

## Bene Koytara Goyterey

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



### ***Dear friends***

This first newsletter of 2026 looks back on the year 2025 and all that it brought. First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for your continued support and involvement. It means more than I can say, especially in a year that was once again full of change and challenges. Through it all, the work continued, and I am deeply grateful for the wonderful people I have come to know and work alongside—those who faithfully and tirelessly carry out the day-to-day work on the ground.

In many ways, 2025 was an eventful year, both personally and professionally. In this overview, I will begin by sharing some family news. You will also read about activities within JEMED, particularly the Fabricants de Joie, as well as updates on the ongoing work at Training Centre Caleb. There has been encouraging progress at the AECM school, along with the continuation of the work of SSCS. Despite a broader context that remains complex and challenging, much good is happening. I hope these reflections offer encouragement and provide insight into how, step by step, the work continues to bear fruit.

### ***Familynews***

The first six months of 2025 were marked by the rhythms of everyday life. Caleb continued his gap year, working and becoming more familiar with life in the Netherlands, while also exploring options for continuing his studies. He applied to and was accepted by an applied sciences university in the northern part of the country. Thankfully, he found a room and began his IT studies in September. Phoebe completed her first year of high school with good results, alongside participating in several extracurricular activities. After several years in which the start of the school year had been delayed, the 2025–2026 school year thankfully began as scheduled in mid-August.

Thanks to a generous gift, Phoebe and I were able to spend the month of July in the Netherlands for our holiday. We spent half of that time staying with good friends and the other half with my parents. During our stay with my parents, my mother was not well. At the time, however, we did not realize that she was terminally ill. This only became clear after Phoebe and I had returned to Niger. My mother passed away at the end of September, and I am thankful that I was able to travel back to the Netherlands to attend her funeral and spend a few weeks with my father. During this time, Phoebe stayed with good friends in Niger so she could continue school.

When I returned home, I was confronted with a serious security incident that highlighted the extent to which terrorist groups had expanded the areas in which they are able to carry out destructive actions. As a result, international organisations were obliged to reassess the safety

of their personnel—particularly expatriates from Western countries—and whether that safety could be assured within reasonable limits. The conclusion was that this had become significantly more difficult. One of the first consequences was the closure of Sahel Academy, the school Phoebe had been attending. Soon after, SIM and several other organisations decided to withdraw their Western personnel. I, too, had to reassess my own situation. After careful consideration and seeking counsel from friends, I concluded that it would be unwise to remain. Consequently, Phoebe and I arrived in the Netherlands in the second half of November. I am deeply grateful that in recent years, together with those continuing the work in Maradi, we have intentionally focused on growing in independence. While we would all prefer that I be able to continue visiting them regularly, this is no longer a necessity. The work can therefore continue, as the aspects for which my input is still required can also be carried out from a distance.

## ***Jeannette Gaitou***

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## ***Jeunesse En Mission Entraide et Développement Niger 2025***

Other JEMED team members are involved in work in several other activities in the country. Different individuals are doing supervisory work at 2 different primary schools. One of these schools has been founded by JEMED, the other by another mission organization. Connected to the JEMED primary school is also a training centre for girls and women. Those involved in supervising the other primary school, are also involved with two other training centres for girls and women, that are part of yet another mission organisation (we love networking). All are furthermore involved in pastoring and in general leadership of churches and in various other occasional activities.

### **Fabricants de Joie (King's Kids)**

The Fabricants de Joie (FJ) is also part of JEMED. I write about it separately because we continue to seek support for this part of the work. During the first part of 2025 Franck, who is the leader for the Fabricants de Joie in Niger, continued to organise the weekly meetings on Sunday afternoon. Typically, twenty to thirty children participated in those meetings. During the Easter weekend he organized a well-attended and appreciated minicamp. He had some other plans for activities, but because of the present situation in Niger, the financial situation of many people is even more tight than it already was. The one thing he was able to organise were a few introductory computer lessons during the school break in July and August. Franck has a basic IT training and had been able to gather several second (or third, or...) hand laptops for this purpose. The multi-functional room at the YWAM base could serve as a classroom. Not many children receive computer lessons in school. Yet, in Niger too, the use of computers is growing steadily. Teaching children computer skills can therefore give them a plus going forward. In November he restarted the weekly meetings after the school break. He decided not to start in October at the beginning of the school year. At that time many parents are often still very occupied with the starting up of the school year issues (i.e. getting the money together to pay the school fees, school supplies and the school uniform). He also started working on a contact with a church in one of the neighbourhoods in Niamey with the idea to be able to start FJ meetings there on the Saturdays.

Stichting Hart voor Kinderen had accepted to give a grant to the FJ based on a doubling of donations we would be able to raise ourselves. For this reason, I worked with Franck to set up a program with a budget, which was submitted to the Stichting at the beginning of 2025. More deliberate fundraising efforts had already been started in the Netherlands. Our hope had been that this funding would come through by the second half of the year so that it would be able to intensify the activities of the FJ. By the end of 2025 this funding had not yet come through. So, Franck continued to organize the basic activities as usual.

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## ***Training Centre Caleb 2025***

From January to June the second part of the first year of the present group progressed normally. The first year is always the most challenging, because most participants have very little or no experience with formal learning. Everything is new. This showed in the exam results where many participants have good or reasonably good results for one subject, but much less for the other subjects. Usually this improves over the following 2 years.

