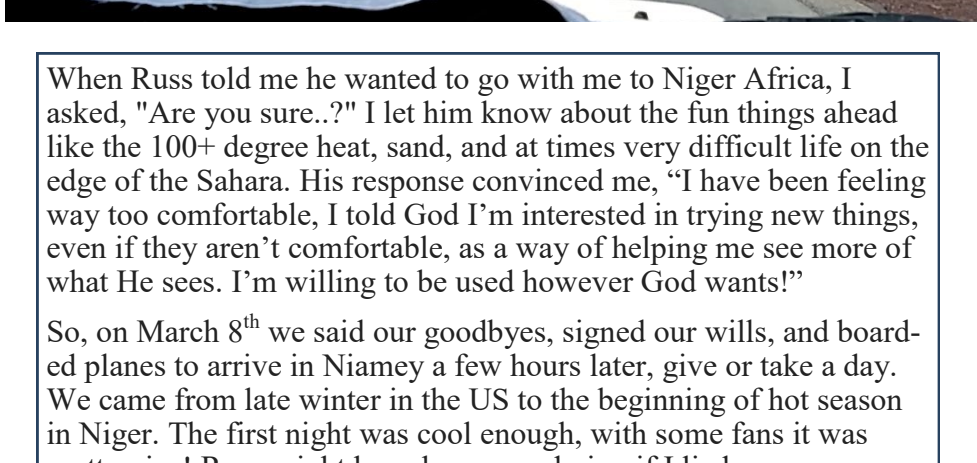


Left Behind : A Crash Course in Traveling During a Global Pandemic



When Russ told me he wanted to go with me to Niger Africa, I asked, "Are you sure..?" I let him know about the fun things ahead like the 100+ degree heat, sand, and at times very difficult life on the edge of the Sahara. His response convinced me, "I have been feeling way too comfortable. I told God I'm interested in trying new things, even if they aren't comfortable, as a way of helping me see more of what He sees. I'm willing to be used however God wants!"

So, on March 8th we said our goodbyes, signed our wills, and boarded planes to arrive in Niamey a few hours later, give or take a day. We came from late winter in the US to the beginning of hot season in Niger. The first night was cool enough, with some fans it was pretty nice! Russ might have been wondering if I lied..

The next morning, we headed off to the Academy where hundreds of missionary kids and many local kids mingle. It's a school where kids can gain an incredible Christian education. School was still in session, so we quietly tip-toed in and out of classrooms figuring out our plan. Over the next few days, we moved the telephone system

THE BOTTOM LINE

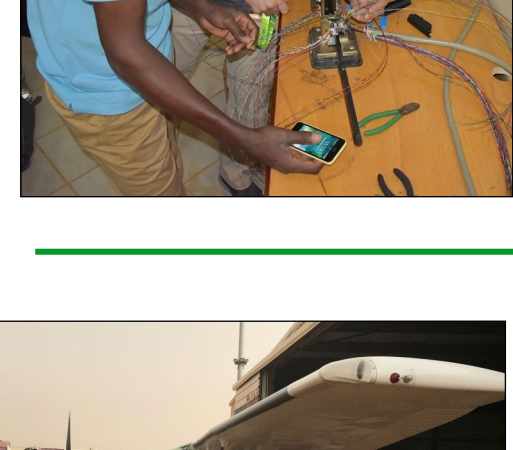


from a very hot and dusty closet to the air-conditioned server room in the library. We like happy telephone systems!

