



Senegal 2024 CF Short Term Trip

February 1-9, 2024

Senegal 2024 Trip Report

2024 marks the start of our twentieth year of partnership with Mission Inter Senegal. Christ First started this relationship through the village adoption of Baback in 2005 followed by the adoption of Ngalagne in 2019. Our team of eleven traveled to Senegal on February 1-9, 2024.

Purpose of Trip

Christ First Church continues to partner with Mission Inter Senegal (MIS) in support of its church planting vision to establish reproducing churches among the unreached people groups in Senegal. We support Indigenous church planters, pastors, and co-laborers for Christ through a variety of projects and programs that create a fertile ground for the gospel to be proclaimed. These programs have helped to bring medical care, fresh water, literacy training, and vocational skills into the villages. The focus of our 2024 trip will be to continue developing relationships within the Baback, Ngalagne and surrounding villages, support and encourage the local churches and encourage the 200 children who are sponsored through CF in the villages of Ngalagne and Baback. The gospel will be shared with men, women and children throughout the week using various methods.

Village of Baback

The church in Baback was established in 2002. Pastors Antoine Diouf and Michel Thiaw shepherd a flock of more than 60 believers in a difficult Muslim region. Initial support for Baback involved socio-economic projects that impacted the entire village (i.e., fresh water, medical clinics, support for the local school, mosquito bed nets, emergency food supplies). In addition, we financially supported the pastors and funded income-generating projects (church garden and livestock projects) that enabled the church to become self-sustaining in 2019. The church in Baback has also helped to plant four churches in the past 15 years.

Highlights:

- *Adopted in 2005*
- *20 short-term mission trips in partnership with Mission Inter Senegal, close to 100 people from CF have participated.*
- *60 believers in a village of 4000 people.*
- *2nd generation church with young leaders.*
- *Child Sponsorship program started in 2010; currently there are 112 children in the program.*
- *Intentional relationships with many Christian and Muslim families.*
- *4 church plants in neighboring villages.*
- *Active outreach to other villages.*
- *Improved health, education and literacy for children.*
- *Light of the World Christian School started in 2020 (Preschool through 5th grade); 224 students enrolled for 2023-24 school year; 80 of the sponsored children attend the school and tuition is funded through the child sponsorship program; the village chief is the president of the PTA.*
- *Self-sustaining church by the end of 2019*

Village of Ngalagne

Our church adoption with MIS shifted from Baback to Ngalagne in 2019. Francois Sene pastors this growing church of 40+ believers. God had been preparing the hearts of many in this village dating back to 2012. Ngalagne is a Sereer village with a population of about 1500 people. The chief and elders are incredibly supportive of the small group of Christian families. Two of the Muslim elders donated large fields where the church would eventually be built. Christ First funded the construction of a classroom for literacy training in 2019 followed by a church building in 2020. Income generating projects have been initiated to enable the church to become self-sustaining by the end of 2025. The church is reaching out to a number of nearby villages where cell groups have started with 4-8 believers in each village. The chief of

Ngalagne, Ousmane Ndiaye, said that peace came to the village once the church was started. His brother also trusted Christ last year!

Highlights:

- *Adopted in 2019*
- *40+ believers in a village of 1500*
- *Cell Groups have been planted in the past 2 years:*
 - *Ndiadiakh – 3 believers*
 - *Wahkeldiam – 8 believers (some women set free from demon-possession last year who are now believers)*
 - *Darou – 2 believers*
 - *Dattel – 5 believers*
- *6 short-term mission trips in partnership with Mission Inter Senegal.*
- *Constructed Literacy Training Classroom in 2019.*
- *Started literacy training program reaching more than 40 adults each week.*
- *Providing monthly support for the pastor and literacy teacher.*
- *Land donated by village elders to build a church.*
- *Constructed church and a wall around the perimeter in 2020.*
- *84 children in the Child Sponsorship program that was started in 2019.*
- *More than 300 children participate in weekly Kids Clubs.*
- *Several income-generating projects have been funded with the goal of the church become self-sustaining by the end of 2025. This will be a major focus of 2024.*