In February the leadership at the training centre organized a commemoration in honour of Blaise and they used the occasion to recall the vision and mission of the centre with all the participants. At the end of the first year 117 participants of the 171 that started, took their final tests and would therefore be allowed to start the second year in October. Even those who don't have good results are allowed to return. If they come, they often slowly but surely improve their learning skills so that they too, toward the end, can finish with sufficient results. Among the 171 who started, 11 came from villages in the Maradi region. These participants stay at the centre during the week, and their families provide for food. Sadly 4 families could not sustain this, and the 4 girls had to stop their training. One other participant passed away. For the other 49 participants who stopped, we do not actually know the reason, but for many it most likely was simply more difficult than anticipated.

For each cycle of three years, it is striking to notice how over the course of the first year the behaviour of the participants changes. There are also those participants who have significant behavioural struggles that leave, but for others their behaviour (aggression, quarrelling, bad attitude, stealing, etc.) really changes with consistent counselling and prayer.

The official start of the new school year was delayed by two weeks till October 13. Even at that time, not all participants were able to come, because from a certain direction toward the Centre there was still too much water on the path from the rains to be able to walk on it. By mid-November it was clear that 88 participants of the 117 had decided or had the possibility to start the second year of their training. Some participants could not continue because for they moved away from Maradi. Others were married during the break and did not obtain permission from their husband to continue.

Before the Christmas break two members of the YWAM team from Niamey went to visit to see how the work had been progressing and how both the staff and the participants were doing. They came back with very positive reports about the quality of the ongoing work they had seen and the way everyone involved, both staff and participants, were taking the work seriously. All are thankful that the Centre continues to operate.



## ***Academie Evangelique Cornerstone de Maradi - 2025***

The 2024-2025 school year ended with a student body of 344: 274 in the kindergarten and primary levels and 70 in middle school. This year again the exam results of the 4<sup>th</sup> year middle school students were encouraging. One student didn't succeed. This resulted in a 94% success rate for the school, a testimony to the hard work of both teachers and students.

The 2024-2025 was the second year in a row that the school had the honour to serve as a government centre for the end of school exams for the final year students at the primary level. For these exams students from different schools are brought together at selected schools to facilitate the supervision and the corrections. Not only is it good that the school has a good name among government offices related to education, but it also increases the school's visibility.

And what is more important than this, is that the parents appreciate the education their children are receiving. A testimony to this is that they massively attended the end of the 2024-2025 school year celebrations.

Early 2025 it was possible to finalize the three-classroom block that had been under construction since 2021. This meant that starting the new school year 2025-2026 it was finally no longer necessary to make use of the classrooms at the nearby Maza Tsaye Centre for Ministries, but that the whole school could be housed at the AECM school site. That was a wonderful milestone! There was one 'but' though. The middle school counts 4 classes. To house those 4 classes in a three-classroom building, one of the three classrooms has been divided in two with a removable separation.

Now, one more three-classroom building is scheduled to be build. For this final block of three classrooms the foundation has been finished. The cost of the foundation was less than foreseen and with the remaining funds cement bricks have been made in preparation for the walls. We continue to search for additional funding to be able to continue and finish the construction of this block of classrooms.

The 2025-2026 school year started mid-October as prescribed by the government. This year a total of 397 students have been enrolled, 309 at the kindergarten and primary school and 88 at the middle school.



## ***Sowing Seeds of Change in the Sahel 2025***

I had the opportunity to go and be on site twice during the first part of the year. The plan had been to go three more times during the second part of the year. But due to family matters and developments in the security situation in the country, that never happened (see the section on Family news).

Work on the research and demonstration farm continued this year again. Last year we did trials with organic fertilizer. But mostly due to challenges in the weather pattern, those trials largely failed. We still had some organic fertilizer left and could use this to do a few trials this year, though much less extensive than last year's. We will only be able to have an idea of the results next year.

Because of stricter government regulations SSCS needed additional paperwork to be able to continue its work in the villages. Unfortunately, this process has been rather slow. Thus, from March it was no longer possible to go to the villages for agricultural or community health teaching.

Abou, the community health teacher, has been using her time to continue to work on improving the health lessons (together with Ruth, who is based in Australia), reading to improve her own knowledge and helping with the administrative and accounting tasks.

In September, after several years of preparation, our new team member Elizabeth arrived on site to continue her Hausa studies and to start integrating in the SSCS community health work. She arrived in the country earlier in the year but had stayed in Niamey to do intensive Hausa studies and be introduced to life in Niger. Sadly, she then had to leave before the end of the year because of the security situation in the country.

With love,  
**Jeannette**

### ***To thank for***

- Praise that the work I've been involved in these past years can continue without my physical presence.
- Praise for a warm bed to sleep in, enough food to eat, cloths to wear, etc, etc. for Phoebe and myself.

### ***To pray for***

- Pray for the many internally displaced people in N. who live under often very precarious circumstances.
- Pray for wisdom for the government in their efforts to counter the terrorist groups and to find ways to improve the social-economic situation.
- Pray for wisdom, courage, strength

and joy for the people who continue the work on the ground; and pray for people like me who now try to continue to bring encouragement through online means.

- Pray for Phoebe and myself and a good number of our friends in this sudden relocation and everything that is involved in that.

Jeannette, Caleb and Phoebé Gai'tou

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