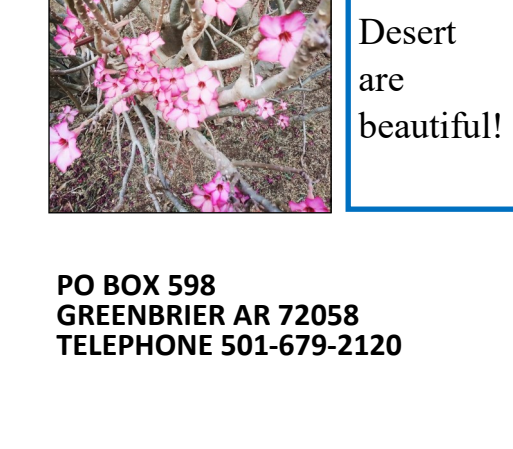
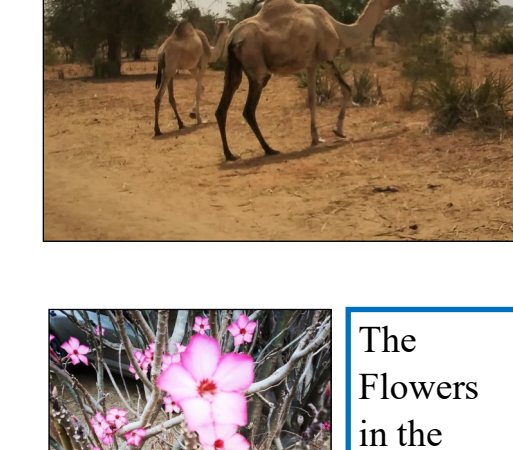
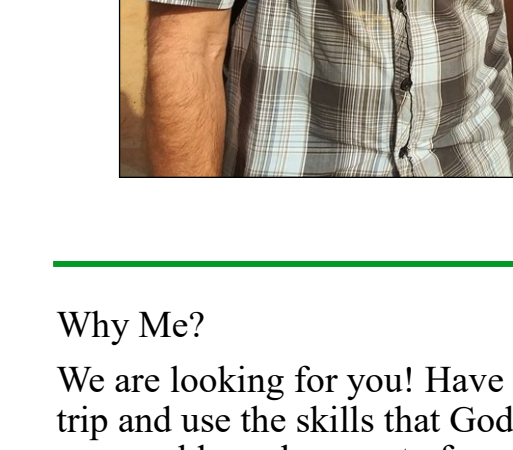
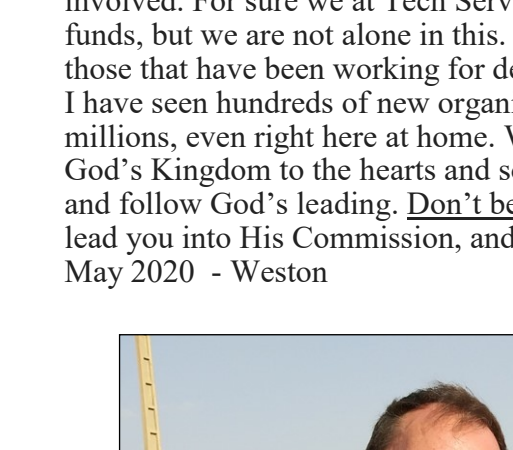
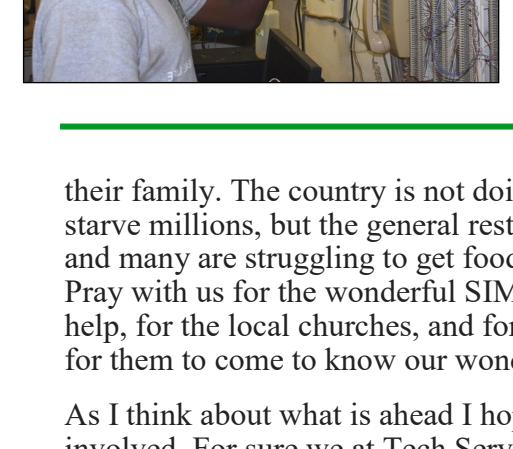
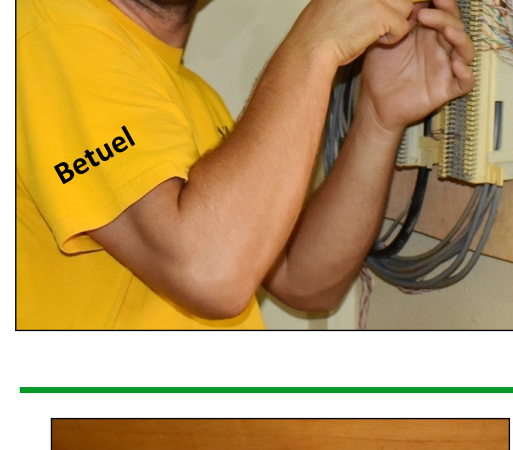
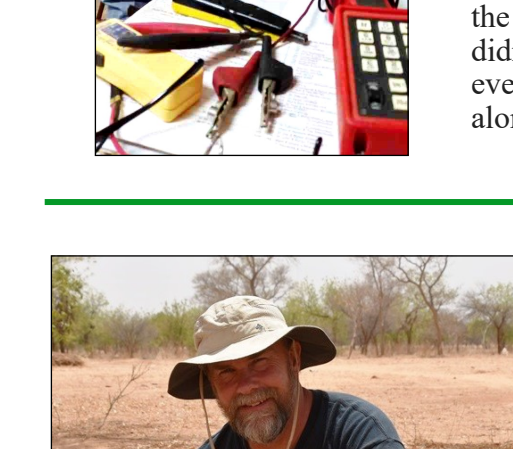
