



NEWS FROM YAGM SENEGAL

Pastor Kristin Engstrom, YAGM Country Coordinator

February 2020

Baptisms at Christmas

In December, I was invited by Pastor Latyr Diouf to celebrate Christmas with his family and worship with the parish of Mbokotour. “You’ll preach on Christmas Eve?” he asked once I accepted. “Yes, I would be honored to preach on Christmas Eve,” I said. “And will you come celebrate Christmas in Mbettite too?” “Yes, that would be great”, was my enthusiastic response, knowing that Pastor Latyr is originally from Mbettite.

Around 11:30pm on Christmas Eve, we arrived in the village of Mbokotour. Once the generator started and the electricity came on, I could see that the chapel was as full as possible with people overflowing onto benches outside. I looked to the left of the altar area and saw, to my surprise, an abundance of babies and their parents in their finest outfits.



Christmas Eve baptisms in Mbokotour

Everything soon became clear: Christmas is the time for baptizing babies in the Lutheran Church of Senegal. On Christmas Eve in Mbokotour, nine babies and one child were baptized. As they were instructed to let the light of Christ shine in them, the chapel, which had been illuminated with one light bulb, grew a bit brighter.

The next morning, I expected a small Christmas morning service. But our Senegalese sisters and brothers surprised me once again. Horse carts surrounded the church building. Women were streaming in in their finest clothes. And again, the front rows were filled with babies and their parents.

On Christmas morning in Mbettite, 21 babies and children were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. New sons and daughters of God, welcomed into God’s family, on the day when the church celebrates the birth of Jesus, God’s son with us. I love baptisms at Christmas!

Accompanying YAGM Senegal

My work as an ELCA Global Missionary is possible thanks to the generosity of many congregations and individuals in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Thank you! Jerejef! Merci! Jokonjo! Jahram! You can contact me via e-mail at kristin.engstrom@elca.org. [You are also invited to support me as an ELCA Global Missionary here.](#)

If you would like to see more pictures and stories of daily life from YAGM Senegal, please check out our blog at <http://yagmsenegal.wixsite.com/blog>. *On est ensemble! (We are in this together.)*



Pastor Kristin Engstrom

As an ELCA missionary, I serve as the Country Coordinator for the Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) program in Senegal.

I’m originally from the mid-western United States, and served as a parish pastor in northern New Jersey for six years prior to moving to Senegal in 2016.

Inside Senegal

Baptême: this French word for baptism doesn’t only indicate a Christian baptism. It is also the name for the celebration on the 8th day after a child’s birth when the newborn is given their name, their head is shaved, and their mother is celebrated. Christians and Muslims “baptize” or celebrate the “baptême” of their child’s life.



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YAGM Sightings

A few glimpses of life, work, relationships, and gatherings of the Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) in Senegal over the past few months.



YAGM Zig, Charlie, Collins, Sarah, Connor, & Pastor Kristin at the Lutheran Church of Senegal Harvest Thanksgiving & Celebration Day.



Wedding of Lutheran Church of Senegal General Secretary, Pascal, and his wife Eva Bernadette.



Pastor Kristin and YAGM Charlie (right) with her wolof language tutor, Babacar and his family in Foundiougne.



YAGM Collins (left) and his colleague, Ibou, pasteurizing milk from the Senegalese Lutheran Development Services dairy farm.