2024 Senegal Team

- Jason and Daniel Bateman (first trip to Senegal for both)
- Pastor John and Ethan Biddle (first trip to Senegal for both)
- Stefanie Kane (new to CF in past year and first trip to Senegal)
- Dave and Deb Pinkerton (Dave's 6th trip and Deb's first trip to Senegal. They now live in Vermont and hope to generate interest in Senegal with their local church.)
- Josh Ward (moved to Texas in 2023 and is returning to Senegal following his 2022 trip)
- Neal Heires (this will be his third trip in consecutive years 2022-2024)
- Mike and Jill Edelman



The team met monthly starting in October to prepare for this trip. Three team members were in two other states, so we met in person and online. The objective of these meetings is to become unified and to share a common vision and purpose for the trip. This team surpassed what we could have hoped for while in Senegal. Everyone engaged fully throughout the trip, and they developed close relationships and cared well for each other.

Trip Schedule

- Thursday 2/1 – Travel to JFK and then evening flight to Dakar
- Friday 2/2 – MIS Orientation, Rest, Shopping
- Saturday 2/3 – Child Sponsorship Celebration in Baback with 112 children, Travel to Ngalagne for the night
- Sunday 2/4 – Worship Service in Ngalagne, Child Sponsorship Celebration with 84 children, relational time
- Monday 2/5 – Medical and Vet clinics in Ngalagne (engaged with patients and kids all day/share the Good News); travel to Thies for the night (hotel)
- Tuesday 2/6 – Return to Ngalagne in the morning, visit families throughout the village; visit new village of Ngilou and share the Good News, Naming Ceremony in the evening for new team members.
- Wednesday 2/7 – Visit families in the morning; travel to new cell group in Wahkeldiam in the afternoon for OCC shoe box distribution and women's hygiene kits distribution; Kids club and Jesus Film in the evening.
- Thursday 2/8 – Final morning with the church; record the story of Ngalagne and church planting; return to Thies for MIS debrief, rest and dinner.
- Friday 2/9 Travel home



Trip Summary

God provided beyond our needs regarding every request we had for this trip.

- Travel mercies to and from Senegal and on the roads throughout Senegal.
- Protection when we blew out a tire on Thursday returning to the hotel.
- We shared the Good News in numerous ways – Wordless book story with bracelets, the Candy Cane Gospel, storytelling with parables and Jesus' miracles, distribution of soap, the meta-story of the Bible, etc.
- Impactful child sponsorship celebrations in Baback and Ngalagne, clear gospel presentation heard by all.
- 120+ patients treated at medical clinic. The team engaged with each patient throughout the day with many opportunities to share the Good News.
- First ever Vet clinic in Ngalagne.
- Many adults received prayer for serious health and spiritual needs. We engaged with a number of demon-possessed women who are finding freedom in Jesus.
- Entered a new village (Ngilou) where the church in Ngalagne will continue its outreach. The Good News was shared, and people were receptive.
- 130 OCC shoe boxes and 60 women's hygiene kits were distributed in a new village (Wahkeldiam). The Good News was shared.
- Our team visited the compounds of many church and village families. The Good News was shared.
- A large crowd came out on Wednesday evening to watch the Jesus Film and the Good News was shared.
- Our team was fully engaged throughout the week.
- God provided for our health needs even during a few challenging days.
- Thank You, Lord, for an awesome trip.



Feedback from Team Members

Jason Bateman



This trip was a challenge for me mainly because I was not too excited about going like I have been on previous mission trips. I was, however, looking forward to going on a trip with my son and seeing how he managed the cultural differences. Watching Daniel interact with the Senegalese children, playing with them and listening to his comments such as “it’s amazing how much you can communicate without having to use words” was a huge blessing. I am glad that we went on this trip. I was incredibly pleased to see how my son dealt with the cultural differences and how he stepped out of his comfort zone to play with the children of the villages. I was especially excited to hear him say “when we come back.”

