

# The Atkins Family Jason, Emily, Savannah, Nathaniel, and Miriam

# May 2022

We'll be flying to the U.S. on June 23rd (until November). many of you as we can!

#### May Showers by Jason

Soon the first rain to fall in Guinea-Bissau since last October will be arriving. We have been working hard to close things up and finish work that a heavy rain would hurt. You get used to being able to leave things out here, because for half of the year, the only weather danger is the intense sun fading and embrittling plastic.



We had a pair of major projects and many more small ones that needed to be completed before the rain arrived. The small ones mostly included getting things put away, trenches filled back in, and the like. However, two big projects needed diligent work in order to be



Roofing the garage / construction storage building ahead of this year's rains gave us a dry place to store material and tools!

ready for the rain.

Last rainy season, though we were blessed to have the shipping container to store our future solar power system and several large/expensive pieces of equipment, we didn't really have any other dry place at the site to store daily things like hand tools and construction



A couple of the roofing days had 110° or higher heat indexes, so that was fun!

supplies. My ingenious guys knocked together a quick little shack for the night guard to have a dry place to lay down, but we lacked a good place to store materials like rebar and rice and tools like shovels, picks, drills, etc. The idea behind building our garage as a first building was to provide a place for construction storage in the near term and then to use it for vehicles later. The garage foundation and walls have been built since last year, but we hadn't gotten around to roofing it yet. Fortunately, we had already collected most of the materials needed to build the roof, so it was just a matter of getting going on it. A couple of guys that I knew from their time at the vocational school were available, so they did a lot

of the truss welding as I divided time keeping this and several other projects on track. Fortunately, I'm happy to report that we were able to get the truss system erected and the roofing laid before the first big rain! Now we have plenty of dry space to store things. Soon we'll finish the doors and even be able to lock the double-bay side! Our truck will also have a safe place to be stored out of the elements while we're away on furlough, which will be great.

The other major area of concern was our house's foundation. Even though we have been working consistently on the house ever since we first broke ground last September, we were at a point where we had spent a ton of time and effort to dig a strong foundation but hadn't yet poured the whole thing. Because of the slope and composition of the land where the house is being built, its foundation ranges from 2' to 6' deep at some points. That digging was all done by hand, so it was a significant effort on my guys' part, and we knew that heavy rains beating on it would likely cave many of the trenches in if the concrete footings weren't poured before the rain arrived. Going in to the beginning of May, the digging was almost completely done, but only about half of the footings had been poured. Fortunately, my guys rose to the challenge! We (cont'd)



### May Showers (cont'd) by Jason

(...) mixed and poured and mixed and poured. (There are no cement trucks here, so all of the concrete was mixed on-site with the help of our trusty one-sack gas-powered cement mixer from the '80s.)

Late-May Update: To date, the guys have a couple more days of digging and then we have several days of pouring to finishing the footings. Though we got a light rain last week, a big damaging rain has yet to fall, so we're coming down to the wire but hoping to squeak in just in time!

## Weekend In Pelundo by Emily

Several years ago I was the speaker at the winter retreat at Simpson Park Camp (in Romeo, Michigan), and this past month I was the speaker for a youth retreat here in Guinea-Bissau. At the retreat in Michigan we huddled around heaters and camp-fires, sipping hot cider with our hoodies on, but at this retreat I was preaching in a tiny open-air church with temperatures



over 100 each day, sweating before they even handed me the microphone. In both places the Lord laid a series of messages on my heart and gave me everything I needed to communicate clearly.

Here in Guinea-Bissau a group of thirty 12-to-18-year-olds, from our church and our church plant in the neighboring town, gathered for a three-day deep dive into Exodus looking at obedience. People hardly ever preach for less than 45 minutes here, and when I got the schedule I saw that my while the Friday night slot was 45 minutes, my two Saturday slots were an hour and half each, and on Sunday morning I needed to speak for 2 hours! God gave me lots of ideas to keep the teaching interactive, keep the kids laughing, and He kept me from getting tongue-tied as I spoke in Portuguese Creole – though by the following Tuesday I had completely lost my voice, haha.

I love spending time with teenagers, and most of the kids at the retreat didn't come from Christian families and came to faith because of the influence of a friend in the

past few years. I was overjoyed to have a small part in making God's

character and calling clear to them in such a pivotal phase of their lives.



### Church Ladies by Emily



One thing that church ladies do over here is cook! Every time there is a wedding, church party, or even just a large get-together, you will find a group of church ladies there first thing in the morning. They gather under a group of cashew or mango tress and get to work: sweeping the ground, gathering wood, peeling onions, pounding garlic and hot peppers, seasoning meat, chopping veggies, lighting fires, rinsing rice, and brewing juice to tie up in little baggies to chill in coolers full of ice. I have been part of these gathering more times than I can count, gradually getting entrusted with more and more complicated

jobs. I am happy to report that I can pound up seasonings and tie juice bags with the best of

them, and I'm by far the fastest onion chopper around. I'm not super great at the machete work of butchering, and no one lets me stir the full cauldrons of rice (the job of the head cook present), so I've still got some skills to learn, but these days of cooking and chatting are some of very favorite in Guinea-Bissau.







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