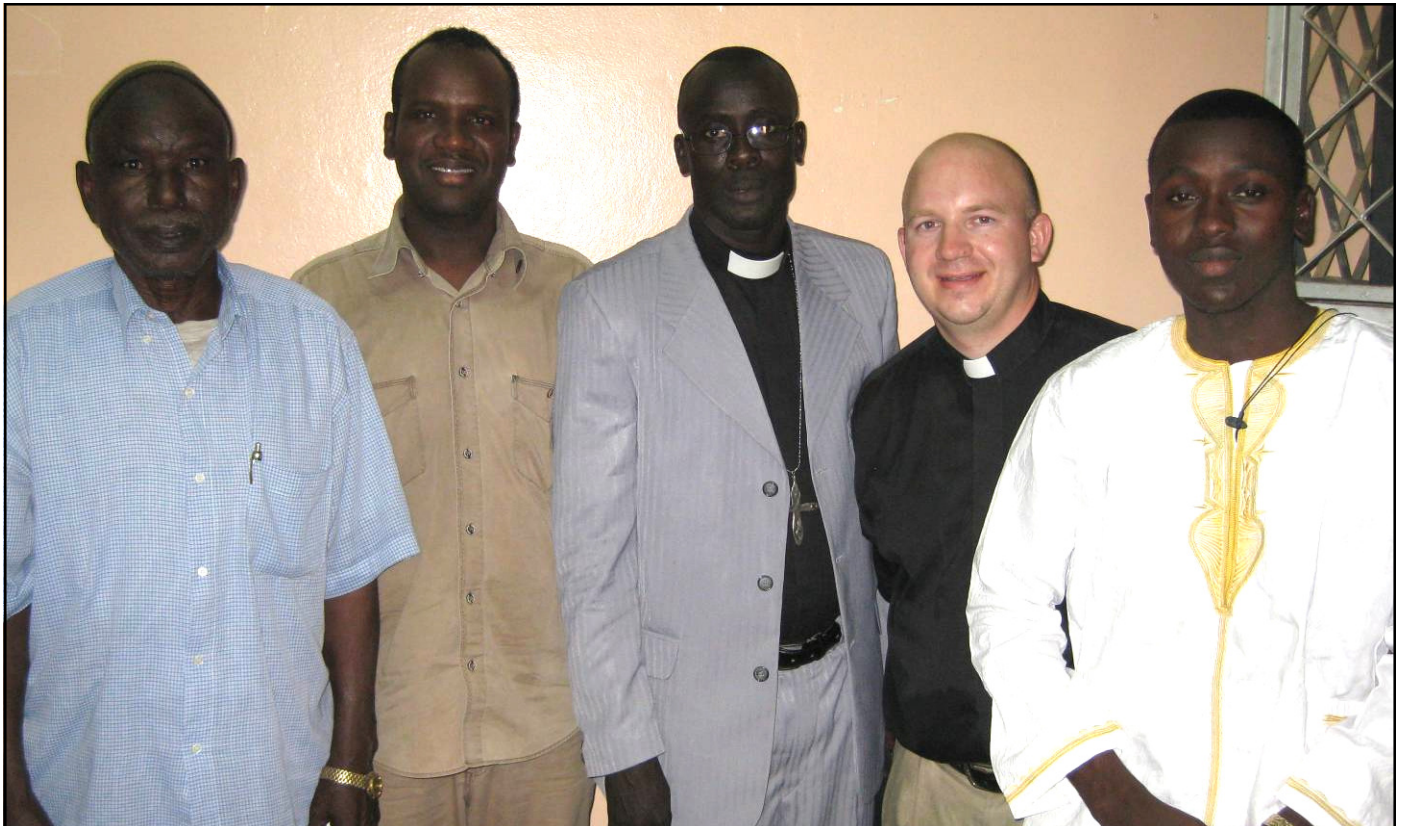
Last year's rainy season was plentiful, and in fact hadn't even finished when we returned from our home assignment. The cool dry season was nice, but it was neither as cool nor as long as previous years have been.

Currently, things are heating up as we head into the hot dry season of April - June before the rains come again in July. We moved to another, slightly larger, house after home assignment, which is the former residence of the Langdji family. We have discovered the joys of having a swamp cooler in a dry climate (though the swamp cooler is currently suffering from a failed bearing). One of the things we enjoy most is going to visit friends in the evenings, as the sun is going down and the heat lets up a little.