Regarding the trip itself, the activities that we did such as the soap distribution and visiting the families of local villages around Ngalagne was a great experience to see how the church shares the Word, and to witness their desire and excitement in sharing the gospel with the local people in the area was extremely uplifting and encouraging. Our team worked very well with each other. Lots of support and laughter with each other. Looking back, I am now glad that I went on this trip. I built relationships that I hope will last not just in Senegal but with other members of the team as well.



Daniel Bateman



I was not sure what to expect from this trip. I had never been on a mission trip before, and I was nervous about going. I was especially nervous about the differences in culture, and with the whole different language. Though I had these doubts, I am glad I went, and would absolutely go again. I did not feel like I was much use to the team, but I turned out to be quite a great addition. The day I got to the village, the kids immediately started playing games with us, which was very relieving. I realized that just by passing the ball around was making the kids very happy. I loved to see them smile throughout the trip. When they would come up to Ethan and me with a ball and ask in their own way for us to play with them, this is where I felt most involved. I was happy I could give the mothers a break by entertaining their kids. Throughout the trip I always found it amazing how much we were able to communicate without speaking the same language. The smiles and

laughs we would get from the kids, and their parents while playing, was very encouraging. It was how I knew that I was appreciated. I was extremely impressed with how much we did, how many people we got to talk to and share the Word with. We were able to reach more than just the village in which we were staying. I cannot stress enough how amazing it was to see how much joy we brought to the people, especially the kids, with all that we did while we were there. In the end, I had an exciting time, and cannot wait to go back.



Stefanie Kane



God is working in Senegal! That was my biggest takeaway from our trip. This trip showed me the immense impact continued personal relations, like the ones Mike and Jill have with the Senegalese, have on bringing people to Jesus. Even non-believers see the impact the church is having in their villages, and this was so encouraging. The people showed a heartfelt appreciation for the sponsorship and educational programs the church/MIS is providing for their children. These programs need our continued prayer and support because they are working in spreading the Gospel and more villages are showing an interest in these programs. I also will never forget the warm

welcome we received from all the people we met in Ngalagne.

The women there greeted us with smiles and put their hearts into serving us. I know I will continue praying for the salvation of all these people. I hope we encouraged them as much as they encouraged us.



Neal Heires



This was my third visit to Senegal in a row, with a team of eleven, largest one of the three. Mike and Jill, as usual, did an extraordinary job working with the Mission Inter Senegal (MIS) team to prepare a full agenda with multiple opportunities for spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, one key point that was impressed on me was when Docor, one of our translators, told us that less than half of the people in the villages can read and write. For many, reading and studying the bible is not feasible. And even if it were, the Serer bible is not a study bible that explains context and references to other scripture. Therefore, the gospel is mostly spread verbally, by sermons at church and the MIS team, AND by us in our annual visits.

When we come to visit, they are excited to meet us and are open to hearing the gospel. And we did present the gospel:

- On the first day at Baback to the children in the child sponsorship program,
- at Ngalagne during Sunday worship and the following day
- at the Medical Clinic, at Wakheldiam,
- on Wednesday during distribution of Christmas Child boxes and Women's hygiene kits,
- as well as during visits to compounds of other families and elders.



We were all called upon to be active participants, whether by participation in the acting out of Jesus's stories in the bible, or by closing prayers as well as prayers for individuals with special needs. Pastor John added one more element to the story telling by drawing the biblical scenes as they were being described.

The other thing that continues to overwhelm me is both the spiritual and physical needs of the village people. When they have trouble, they often cannot afford the expensive medical care when it is required. Some women turn to witchcraft for healing, as Islam offers no hope.

Here is where Christianity really makes its impact on them. We offer prayer for healing and guidance and to trust in Jesus, while also offering physical support in many circumstances where it is truly needed, helping out those in need where we can, as if we were helping Jesus. We are spreading the love of Christ as he loved us.



