
RCA GLOBAL MISSION DEAR FRIENDS UPDATE

from Jeremy and Susan Beebout in Niger
April 2020

Dear Friends,

We hope that this letter finds you and yours healthy. If you are not healthy, may you continue to draw on the hope that is ours in Christ! In our previous letter, I said I was hoping that the year 2020 would be a year of clear vision! I would say that the current times that we are in are not likely to be described like that. Then again, a few things are clearer. Our self-reliance and feeling that we know what tomorrow will bring are long gone! Another example: our health is not something to be taken lightly. And finally, GOD IS STILL SOVEREIGN!

Niger was one of the later countries to “welcome” COVID-19 into its borders. As I write, the situation is still very much in its early stages. The Nigerien government closed all schools, borders, and airports on March 20. Then all land transport was stopped and now no one is allowed to travel in or out of the city. The government has been very aggressive early on, recognizing that our capacity to handle a major surge in patients is very limited. There are almost no ventilators in the country. We have very few tests and very limited personal protective equipment. Cases are slowly being identified and treated at a new hospital in the city which is offering exclusive services for Coronavirus cases. Unfortunately, the first patient who died was identified late in his treatment. This resulted in many health care providers getting exposed and ending up in quarantine, including Dr. Joel, the former Assistant Director of Clinique Olivia, who is now a trauma surgery resident. Please pray that he would not become ill.

Several EERN members are also sick, and others were exposed due to the cultural expectation to visit anyone who has recently traveled or who becomes sick! Many people are skeptical about modern medicine in general and the many rumors and myths flying around social media have only enhanced their misunderstanding of the disease and its cause. Some people even think it is a political ploy or invented strategy to deter or defer the upcoming presidential elections. The Christian community, for the most part, has willingly accepted the order to worship and pray as families at home. For Muslims, there has been some strong pushback when the government declared that they were not to go to the mosques and pray together. In one region, a person died in a related demonstration. This risks to be a significant challenge in the ongoing battle and the risk of civil unrest is multiplied in this environment where resources are so limited and the pressure of terrorism remains.

Clinique Olivia is not authorized to test or treat patients, but we still have the burden of protecting our staff and other patients from possible cases. Susan and the Clinic Director Dr. Hamadou are working together to respond to the shifting situation. There is now a curfew from 7 pm to 6 am in Niamey so the clinic will be returning to daytime hours only. The clinic is extremely short of doctors due to the other expatriates being on planned home assignments and two other doctors having babies. Please pray for safety and wisdom for the staff and also that medications that have been ordered for the next six months of clinic operations would somehow arrive. Already several important medications have run out.

In the midst of this worldwide struggle, we as believers in Christ have the opportunity to discuss deeper topics with others, such as spiritual foundations and where our hope remains. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13. If Jesus is the solid rock upon which we stand, then we do not have a reason to panic or lose hope.

As a family, we are currently healthy and taking one day at a time. Sahel Academy has closed its doors for the time being and is evaluating the possibility of continuing with online options. The work on the clinic in Dogon Doutchi

continues for the moment but we are no longer allowed to travel out of the city to visit. The mason is currently constructing the two stairwells to close them in before the approaching rainy season. He also has constructed a short perimeter wall around the upper floor. Lastly, a permanent storeroom is being built, which will replace the temporary version next to the clinic (since construction began in 2016) which the termites are in the process of dismantling.



One other brief update is that we recently harvested potatoes out of the garden at CADR. Although it wasn't a great harvest, it was still worth our efforts and was an encouragement to see the garden being used. The best were sold at a low price to CADR staff and the rest were used for the noon meal prepared for personnel.



We know that these crazy times have had an impact on each of your lives and caused major changes in plans. Just before the crisis reached here, Susan's oldest nephew died suddenly. His ashes were recently interred in a ceremony with just his parents, his brother, and their pastor. It was not deemed safe for the extended family or their church family to be with them. The pain of social isolation is certainly amplified when we cannot gather to share our suffering and our joys. We trust

that the Holy Spirit is close to each of you in the big and small losses that this situation has caused. May we become more dependent on Him and find creative ways to love and serve one another! Already, we have begun to pray with other RCA missionaries on WhatsApp, which is a huge blessing. Good is coming out of these difficult times and we know that God will work all things for His glory.

In Him,

Jeremy and Susan (for the family)

Beebouts' ministry

The Beebouts work with the development arm of the EERN. Jeremy, an agronomist, helps with rural development activities including vocational training, promotion of beneficial local plant species, and construction, as well as teaching agricultural English at Niger's only public university. Susan, a medical doctor, teaches medicine at the university and is helping to create a primary care clinic in the capital city of Niamey. Learn more at www.rca.org/beebout.