



Newsletter 1  
4 September 2017



*Myself, Berkley, Casey, Mercedes, Dounbar (one of our hosts on Tabaski), Lily, Grace, and Hannah*

# It's Dakar Time



## Summer & YAGM Orientation

I had a pleasant, relaxing summer living in Fargo working as a CNA at Sanford Hospital in Fargo and helping out a couple of weeks at Park River Bible Camp as a counselor. These flexible jobs allowed me to enjoy time with family and friends before leaving. On August 15<sup>th</sup>, I flew out of Minneapolis-St. Paul for YAGM orientation in Chicago. As this day approached the need to store my things and finalize what goods I would need with me for the year became more apparent (ex: I arrived in Chicago with one pair of pants!).

Orientation in Chicago was an intense, but necessary week that allowed me to listen to experiences of YAGM alumni, fellow YAGMs, ELCA Global Mission leadership, and allowed me time for reflection on the year ahead (and I found some more pants!).

## Dakar

On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, myself and the six other Senegal YAGMs (aka: the Senegals) flew from Chicago to Brussels and then Dakar, Senegal. We were met by our country coordinator/advisor Pastor Kristin Engstrom in the afternoon heat. Excitement was high but after eating our evening meal I was exhausted and ready for my mattress.

I have now been in Senegal a week and a half for in country orientation. I go to my host community in Linguère September 17<sup>th</sup> where I will be living with a host family and building community through a position with Senegalese Lutheran Development Services (SLDS) working in their primary care and HIV/AIDS programs.

Our first full day in Dakar began by visiting one of Dakar's bustling markets to purchase fabrics, followed by consultation with a local tailor so that everyone would have Senegalese dress (pictured above) in time for Tabaski (more on this holiday later). It has been great fun meeting Dakar locals, consuming delicious meals, and learning more about what informs the culture of Senegal. My favorite foods to date are Attiéké (fish and couscous) and the drink Bissap (hibiscus flowers and sugar). Our group has also started language lessons during



## What is YAGM?

I am thrilled to be living in Senegal this year through Young Adults in Global Mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (YAGM). YAGM uses the model of accompaniment as young adults are sent to greet and live alongside new communities for a year. This form of mission is different from previous understandings of missionary/mission as the focus is to build relationships and mutual understanding of beliefs/people/culture rather than change the locals' spiritual practices. I believe that this in turn will help to inspire and strengthen the church in the United States.



Attiéké – A West African dish containing fish and fermented cassava pulp (similar to couscous). One of my favorite parts of language lessons is the delicious Senegalese meals we enjoy at the cultural center before class.

**A huge thank you to family and friends supporting me both financially and spiritually (I was able to surpass my fundraising goal of \$5,000 – Gifts above this goal continue to go to the YAGM program)! I would not be able to embark on such a journey without your love and support. FYI – I will also be keeping a blog this year.**

**<http://amberwavestoambersands.wordpress.com/>**

the week at a local cultural center. I am learning Wolof – a widely used language and cultural group many people in Senegal identify with.

Last Saturday was Tabaski – a significant holiday in Senegal. This is a day observed in Islam although it is an official holiday as well since 95% of Senegal identifies as Muslim.



The days leading up to Tabaski reminded me very much of Christmas in the United States, but with billboards proclaiming Tabaski overlooking the crowds of frantic shoppers. Pastor Kristin and we seven YAGMs were invited to a friend's home to share in the feast (it is a common tradition for Christians

to be invited to the homes of Muslim friends to partake in festivities).

Rams have been everywhere in Dakar as people prepare for Tabaski. Similar to evergreens at Christmas time, rams can be found at nearly every street corner tied to a post or tree. The ram serves as a reminder of when God spared Ishmael and sacrificed a ram. Families butcher and prepare a feast around a ram (our meal of fresh vegetables, potatoes, and mutton is pictured above).



Playing and following football (soccer) is a major pastime in Senegal. Our group was able to attend a match between Senegal's national team and Burkina Faso that will help determine participants in FIFA 2018. Although the match ended in a tie it was fun to watch the game and observe how fans express themselves in both dress and cheers.

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