



The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah,
Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau,
West Africa

November 2023

Our first visitors this winter
were an encouragement,
with more to come soon!

Party Time *by Emily*

We had our first visitors of the “winter” this past month. Brent and Connie Gregory do missionary care with Barnabas International, and they have been working with all of the missionaries in our organization for the past 3 or 4 years. We talk to them on Zoom every month, and this was their second trip out to Guinea-Bissau to see us and our ministry in action and to meet the different people in our lives here.

While they were here, I threw a party for the women of our church and its church plant which is in a neighboring town. The party was an all-day event at the project land with campfire cooking, games, so many prizes, and a prayer service. Some of

the prizes were fun things that I had purchased in the U.S., but the other prizes were not only beautiful and beloved but special because of where they came from. Last year my dad gave me all of my mom’s headscarves and caps that she had worn during her cancer treatment to give to the ladies of our church who loved me and prayed for our whole family over those 3 years. Also last year a dear friend in Tulsa passed away suddenly, and her husband gave me a whole collection of her beautiful jewelry to give to the women here. So, I invited a crowd, cooked a feast, hung up all of the lovely prizes on cords strung around the pillars of our new house under construction, planned all kinds

of games and activities, and relished the day of fellowship, laughter, and joy.

Brent and Connie enjoyed the visit, the party, and the whole community of lovely people in our lives each day.



Cooking together!



Caught In The Middle, Again *by Jason*

Unfortunately, this month we found ourselves in the middle of the latest chapter of the legal fight between the vocational school here in Canchungo (where our shop is still located) and the church whose land the school is built on. The legal process is closing in on its second year, and the court recently issued a judgement handing the school building over to the church in the interim as it continues to try the case.

We haven’t been part of the vocational school organization for years, so our equipment fortunately isn’t part of the issue of contested ownership. However, our rental agreement with the vocational school (who graciously let us stay in the space once we weren’t part of the organization anymore) now needs to be renegotiated but with the church. Many details come along with this (electricity from the shared solar power system, guarding arrangements, etc.), but early negotiations were contentious about topics we didn’t even expect to be a problem. The church’s position is that since the initial court decision came out in January 2022 handing the building over to them, we owe them 2 years of back rent. However, the vocational school appealed that decision, and the handover was paused the following (cont’d)

Caught In The Middle, Again (cont'd) *by Jason*

(...) month. Both sides think they're right, and we (while repeatedly telling both sides that we're neutral) were basically forced to defend one side to justify why we continued to pay rent to the vocational school (who still had ownership and paid the expenses for the building maintenance) in the meantime. Initial discussions about a new rental agreement between us and the church from here forward were stuck on the "back rent" issue, and at one point we were locked out of the facility for 24 hours and threatened with not being allowed to remove our equipment until the rent for the last two years was paid again, this time to the church.

Fortunately, the pastor of our church (different than the one tangled up with the vocational school) was able to arbitrate, and although we don't yet have a new rental agreement, we do have a key again and feathers seem to be slightly less ruffled. We're hopeful that soon we'll have an official agreement with the church that lets us keep the shop where it is until enough of the new shop at the project land is built to the point where we can move the machines into it. If the church chooses not to rent to us, the law here does give us 90 days to vacate, at least.

This conflict is also tied to the house where we live, as the same pastor owns it as well. It's been an unwelcome and stressful backdrop to the joy of our site construction project over the last three years that several times a year instability in that relationship has caused us to switch priorities between building our house or speeding up building the shop based on whether it seemed most likely at the moment that our current house or current shop situation was most likely to dissolve without warning and require us to move one or the other at the drop of a hat. We are thankful for the amazing opportunity to build our own space on land we own that we can move into soon. Please pray for grace for us until we're able to reach that goal!

First Bungalow Progress *by Jason*

Even though it's been a background project that hasn't had our main focus, since the last update about our first guest bungalow almost a year ago, a lot of progress has been made! Our team has been working hard to build the roof (including the first timber frame I'd ever made!), plaster the walls, and install a plaster ceiling. The burglar bars for the windows have been made and installed, and we're now moving on to finishing steps like paint,

tile, doors, bathroom fixtures, etc! The Simpson Park team coming in January is going to help us put the icing on the cake and hopefully be able to almost completely finish the building and make it ready for our its first guests. (The first guests are already slated, but get your name on the list now if you're interested in a trip to visit us and relax in a quiet spot by our favorite river!)

Left: The giant slab from a local tree was too thick even for my 14" tablesaw alone and became the two beams of my 1st timber frame truss.



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