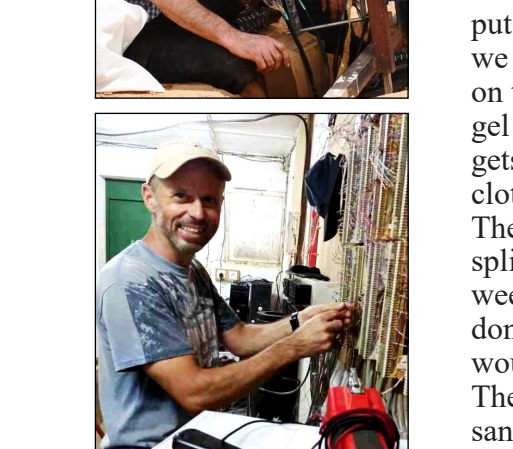
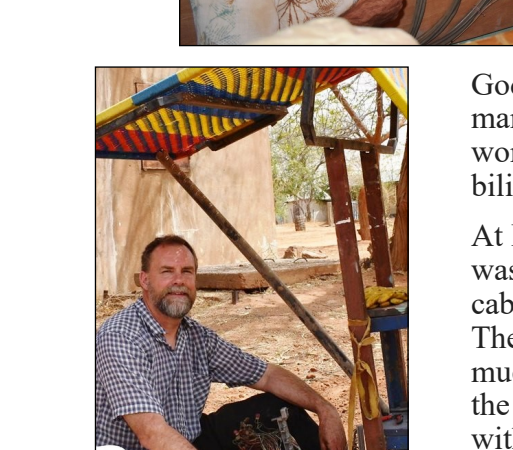
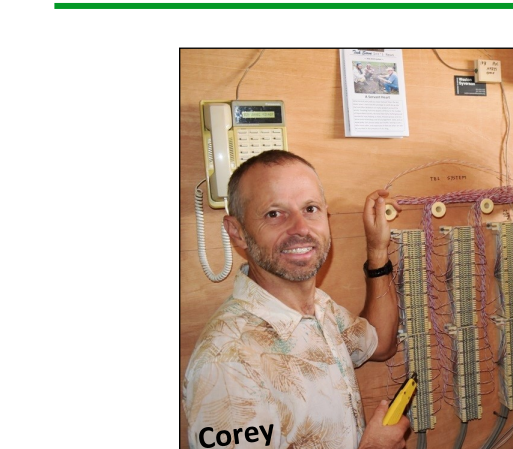
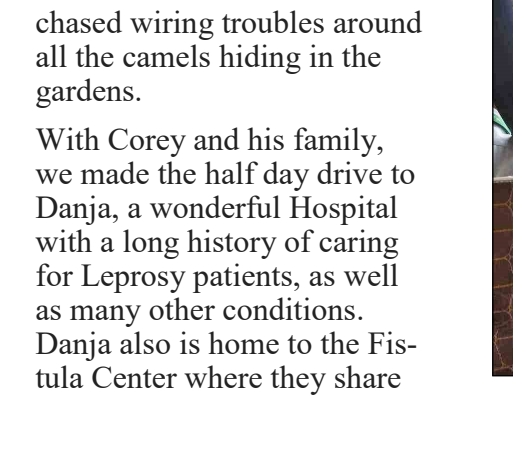
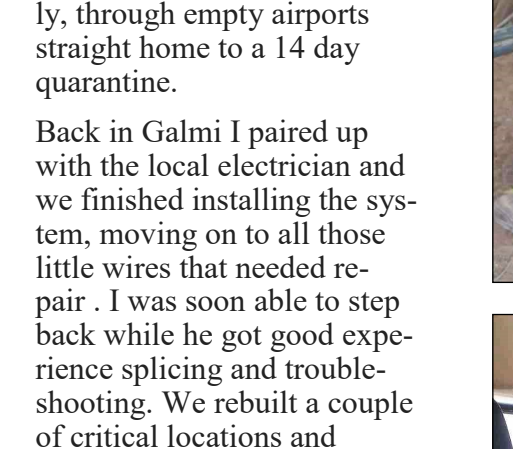
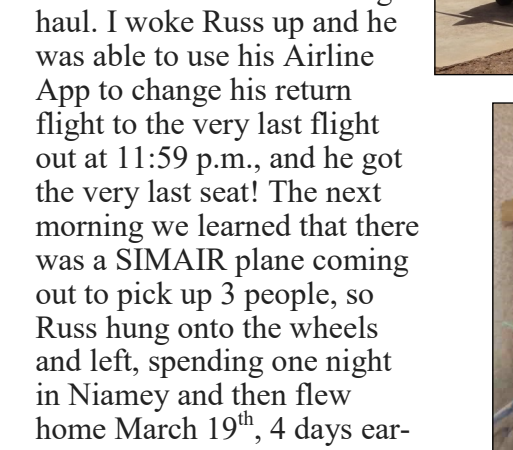
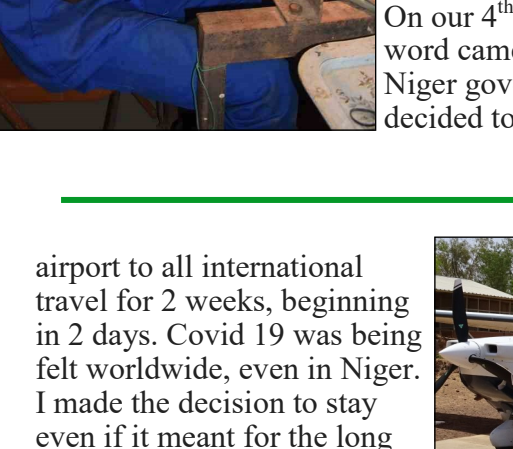
This job required a bunch of little wires to be in just the right place on many connectors, a task that Russ and the local IT guy tackled while being blasted by the chilly air required to keep the servers cool. I could see Russ questioning this... I promised hot and dusty, and he wants some hot coffee to keep warm!

