

Joel and Karen Gray



Swimming (Serving) in Niger

September 12, 2020



Horrifically devastating flood surges through Niamey

God's faithfulness in a time of chaos

Words alone will not fully express the chaos we have recently experienced. We evacuated our home on the Sahel Academy campus on August 24 and then evacuated again on September 6 from where we were staying after the first evacuation, as flood waters overwhelmed part of the the city of Niamey.

Thousands of people in Niamey have lost their houses and their food. Our places of ministry, Sahel Academy and ESPriT Bible School, are completely under water. Some city streets are impassable and traffic for many people has become an increasing challenge.

Through it all we rejoice in the God who is faithful. As Psalm 29:10 remind us, "The Lord sits enthroned over the flood, the Lord is enthroned as King forever." He knows every hair on our head and every drop of rain that falls from the sky. We may not understand the trials that are part of our very broken world, but we cling to a God who is faithful. We grieve with those who grieve and look forward to the day when when all suffering shall cease and we shall live in the presence of our Lord and King forever.



Bible School Under Water

The population of Niger is overwhelmingly Muslim. Less than 0.5% of the population is Christian. The Bible school has the crucial task of preparing men and women for ministry. It is now, as pictured above, under water. The school's leaders are scrambling to rent other buildings in another part of town for the year. Joel taught 6 courses there last year and was scheduled for 3 this year. Pray we find a place to hold classes for this year.

Please Pray



After two weeks of intense sand-bagging to shore up weak areas of the Sahel Academy wall, on Monday, August 24, the wall broke. Water burst through the gap in the wall and in less than 2 hours our almost 5 acre campus was under 4 feet of water. Missionary residences gathered their most important belongings and waded in chest deep water for the gate.

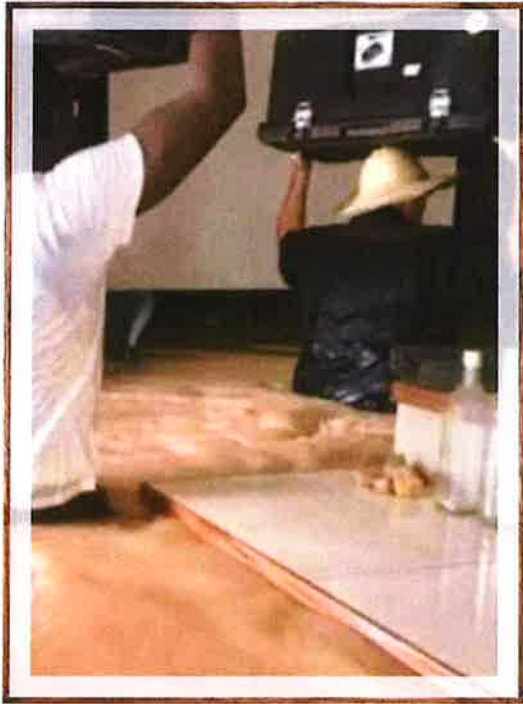
It has been almost three weeks since the beginning of the flood and the campus of Sahel Academy is still under water. Pictured to the right is the main door of our administrative building where Joel's office is. The campus of our school has become part of the Niger river, Africa's third largest.





Newly Renovated Library

Two weeks prior to the flood we had completely renovated and moved back into the school library. It had a beautiful new ceiling and was clean, bright, and inviting. When it became clear that the campus might flood, teachers pulled books from the bottom and stacked them on the highest part of the shelves. While many of our books were saved, the furniture is completely destroyed. The shelves were swum off of the campus by a group of adventuresome teachers. After several thorough cleanings, first with bleach and then vinegar, feisty multi-colored mold continues to emerge from the shelves. While an official damage assessment has not yet been done, damage to the campus wall, buildings, equipment and furniture could easily run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.



For two weeks we worked in teams to salvage furniture and equipment. Teams waded into sometimes neck-high water or took canoes onto the campus and hauled tables, chairs, desks, science equipment, and books off the campus. Other teams drove the furniture and school equipment to dry places around town to wash, dry and fight back mold. Karen, above, is sorting through books trying to find what was saved from her kindergarten classroom.



Many cars were trapped on campus and could not be driven out. Creative ways were found to get them through the water and onto dry land. We are thankful that our car was parked on a high part of campus. Friends put it up on bricks and rescued it on a trailer 8 days later. Several other cars floated out with barrels.



The interior of our our car was stripped, scrubbed and dried to keep mold from growing and spreading. Water had gotten onto the exhaust pipe but not into the motor. two days later our car was put back together. We are very grateful for friends who helped us rescue it.

How Can You Be Involved?

Donate for Flood Relief

1. Give through SIM

[https://checkout.simusa.org/give?\\$1](https://checkout.simusa.org/give?$1) . Niger Flood Relief 97620

This is a broad flood relief response that will go to multiple purposes including rebuilding homes of Nigeriens, providing food to hungry people, and rebuilding the Bible School and Sahel Academy.

2. Give through Teach Beyond

<https://give.teachbeyond.org/support/sahel/>

Funds given there will go to rebuilding Sahel Academy.

Please Pray

1. Many in Niger have lost their homes and food. Some estimates put the displaced at 250,000.
2. We are entering high malaria season and with lots of standing and stagnant water, malaria and cholera will likely be a problem.
3. The Bible School, with an extremely tight budget, must rent buildings for the year.
4. Sahel Academy is scrambling to get the school year started.

5. Sahel staff are physically and emotionally exhausted. Many of our staff are looking for new homes as we are relocating the school.

6. Pray that God will be honored by how we respond to the challenges we are going through. Pray that these trials draw many to Jesus.



A Word of Gratitude

Words cannot express the chaos we have been through but neither can they express the thankfulness we have for the support we have received during this time. People have come together in Niger in amazing ways as we have faced these incredible trials. We also want to express our deeply felt gratitude for our friends and family at home who have expressed their care and support in numerous ways.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Joel, Karen, Daniel, Joshua, Jessica, and Katie

Our mailing address is:

*Joel and Karen Gray
SIM Niger
BP 10065 Niamey, Niger
West Africa*

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