

Bene Koytara Goyterey

Those who work for God's Kingdom (translated from Zarma)



Dear readers of our Newsletter,



Our last newsletter with the overview of the work during 2021 was of a very different nature than our usual ones and now this newsletter spans the rather long timeframe of about 4.5 months. During this time we were in the Netherlands for 2 months, then Blaise was away in Nigeria for 2 months, and now I have just travelled to Maradi for a stay of 10 days (and wondering how in the world I'm going to catch up on 6 months' worth of work in just 10 days...). Caleb and Phoebé have been back in school since the second week of August and have already finished their first quarter of the school year. Life has been busy with many different things, and the time in the Netherlands seems longer ago than it was in reality. But as you will be able to read in what follows we had two very good months there. A special word of thanks here to those churches and groups that welcomed us in their midst and offered us the opportunity to share about the work we're involved in here: the PKN church in Gouda, the 50+ group of the Pentecostal church in Amersfoort, the Baptist church in Amersfoort, the home group in Leusden, the Baptist church in Winschoten, the Baptist church in Lelystad and of course our 'home church' the Baptist church Rotterdam-Centrum. We look forward to further opportunities for partnership.



We arrived back in Niger in the middle of the rainy season, but by now we are steadily moving into the dry season. This means that it's harvest time. And it means that the school year has started again (the school Caleb and Phoebé attend has a different calendar than the Nigerien schools). At Training Centre Caleb the women and girls have started their activities and also the AECM School has opened its gates. This year we'll have our first group of students who will be taking exams to finish college (the first 4 years of secondary school training). We hope to be giving more updates about these activities in future newsletters, but here we'll share about what happened these past 4.5 months.

Two months in the Netherlands



In the early hours of Sunday the 31st of July we arrived back home in Niamey where we received a very warm welcome from our two dogs. It was a rather dark welcome too; our electricity wasn't working. The good thing was that it wasn't a surprise. The people watching over the house and caring for the dogs had informed us that there was something wrong since the new electricity meter had been installed a few days earlier. Still, it wasn't exactly the issue one wants to have to deal with at 4am after traveling. But Blaise and Caleb got busy and managed to hook up our small generator so that we at least had electricity in part of the house. The kids decided that it was too warm to go to bed anyway and instead started cleaning their rooms and bathrooms (in new middle class houses in Niger often each bedroom has its own bathroom). All in all a rather 'interesting' return home.

But, what I really want to write about does not concern our every day life issues in Niger, but our time in the Netherlands.

There were four main activities on our to do list for our time in the Netherlands: (1) catch up with family and friends, (2) connect with old and new partners in ministry, (3) shop for needed materials, clothing and shoes that are harder to find in Niger, of less quality or significantly more expensive and (4), last but not least, **REST**. Did we manage to realize all four activities on our to do list? To a large extent we actually did!

Let's start with the 'rest' part. This was actually also very much connected with the first 'activity' on the list: catch up with family and friends.

Our last time in the Netherlands was six years ago. So, it was a joy to be able to stay with my parents for most of the time. They had rearranged their two work rooms to make space for the four of us and we got to enjoy their hospitality throughout the time we spent with them. It has been very grateful that they continue to be healthy and strong enough to be able to do that. It was a very precious time and it made a great contribution to providing rest for in particular Blaise and myself.

Besides the time at my parents home, we also enjoyed a week and a half at the home of my brother and sister-in-law. There too we were very well taken care of and we were really glad that it worked out to have this time with them while they had their respective jobs to attend to. And since they live in the middle of the Netherlands we rather conveniently were able to combine our time there with some other more work or 'getting the necessary paperwork in order' related visits. That too contributed to the restfulness of our stay.

And then there were the fun visits with a number of friends. Some of them we've known for years and others more recently. A visit to a friend in Belgium was one of those that stood out. Blaise had known him for quite a long time already and had also spent time with him at several occasions. I had known about him for quite a while, but only more recently we had gotten to know each other better through working on the same team facilitating a Bible study. This, however, had entirely been through Zoom. So it was really nice to be able to meet in person now. And Phoebé (together with the rest of us) got to meet Emma and Evi and their mother. Emma and Evi are the two girls with whom she had been exchanging about life in the Netherlands vs Niger (see the kids specials on our website).

Even though we had a good number more special visits than the ones mentioned here, there were a number of people we would also have loved to visit, but which sadly enough did not happen. Not everything could fit in the time span of two months.

Some fun outings were part of our programme too. We got treated to a boat tour on the beautiful "Reeuwijkse plassen" during a day with a glorious blue sky and lots of fresh air! During the month of June an organization promoting the use of rooftops in cities had created the possibility to do a rooftop walk in the city centre of Rotterdam. Most interesting to learn of various possibilities to make use of the space the roofs of buildings provide and we got to look at the city from a different than usual point of view. Miniworld Rotterdam (model railway with scenery based on the larger Rotterdam area) was another fun visit, as also Burgers Zoo. Obviously, we also visited the beach where we went for a nice and refreshing stroll enjoying the breeze and the wide views.

To be continued [Here is a small impression of our holiday](#)

Two months in the Netherlands, continued

As mentioned, during our time in the Netherlands we also had to do some work related things and take care of some other necessities beside having fun, enjoying special times and rest. Even though we could continue to share still quite a bit about fun and special times – like having the opportunity to celebrate with friends their 30th wedding anniversary and with my parents their 55th wedding anniversary – we also want to tell a bit about these other activities.