Meeting the people that keep this place running was humbling. People from all over the world are here taking care of the educational needs of missionary kids in order that their parents may be free to accomplish the work that God has gifted them to do. The SIM missionaries in Niger focus on the needs of the local people, such as Health Education, Agricultural projects, Bible translation, and taking opportunities to share the love of Christ in their daily interactions. Part of this effort includes two Hospitals, but that's just the tip of the proverbial Iceberg, (which few here have ever seen). These SIM facilities are a hub of opportunity meant to bless to the wonderful people of Niger. The missionaries who serve here are truly heroes in my book! Visit SIM.org sometime.

The telephone system was partially dead, and needed parts. We found plenty of other areas to fix including all the corroded connections in those tombstone



on our return, so we caught a ride on a small missionary plane (SIMAIR), to the bush town of Galmi, narrowly avoiding the eight hour bus ride.



looking pedestals. Lots of splicing! Over time we tried to figure out why stuff around the compound didn't work, like telephones, the paging and alarm system, and our toaster.

About this time, we heard about the travel ban from Europe to the US. "Covid 19, no cases in Niger, we're good!" we naively thought. By Friday we felt we would make more progress

an from the next Hospital (Danja) and with Sam, the Local Nigerien Electrician. Our second step was to remove everything out of the phone room and hose it out, literally. We cleaned things, blew out the sand, and had strong words with the termites.

On our 4th night the word came that the Niger government decided to close the

airport to all international travel for 2 weeks, beginning in 2 days. Covid 19 was being felt worldwide, even in Niger. I made the decision to stay even if it meant for the long haul. I woke Russ up and he was able to use his Airline App to change his return flight to the very last flight out at 11:59 p.m., and he got the very last seat! The next morning we learned that there was a SIMAIR plane coming out to pick up 3 people, so Russ hung onto the wheels and left, spending one night in Niamey and then flew home March 19th, 4 days early, through empty airports straight home to a 14 day quarantine.

Back in Galmi I paired up with the local electrician and we finished installing the system, moving in to all those little wires that needed repair. I was soon able to step back while he got good experience splicing and troubleshooting. We rebuilt a couple of critical locations and chased wiring troubles around all the camels hiding in the gardens.

With Corey and his family, we made the half day drive to Danja, a wonderful Hospital with a long history of caring for Leprosy patients, as well as many other conditions. Danja also is home to the Fistula Center where they share

God's love by performing many surgeries to help the women of Niger with this debilitating condition.

At Danja the entire system was down because of many cables that had been dug up. The termites had eaten up much of the plywood behind the Telephone system, but with a new sheet in place we put in the replacement system we sent over. We then moved on to repairing cable. Cable gel or "Icky Pick" is fun, it gets stuck to hands, tools, and clothes, when you open cable. There were dozens of cables spliced in the space of a week. Most of these were done at 6:30am as the temp would often soar over 115.

There is also an abundance of sand, kinda like working on the beach! The Australian didn't seem to mind a bit or even slow down, working alongside every day.

The telephone system is a big compliment to the operation of the hospital, as cell phones barely work here and the hospital is 2000 feet away from the houses. It was such a pleasure to be able to serve these wonderful people, giving out here in the Sahel.

Around the end of the week we got word that Niamey was going to be quarantined for 2 weeks beginning in 2 days. This was unfortunate, as the plan was to return to Galmi to finish installing a paging system and re-splicing 2 major locations that desperately need it. Instead there was another SIMAIR flight coming out to pick up one other person, so I got the front seat on way back to Niamey. :)

Back at the Academy every day was an opportunity to fix something. We started with the system, by this time the circuit boards from the US had arrived via Fedex and we were able to get the system back up and working. For 12 days I got to work with the Facilities Manager Betuel, (a Romanian missionary) and repaired cable, installed cable, replaced speakers, re-spliced pedestals, and trained on the system. I so enjoyed working with Betuel, trying to see who could get the most "Icky Pick"

on everything, it's close to impossible to get it off your hands. The missionaries there were a joy to get to know, incredible people!

