

Dear Friends,

As we prepare to enter the summer months we thought we'd give you a little history of the Lutheran work in Guinea among the Maninka people. Below is part 1 of our story from Tim's point of view. It's easy to see God's Hand from the beginning, even among struggles and threats of closure! Tim writes:

*The Lutheran ministry to the Muslim Maninka people in northern Guinea really began in earnest in 2003. That was when Jon and Sharon Oetting and their children, and Tim and Heidi Norton moved from Kankan where they were learning the language, to Siguiri-way up north near the Mali border. Here there is no other mission presence for hundreds of square miles, and only a handful of small churches. Jon, who was a teacher, later left to pursue the ministry, and is now serving in California.*



THE OETTINGS  
2003



*Tim (Norton, not to be confused with yours truly!) was outstanding in the language from the beginning. Other missionaries and the Maninkas themselves talk about how completely he has mastered the language. Not only could he speak it, but he mastered the unusual Maninka writing that they had developed themselves called "Nko". It is highly unusual for an African language to have its own alphabet, but some time ago a teacher developed Nko, and the Maninka are very proud of it. Tim learned it well enough to teach it to the Maninkas themselves, which became a great "in" for him. As I said, the Maninka are proud of Nko, but few are able to use it.*

*Tim made outstanding progress at first. Many missionaries have worked many years among the Maninka in Kankan and the surrounding areas with very little fruit. Tim established teaching groups in more than 12 villages, usually offering to teach Nko, but with the understanding that he would use Christian writings in the classes. He later had leaders that could do the teaching in the expanding work. But there was eventually a falling off. Several of the leaders demonstrated that they were in the work more for what they could get out of it financially. One actively tried to deceptively gain control of land that was purchased for a church building. While Tim was on furlough in the states once with the work in the hands of some of these men, a lot of the teaching groups closed down.*



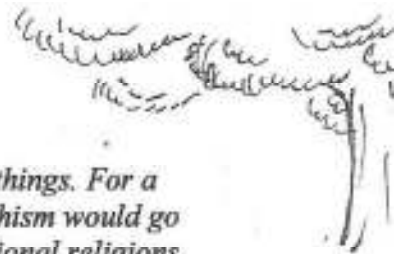
O K N  
I H H  
(THE WORD "NKO" IN NKO WRITING)  
(NKO READS FROM RIGHT TO LEFT)

*But the work is on the rise again. I have not had much to do with it yet, as I still am in language learning, but I have seen a bit, and contributed a tiny bit. The first thing you notice about the ministry here is the work in Siguiri itself. Now what this really amounts to is a distraction from our real work here. You see, most of the members of the Siguiri church are not really Maninka or of Muslim background. Actually they are mostly Christian foreigners and speak English. Several are from Ghana. There is a family from Sierra Leone and one from Benin. Sometimes there are some Kissis from the Forest Region. There can be from six to over twenty on a Sunday. It is not a model group, but since these Christians want to worship in this Muslim area we can't really turn them away, and having the group is a good basis for some of the newer believers to come and see Christian worship in action. (Several Maninka Muslims often do attend.)*



*As I said, this group seems to take a fair amount of time since they are right there in town. One of the first things I will do as I finish language work is to take this group completely off of Tim Norton's hands so he can focus on the real Maninka work where he is most valuable, and these people are very much like some of the groups that I have worked with for many years in Ghana*





and Guinea. I already work with the leader, Kwaku, on his sermons and other things. For a while I thought my illustrated introduction to the Christian Faith and the catechism would go into mothballs when I got here, since it is heavily geared toward African traditional religions. But I saw that it would be good for this group, so I started teaching it at our Sunday services already, and it is being very well received.

ANDREA HERMAN



Another part of the work that is already being done in Siguiri actually has roots from our time back in Guéckédou. In 1999 Andrea Herman agreed to come out to be our Volunteer Coordinator for two years, to help facilitate what we hoped to start up at that time, short term team visits in conjunction with our Kansas District partnership. At that time short term teams were not the "craze" that they are today, so there wasn't a lot on which to base our ideas! So while we never did actually have teams come out during that time, one very important thing happened. Andrea felt strongly that God was calling her to work with Maninka women. She left Guinea to return to the US to get the training she needed and in 2007 came back to Guinea and moved to Siguiri. She studied the Maninka language and began forming relationships with many of the women in town. While still in the early stages, ministry to women will be a major part of the overall strategy since this has to be done by a female in this culture.



Next month I will talk a bit about the ministry and what I've observed since we arrived. The language work continues well and I've gotten some good solid blocks of study done this past month and a half. Thanks for all your prayers, and please keep them up!

We've been very blessed to have our daughter Andrea home this past month. She arrived from Dakar on June 4<sup>th</sup>. After a week to get a passport renewed we headed to Siguiri. She will leave on July 1<sup>st</sup>, return to the US and eventually end up in New Orleans at the National Youth Gathering there. After some time with her siblings she'll return to Dakar in mid-August. Such a world traveler!!



ANDREA HEINEY



By the time this goes out Guinea will have had her first ever democratic elections, due to be held this coming Sunday (the 27<sup>th</sup>). We're praying all goes well and that peace is kept. We pray also for a good and God-fearing leader for this country that has suffered so long in the leadership department! Please pray with us on that!

We appreciate so much all your prayers for Guinea and for the work in the Maninka area. You might remember that when the Kansas team was here we went to the mountain top and prayed over the city asking you all to join us. We have continued the Wednesday at noon tradition as has the team. If you ever think of it on Wednesday at noon and want to join us, that would be great! And may many, many Maninka stand before the Throne of Grace into eternity!!

LCMS- Guinea—HEINEY  
c/o MELCI-MA  
BP 3641-3642  
Rue 308 Porte 386  
Torokorobougou  
Bamako  
REPUBLIC OF MALI  
[www.guineacommission.com](http://www.guineacommission.com)



Love in Jesus!

*Jim + Beth*