## ***Linguere becomes the Thirteenth Parish of the ELS***

The Lutheran Church of Senegal (*Eglise Luthérienne de Senegal*), or ELS, held its yearly general assembly (*Synode*) this month, March 10-12. Dirk traveled to church headquarters in Fatick with Malick Sy and Ndiaty Diallo, two members of the *Dental Issayankobay Jolof* (DIJ), the Pulaarophone Christian community in Linguere. Nearly a year ago, the DIJ wrote a letter to the ELS, formally requesting to be accepted as a parish of the ELS. Until this time, the DIJ has had no formal relationship with the Lutheran Church in Senegal, though they have been in contact and participate in various ELS events. And technically, because ELS is the church body with which the ELCA relates, they are served by a pastor of the ELS (Dirk). Acceptance of the DIJ as a parish of the ELS was one of the first items on the docket, and it was accepted! Linguere is now officially a parish of the Lutheran Church in Senegal. We are excited about this development, as it belies a growing and deepening relationship with the larger Christian community for the DIJ that has been “on its own” since its first three baptisms in the early 1990s. It can also be seen as a big ethnic step for the ELS, which is predominantly composed of people from the Serer ethnicity. Working with a Fulani congregation will bring challenges for both sides, but it is encouraging that both groups have chosen to come together in Christ instead of creating boundaries based on ethnicity.

The other big event at *Synode* was the election of a new church president, vice president and council members. Pastor Abdou Thiam was elected president and Pastor Joseph Senghor was elected vice president. We extend our congratulations to them and solicit prayers for their new roles in the church.



The newly-installed 4th president of the ELS, Pasteur Abdou Thiam (center), poses with the delegation from the new Linguere Parish of the ELS: Aliou Sadio Ba, Soule Ba, Pastor Dirk Stadlander, and Babacar Diallo.

## *Babies, babies, babies...*

We wouldn't usually do baby announcements, but we've had a run on babies in Linguère lately. The first was a little girl born to ELS evangelist Insa Diallo and his wife, Ndiaty, about 6 months ago. Then, in February, bible translator Malick Sy and his wife, Aissata, had their first little boy in January, followed by a son born to Samba Coulibaly (another translator) and his wife, Aminata.

The two shepherds (cowboys) working on the milk production project's farm also both had children born almost concurrently with the two bible translators!

In the Senegalese (Muslim) tradition, families celebrate a "baptism" or naming ceremony on the 8<sup>th</sup> day after the birth of a child. Both translators held a similar "Christian" celebration for their children: publicly announcing the baby's name in a short prayer service for the baby and family. Family, friends, and neighbors gathered for these celebrations, and we all shared a meal after the service. It provided a natural, pressure-free way to share an aspect of Christian life with the many Muslims who are close to these families.

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## *Thank You*

Your participation in sharing God's love in Christ is very exciting for us. We are supported by you through prayer, interaction, and financial giving. Thank you for all that you do to make it possible for us to continue to serve in Christ's name in Senegal. For more information about giving globally through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, please contact:

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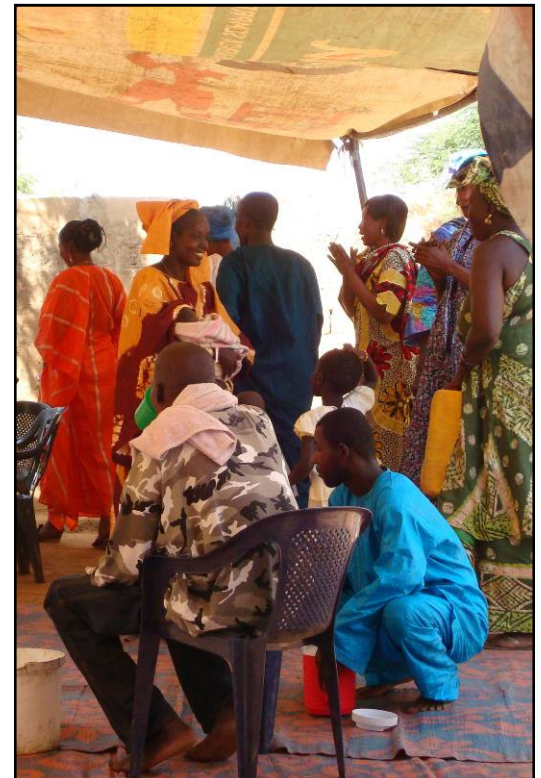
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Sarah holds the 8-day old child of Aissata Ka and Malick Sy, bible translator, as Ndiaty Diallo holds her 6-month old and Ellen says, "cheese."

Friends and family gather for the "reception" of the child of Aminata Sy and Samba Coulibaly, bible translator.



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