Abou Ngom, my namesake and a church deacon, is crippled and had no bathroom facility in his compound which made life extremely difficult for him. Donations that came through MIS and approved by the Ngalagne church, enabled the construction of a bathroom facility that was nearly completed the day we visited. The expression of gratitude by all in the family compound was overwhelming, and a real testimony as to how expressing the love of Jesus transforms lives. While there are some believers in his family in addition to him, it would not surprise me to learn that they are now all dedicating their life to Jesus.

In closing, I can say that from year to year, it is evident how the gospel is spreading. Before, we had to work on building relationships, while interjecting the good news. Now, we are spreading it openly and strongly, and they are extremely interested in hearing it. "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." Indeed, they have ears!



Dave Pinkerton



This was my sixth trip to Senegal. Although all the trips have been "relationship-building" trips, this one was different. God taught me humility in many different situations--that people are the same everywhere and respond to kindness, whether a team member, villager, or my spouse.

The biggest revelation was the realization that Satan is still continually active. The church in Senegal sees demon possession as very real and handles it with much prayer. It was a one-of-a-kind experience to see how impactful the name of Jesus is!!



If you ask me one thing I learned and will put into practice as a result of this trip, I would say get to know people by asking questions--spend less time talking and more time listening; less time "doing" or "fixing" and more time just "being." As the saying goes, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

Deb Pinkerton



The Senegal trip opened my eyes in several ways. It showed me how people with such meager means can be so generous. It also reminded me how important community and relationship building is to impacting people for Christ. Finally, it taught me how blinded we are in the West to spiritual warfare. The ministry of casting out demons is very real in Senegal! The church there desperately needs our prayer and monetary support to continue the momentum created in advancing the Gospel throughout the local villages. As a result of the trip, I will be telling others about my first-hand experiences, hoping to generate more interest in what God is doing in Senegal.

Jill Edelman



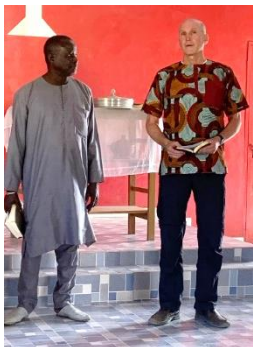
In the months and weeks leading up to the trip, I was reminded how God divinely orchestrates who and how He works through to accomplish His plan and purpose for each of our lives. I was excited to share how God is moving in Senegal with the new team members, and how He would unite us through the power of His Holy Spirit. It is always interesting and enlightening to see the trip through newcomers' eyes and hear their insights and perspectives about their experiences. God never ceases to use others to teach me new things about Him and ministry.

It is very encouraging to see the growth of the Light of the World Christian School in Baback, and how effective the school has been in growing our Lord Jesus's Kingdom in Baback. I do believe this is an important ministry tool that should continue to be supported through the Child Sponsorship Program, and any other ways that CF would see fit to support the gospel work happening there. I also see the need to encourage the staff, and the church to continue to pursue their own personal relationships with Jesus Christ through access to biblical training.

(The man in this picture is the village chief, Babacar Diouf. His children attend the school, and he is the president of the PTA.)



In both Baback and Ngalagne, the skits and John's illustrations (at the Child Sponsorship gatherings, and the Medical Clinic in Ngalagne) seemed to be effective as a teaching tool and provided an opportunity to share the gospel in multiple ways with the children. Being that this is still primarily an oral culture, I think that we should look to utilize this means of teaching on every CF team trip.



Sunday in Ngalagne was an example of God's sustaining Grace. God heard and answered the prayers of our team members and gave Mike (battling Laryngitis) the vocal strength he needed to deliver our Lord's message in church. Team members were encouraged as a result, and God was glorified!