One thing we needed to work on was the renewal of the Dutch passports of Caleb and Phoebé. For this we needed to go to a special counter for Dutch civilians living abroad located at Schiphol Airport. The good thing is that this whole process has been improved upon in recent years. So, we actually had submitted the whole dossier online several weeks before and everything had been checked and approved already. Now we just had to bring the hard copies, have those registered (and pay) and a few days later we could go again and pick up their new passports. We were very glad that this all went through as smoothly as it was supposed to be. It was also a privilege to (re)connect with you, our partners for the work here in Niger, both with those we knew already and with those that are new. We are very grateful for each of you and would also love to have regular input from your side if possible. We consider that you are not simply supporting us and the work we are involved in. You are partnering with us in the work that we are practically involved in here in Niger so that people's lives may be changed for the better.

Thus, it was a joy for us to be able to share with many of you about the various things we're working on in Niger and to also get questions from you. Your questions often help us to understand the things that are completely logical to us living in Niger and being part of society here, but maybe not to you, coming from a completely different context. In this way we are better able to share about our life and work here in a way that you can actually relate to it. So, please, do keep those questions coming. Then we can write about it in our newsletters and make those more relevant to you too.

While on the one hand it was very special for us to have the opportunity share about our work with a few groups that we had not met before, on the other hand we were unfortunately not able to visit all churches or church groups that we are connected with. We were in particular sad that we did not get to visit the Baptist Church in Dordrecht. But with one Sunday less due to a delay in flights on arrival, our 7 Sundays were full very quickly. We trust that our next visit won't be 6 years away!

Back in Niger



Back in Niger
During our time in the Netherlands we were constantly hearing reports on the delays passengers were experiencing as well as difficulties with the baggage handling at Schiphol Airport as a consequence of personnel shortages. We had been watching that with some quiet apprehension and wondering how things would work out for our return flight. So, we were glad when we understood that in order to reduce the pressure at Schiphol certain companies started to use other airports and Royal Air Maroc had diverted to Maastricht airport. True, Maastricht is a longer drive for us than Amsterdam, but we were confident that things would be much quieter there than at Schiphol, since it's only a small airport. And so it was. Relaxed in with all our suitcases and getting through security with all our hand luggage was as relaxing as one can wish for. While we were going through security and taking all the electronic equipment out of the bags, one of the staff helping started to chat with me. I told him where we were from and just some other small talk. He replied "it's so interesting, ever since we are getting different flights diverted from Schiphol, people from all parts of the world are coming through". His job obviously had become much more interesting!

Back in Niamey we had to get back in to the swing of things quite rapidly and Blaise in particular. He immediately had to start preparing his trip to Port Harcourt in Nigeria. At the YWAM base there a three months training programme for child- and youth work had been started since the beginning of July and Blaise was part of the staff for the training. While in the Netherlands he had been helping with certain things from a distance already. He left 5 days after our return to Niger.

School for Caleb and Phoebé started again on August 11. They enjoyed getting back together with their friends. Caleb is in grade 11 this year, which means next year will be his final year of high school and we need to start looking into what all will be needed to arrange for him to continue for further studies in the Netherlands. He's thinking of studying computer science. Phoebé is in grade 7, so she still has 5 years to go to get through her secondary education.

Regarding the work with SSCS I needed to start looking into the renewal of the project since the present project plan is valid till the end of this year. While starting to work on it however, I realized that requirements for renewal are such that the available time was too short. Under circumstances it is possible to ask for an extension, which is what I worked on. This extension has bought me time to first of all work on an evaluation of our activities since January 2020 and subsequently lay out our plans for the coming years. Other work on my plate concerns project work reports for both SSCS and JEMED's that are due soon.

At the Académie Evangélique Maradi this is the first time that the leadership team will be starting the school year without the presence of Judy Evans. Also, the person we had hope for to be taking up the overall administrator's role, in the end was not able to do so. Thus, the leadership team in place is all the more so on a steep learning curve. But Judy and I are encouraged to see (albeit from a distance) that the team is taking up the challenge and we have good hope that they will continue to learn to be more and more independent.

Nevertheless, for the moment, it means that Judy and I need to continue to support the team with advice and some practical input more than we anticipated.



To thank for:

- A good time in the Netherlands with family and friends and the opportunity to visit several churches and groups.
- The input Blaise was able to give into the lives of those participating in the YWAM training program in Nigeria.
- An encouraging start of the activities at Training Centre Caleb and the Disciple Training School.
- The effort of the small leadership/administrative team at the AECM School to continue to provide good quality education.

To pray for:

- That the women and girls at Training Centre Caleb and the Disciple Training School will have a good time of learning practical skills, but that they will also grow in wisdom socially and spiritually.
- The small leadership/administrative team at the AECM School to grow in wisdom for the management of the school and in particular the financial management.
- Sahel Academie (Caleb and Phoebé's school) has a shortage of staff and teachers this year. They have found creative ways to make it work well, but it's an extra heavy workload for the staff and the teachers that are there.

With our love,

Blaise, Jeannette, Caleb and Phoebé

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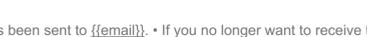
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