

A letter from Claire Zuhosky serving in Niger

September 2014 Abundantly Blessed

Bonjour mon famille et amis!



Visiting nature reserve for giraffes while in Niamey

My heart is overjoyed at the chance to write you and describe all that has happened since arriving in Niger. Time has gone by so quickly with each wisp of adventure in this mysterious and lively environment. I arrived in Niamey in August and spent two weeks there, where I was able to meet many leaders of the church, Eglise Evangelical de Republic du Niger (EERN), who were very excited to be in partnership with the PC(USA). While in Niamey I was delighted to be given the name "Haske" in Hausa, which means "Light." It sounds like "husky"—therefore my name is Haske Zuhosky. Praise the Lord, I am only one of many lights in Niger—their courage and resilience under harsh and constantly changing terrain inspires me daily to burn a little brighter !



My companion Jael and I

On the 22nd of August I completed a 10-hour drive and took up quarters in the bedroom of a newly built EERN guesthouse located by its Radio Studio and Computer School. Within this compound there is a guardian named Maman who provides security and maintains the property. He and his Christian family also live within the compound. They have taken me in as one of their own, instantly and effortlessly grafted into their roots. We enjoy the tasks of daily living together. Do not be surprised if someday their faces appear in the background of our Skype call as they love to be included! I have been especially blessed by their niece Jael, who has become my shadow and I hers. Her concern for my welfare is evident daily, constantly reminding me that I have been abundantly blessed by the Lord through the people He has placed in my life. My prayer is that I might return the blessing tenfold.



At Macedonia Church for Sunday service

Through my relationship with Jael I have a daily invitation to experience, not just observe, the local culture and cuisine, providing opportunities to gain insight into societal behavior and norms. For example, I had the honor of attending my first wedding in a small village about 20 minutes away in which Jael was a bridesmaid. It is a very quaint and peaceful place with mud-brick walls outlining its many sections, each filled with very modest homes and courtyards with different farm animals and gardens. The church was packed like sardines and people assembled outside its walls to catch a glimpse of this momentous occasion. As I observed the ceremony that unfolded before me I was very blessed to see the unabashed joy with which they celebrated as a community, dancing and singing praises to the Lord for this couple's vow to love one another. You could not help but be lifted up off your pew, swaying rhythmically as one corporate body to the beat of endearing drums as the room was filled by sprays of perfume and thrown confetti.

I have begun to acquire the local languages, working primarily with French and some basic phrases in Hausa. I will soon begin a course at a local French academy that will provide me with some structure and the chance to collaborate with others. I have really enjoyed the experience of learning a new language. Though it can often be overwhelming I enjoy the challenge of it, for when words do not translate, much of life

becomes a game of charades as you act out to others what it is you are looking to ascertain, be it knowledge or a physical object. Laughter almost always ensues, regardless of how good an actor you might be. Hausa is a very interesting language to speak and hear. For instance, *kadunkadunk* means "a small amount," a word I repeat often when locals ask me a barrage of questions in Hausa wanting to make my acquaintance. For now I must say I know only a small amount, but I look forward to a future when my tongue can communicate my sincere feelings to these dear friends.

Only God's hands could interweave such a story of connected humanity, could create such an alluring tapestry of people, of families, of children, of hearts... I thank you so much for providing me with the opportunity to serve, live, and breathe next to these treasured souls in Niger. My heart beats a louder tone here! Your prayers, words of encouragement and financial support are dearly appreciated as we continue on this journey to ignite sparks of light, leading ultimately to a restorative Heaven on Earth. May all praise and honor be unto Jesus' glorious name!

As our hearts are lifted in prayer to our Heavenly Father, I ask that you would please remember the following requests:

Health:

- My father, Frank Zuhosky, who was recently in the hospital since my arrival in Niger, that the Lord would bless his health, providing him with strength and energy to face each day.
- Abner, the youngest child in Maman's family, is ill with typhoid and malaria. Please ask the Lord to restore his health and exuberant nature.
- For my continued health, as I have been dealing with stomach issues since arriving, some days worse than others.
- Language: that the Lord would bless me with retention and courage to practice what I have learned with every opportunity presented to me as I continue to intake more French and Hausa.
- Culture: that the Lord would continue to bless me with friendships, the ability to set appropriate boundaries, and insights into how to serve and bless the people around me in a manner that is sensitive to their hearts and cultural context.
- For the people of Niger, that the Lord would make His presence known to them in a profound way, that He would provide for their daily needs, that His hand of mercy would bring healing to their bodies and to their land, and that His blessings would rain down upon His beloved people.

May His Face Shine Upon You All,

Claire Zuhosky, M.Div.

Youth Center Development Specialist

Niger

- The following link is my personal blog: <http://clairezuhosky.wordpress.com/>

• To communicate with me:

Email: cez108@hotmail.com or claire.zuhosky@pcusa.org

Skype: claire.zuhosky

• To contribute:

I, along with my colleagues in World Mission, am currently still in the process of raising funds for my sending and support and could use your financial support to keep this vital work among the youth in Niger viable. If you would like to contribute to my ministry now or in the future, please contribute online at www.presbyterianmission.org/zuhosky-claire