

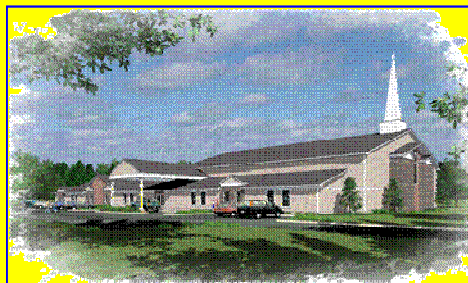
## You Will Be My Witnesses...To the Ends of the Earth!

We at First Baptist Church of Aurora are becoming obedient to the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19 – 20. Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

The first page of this publication speaks to our obedience as a church to Jesus' command to "Go!" The center pages of this publication recalls God's Hand at work as we were obedient – for many Bambara believed in Christ, were obedient to baptism, and are now following the Lord as true disciples who worship God in spirit and in truth.

We, as a church, are now looking forward to that part of the Great Commission where we are challenged to "teach them everything Jesus commanded." That's a tall order! In 2008, three mission trips are confirmed with the missionary staff in Mali. These dates include: April 1 – 12; June 1 – 11 and December 1 – 11. During each of these trips, we will be continuing to teach the new believers everything Jesus has commanded us to be and to do.

As we look forward we must realize this partnership will continue for a couple of years, until the young church established in Sunja has become a fully devoted, self-reproducing church. In December of 2007, Kunto encouraged us saying, "Now I'm a believer, I was baptized and now I know Jesus but I would love to know more about him."



## IS GOD CALLING YOU TO GO?

**Begin by praying (Matthew 9:35-38).**

**Discuss your desire with family and friends.**

**Talk to Diana Otten and Pastor Keith.**

**Read the mission manual.**

**Choose a date for 2008.**

**Begin the process of acquiring a passport and tourist visa. Get vaccination shots and learn some Bambaran phrases. Watch the training video and prepare to be used by God in a most wonderful and powerful way.**

**GO!**

# Mission to Mali

**Partners in Missions—Philippians 1:6**

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## GOD'S CALL TO GO TO MALI, WEST AFRICA

During Paul's second missionary journey he experienced a call from God to go to Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10). Paul's team included Silas and Timothy. These men responded favorably to God's call and took the gospel to Europe for the first time. On that missionary campaign God reached the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus with the good news of Jesus Christ (Acts 16-20).

Similarly, God gave our church a vision in 2006 to partner in Mali, West Africa. In June of 2007 a team of three individuals (Roger Haun, Pastor Keith Missel, and Diana Otten) joined veteran missionaries Steve and Susan Roach and Diane and Tom Pace for ten days of ministry. After settling in for a day and receiving Cross Cultural training, our team left for ministry for the village of Sunja. God provided a wide open door for ministry, for the chief of the village welcomed our team with open arms.

During our time in Sunja, 22 men and women put their faith in Christ. After teaching these new believers how a New Testament church functioned (Acts 2:42-47) they began meeting for worship on a regular basis. In addition, three teachers were selected from among the people for mentoring and leadership within the church.



Prior to June of 2007 the village of Sunja did not have one follower of Christ. Although ministry to the Bambara people of Mali has taken place over the past couple of decades very few have responded to Christ, until recently. Clearly God's Spirit is working powerfully. One veteran missionary said "this was the hand of God." In addition, Roger Haun, regional director for West Africa said, "I have never seen anything like this before."

When Diane and Tom Pace spoke at our church in September Diane stated "that in twenty years of ministry she could count the number of conversions on her two hands." However, Diana said, "in the past year in Sunja and neighboring villages in the Bush, nearly one hundred Bambara have given their lives to Christ."

## BEAUTIFUL BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

The book of Acts is clear that genuine faith in Christ results in obedience to the ordinance of baptism. The first baptismal service for the new believers in Sunja took place on Sunday June 24, 2007. Twenty two believers walked from their village to a river and identified themselves with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The picture below demonstrates how genuine these followers of Christ are as they seek to please the Lord in all they do.



Twenty two men and women baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!



The church in Sunja is growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

## STRENGTHENING THE CHURCH

After their first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas saw value in returning to the churches they planted with the goal of strengthening them in the Lord (Acts 15:36-41). Following the apostles example in December another team of three from First Baptist Church (Diane Otten, Pastor Keith Missel, & Pastor Paul Waickman) returned to Mali to help the believers in Sunja grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

During this trip our team once again experienced the hand of God. The following blessings reminded us that God ultimately cares for His vineyard (John 15).

- The church in Sunja continues to grow in Christ. Since June, five more people from Sunja professed faith in Christ and were obedient to the Lord in baptism.
- The church meets regularly for worship.
- The church is affirming leadership and these leaders are being mentored by the missionaries.
- The Word of God is being taught by three appointed teachers with indigenous lessons written by the missionaries.

One precious memory we will always have is seeing the church in Sunja celebrated their first communion. How wonderful an experience to see these believers understand that the bread (they used Millet cakes) represents Christ's broken body and the blood (they used red tea) represents Christ's shed blood for them. We came away from our second trip reminded that God takes care of His vineyard.

## VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL—YOUR OFFERING AT WORK!

Many people in the villages are illiterate. Therefore, presenting them a Bible to read once they put their faith in Christ is unhelpful. A ministry, known as the "God's Story Project" developed a solar recorder that contains 66 Bible stories. With the money raised from vacation Bible School in 2007 we purchased 7 God Story recorders. These recorders were distributed to key leaders in three different villages. To the believers in Mali, the recorder is their Bible. They listen to the recorder morning, noon and night. One gentleman named Kunto said, "he takes his recorder out to the field and listens to the Word of God while working."

The wonderful thing about these recorders is that they are solar powered and do not need batteries. In addition, the recorders can easily be shared with others once the Bible stories are learned. The picture to the right is an actual recorder distributed to believers in the three villages we served. For more information on the God Story go to <http://www.gods-story.org>



## THE CHURCH MULTIPLIES

In the photo below, the man on the far left is Sunkalo. After giving his life to Christ in June, Sunkalo changed his name to Paul. Since June, Paul has grown tremendously and now is one of the teachers and leaders of the church in Sunja.

When our team returned in December, Paul told me he had a friend in a neighboring village who wanted to know Christ. We traveled through the Bush and came to a small village to meet Esa and his friend Dou Dou. After a few hours of hearing the gospel both men believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Esa is the short man pictured to my right.

Esa's testimony is powerful. At three years of age, Esa lost one of his legs when he fell into a fire pit. Two months ago, he had his other leg amputated because of a disease. While Esa was in the hospital he wanted to die. He began starving himself to death. His friend Paul visited him and shared about his new relationship with Christ.



When we visited Esa, God's Spirit opened his heart to the gospel. Two days later we returned to the village to present Esa and Dou Dou with a Bible and Bible recorder. Esa brought five friends to hear about Christ. That day, these five men trusted Christ. Through Paul, the Word of God has spread to another village and the church in Sunja is multiplying.