Having another experience at the close of the service with demonic activity gave me pause to pray and consider how active the enemy is and how this activity is just as prevalent in our own society as it is in Senegal. It was a good reminder for me to be on guard spiritually, to be utilizing the full armor of God in my daily living, and to continually ask God for discernment and wisdom in daily conversations with unbelievers and believers in light of the weapons the enemy is using against us every day. I am thankful for the leadership of the church taking the time to help the team have a better understanding of what had happened and explain the process they use in

counseling and praying with individuals that come to the church for prayer and help. Their approach is biblical and spiritually mature and was a blessing to hear their response. The leadership of the church did ask for prayer for consistency in attendance by members and for God to continue to grow His church there in Ngalagne. I pray also that the women living in the community would be freed from any strongholds that keep them from coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The culture is restrictive spiritually, and I pray that God would remove this stronghold the enemy uses.



I was very encouraged to see how involved both Ethan and Daniel were in interacting with the children in both villages. I know that typically adults in Senegal do not "play" or spend a lot of time interacting with their children. I also know that the parents and other adults were watching how involved Ethan and Daniel were playing with the children. This speaks volumes of the love that God has for these little ones, and I am sure this had an impact on the church and community around the church to see how engaged these teens were with the children.

I am so thankful that Dave was able to share this trip with his wife Deb. I know she had some rough times with her health, but in spite of that her love for the Lord was clearly seen in the interactions she had with the children and women. This experience, shared as a couple is a gift from God, and I hope that they both will have the opportunity to join us again on a future trip.

That being said, it was also a blessing for John and Ethan, and Jason and Daniel to have this shared experience as father and son. I pray that this experience strengthens their relationship with one another and that they were all encouraged spiritually.



I also really enjoyed the opportunity to get to know Stefanie and Deb better and to be able to minister together to the women. I look forward to getting to know each of these sweet sisters in Christ better and for more opportunities to do ministry together!

And it was a blessing to watch Neal, Josh and Jason, using their gifts (in and outside their comfort zones) all interact in numerous ways with people in the various places and situations that we were in together.

This was the most interactive team we have had on a trip as long as I can remember. I saw team members stepping out of their comfort zone and using their gifts to engage with people in Ngalagne. This was especially effective during the medical clinic in Ngalagne. All of the adult team members actively engaged with the people (mostly women) while they were waiting to be seen by the doctors. Time was taken to pray over individuals, ask questions, and Bible stories were shared (verbal and visual), and

people were loved on. Fresh water was shared, and lunch was even served to people still waiting to be seen by the medical staff. The love of Jesus Christ was seen and experienced in tangible ways.

One of the most encouraging things for me was to see how Pastor Francois and the church leaders in Ngalagne are reaching out to nearby villages. The workers may be few, but they are diligent, and the love of Jesus Christ is clearly seen in them as they interact with people. The time in the village we visited Tuesday evening, and our time in Wahkeldiam (hectic as it was), were notable examples of the fruit being produced for the Kingdom of God. There is genuine love for Jesus and for people in the leadership of the church. The combination



and use of tangible items (care kits for women, soap, and OCC shoeboxes) to meet physical needs creates opportunities to share the Gospel and to build relationships. These are all things we should continue to support in the ministry work through and to these villages.

The naming ceremonies, the giving of names to namesakes is so significant in the Senegalese culture. My prayer for our team is that they fully understand the significance of this, and that they will remember to keep their namesakes in prayer. I pray that whether together or apart, by the power of the Holy Spirit, these friendships will continue to deepen over time.

Matt did an exceptional job with the debrief and the team was effective in sharing their experiences, perspective and suggestions regarding their experiences. It was shared with me but not in the debrief that a "fun day" at the end of the trip should be included in future trips. This is something worthwhile including for teams, remembering that this may be the only time most team members have the opportunity to be in Senegal.

In conclusion, I am overwhelmed by all that God is accomplishing in the villages we visited. I pray for walls to continue to come down in people's hearts, and for the Lord to continue to give Mike and I opportunities to partner in the work that He is doing both in Senegal and here at home. I pray that the team would continue to process their experiences from this trip and consider the plans God has for them moving forward (wherever that might lead them). I thank God for Mike's leadership in our marriage, in our family, in the ministry that He has called us to, and pray that we will continue to be unified in the calling our Lord Jesus Christ has placed on our hearts. I am very thankful for this team, for the deepening of relationships and the time we were able to share with one another in Senegal.

Josh Ward



I had already been on the trip to Senegal two years ago, so I was unsure of what new things I would experience and learn. This time, I went with more intentionality and boldness when interacting with the locals. It was great to see how open and welcoming everyone was, both within the villages and within our team. During this trip, it felt like I was living back in the New Testament/Gospels. Some people of the village would come to us asking for prayer to heal them, similar to how the sick came to Jesus. Reflecting on it, I too was impressed with their faith (or desperation) that they would turn to Christians for healing. Needless to say, the opportunities to show God's love and power were ample.

This trip has bolstered my confidence in the power of prayer and how much God is willing to use us to advance His kingdom if we are open to Him. Moving forward, I will be more eager to pray for people, right there on the spot, and be more confident in His power. Amen!



Pastor John Biddle



In addition to the joy of sharing this experience with my youngest son, this trip was an eye-opener in the understanding of our long partnership. It also made clear the value of sustained partnership. Our long-term investment there is bearing fruit in a way that is unique and durable.

I've been aware of the “what” — the components of ministry: Child sponsorship, material needs being met, water, physical churches, demonstrations of Christ's love through medical and spiritual needs.... But seeing the role that they play in making the gospel relevant fills in the “why” of their importance.

Having experienced the people, the land, and the culture, it's clear how all those ministry components work in symphony to pave the road for the good news.

An animistic, muslim-ish cultural default views outsiders and the Christian faith with some initial suspicion.

Low income, low literacy, poor healthcare and other difficulties leave many to struggle with basic needs, reducing their ability to tend to their spiritual needs.

Low income and few believers inhibit internal support for local ministry.

Lack of literacy makes gospel explanation a long, relational process.

Now I can better see how the MIS ministry components are all highly integrated & strategic. Ministry is 100% relational. Relationships are built on demonstrated care. Care is physical and relational. Love is demonstrated through met needs and opens the door to the gospel. The physical presence of people and facilities makes it all happen, but it happens over the long term.

And behind all this is the very apparent spiritual truth: The name of Jesus is powerful and people will respond— so long as they also see Jesus' hands and feet demonstrating His love.

So this trip was very valuable for me, not just as an experience, but to understand why our long-term partnership has been such an effective and important investment in building God's kingdom.



Plans for 2024 and beyond

- We are requesting pastoral approval to reserve a **2025 trip** date with MIS for Wednesday, February 26 returning Saturday, March 8. Mike and Jill would continue with GTN training from March 9-29, 2025.
- Continue discussions with MIS regarding the **next village for CF to adopt** after Ngalagne toward the end of 2025. This might involve the need to raise funds to help launch this village adoption (i.e., income project for pastor, project to develop relationship and trust with the village.) Expansion of child sponsorship would make sense as well.
- With greater than 60% illiteracy rate among adults (especially women), **providing the Sereer bible** on a handheld, solar-powered device is a huge need. Mega Voice (and other providers) offer pre-loaded devices for \$20-25 per device. This could be a potential church-wide project for later in 2024.
- We will look to **expand the child sponsorship program** again this fall with an additional 30-40 children. We welcome support to promote this church-wide in the August timeframe. We could probably find sponsors for these kids on one Sunday.
- There is always a need for **new church construction and pastor income-generating projects**. Might this be a potential December 2024 fund raising project? Please let us know if this in the global outreach plan for 2024-2025.
- GTN will continue to **partner with Mission Inter Senegal to equip pastors and leaders** throughout Senegal. We are praying about additional equipping opportunities and the potential to partner with Chris and Melody Powell in Liberia. GTN has done training there in the past and the GTN trainer has asked us to engage as we feel led. This would align around an expanded west-African strategy.
- We welcome support to **develop a Senegal leadership team** to prepare for continuity of this partnership.



We thank the Lord, for the past 20 years of ministry in Senegal with CF, MIS and now GTN.
The fields are white for harvest! Ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His harvest field.
Mike and Jill Edelman