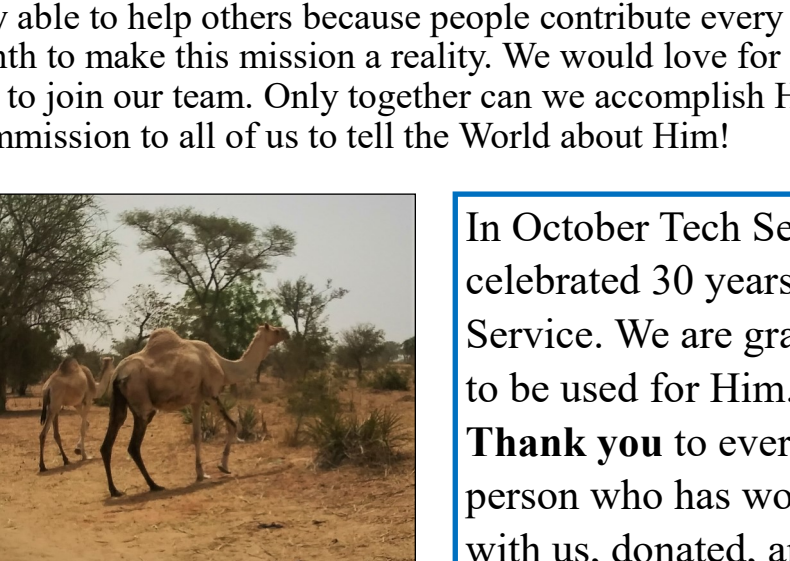
The US Embassy announced that they would be organizing repatriation flights for \$2000 a seat, so email your info and sell your left kidney! I fortunately missed the first flight which left a week later, with 67 people boarding a Cargo 747 with seats bolted to pallets and porta poties in the back. In the meanwhile, the government of Niger extended and increased measures to keep the country isolated, meaning commercial flights could be months away. A week later my name came up for the second flight, so on Friday the 10th 63 of us boarded an Ethiopian 787 with a full crew and hopped across Africa until we jumped over to Washington DC. I eventually made it home Sunday afternoon, to begin a 14-day quarantine, and freeze!

We left behind thousands of missionaries in Africa, who are there doing their best to help the local people survive this crisis, as they go into the hottest months of the year. I witnessed love in action as efforts were organized to help the local churches provide bags of rice and beans. In Niger most people work every day to make enough money to buy food to share with

their family. The country is not doing lockdown as this would starve millions, but the general restrictions are having an impact and many are struggling to get food. Children especially suffer. Pray with us for the wonderful SIM missionaries who are trying to help, for the local churches, and for the incredible people of Niger, for them to come to know our wonderful Lord and Savior, Jesus!

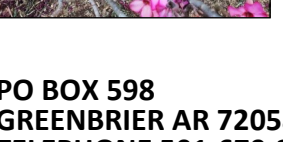
As I think about what is ahead I hope that you are encouraged to be involved. For sure we at Tech Serve can use help, prayers and funds, but we are not alone in this. We are so privileged to serve those that have been working for decades, and over the last 30 years I have seen hundreds of new organizations taking God's message to millions, even right here at home. We are all tasked with bringing God's Kingdom to the hearts and souls of people, we must listen and follow God's leading. Don't be left out, diligently ask God to lead you into His Commission, and don't give up!

May 2020 - Weston



Why Me?

We are looking for you! Have you ever wanted to go on a trip and use the skills that God has given you? If you can't go, would you be a part of praying for us? We would love to hear from you. Have you ever considered supporting Tech Serve on a monthly or yearly basis? Tech Serve is only able to help others because people contribute every month to make this mission a reality. We would love for you to join our team. Only together can we accomplish His Commission to all of us to tell the World about Him!



The Flowers in the Desert are beautiful!

In October Tech Serve celebrated 30 years of Service. We are grateful to be used for Him. Thank you to every person who has worked with us, donated, and prayed for us. We would not be here without you!!!

Please stay in touch, give us a call for encouragement or just to say hello!

501-679-2120

www.techserve.org

PO BOX 598 GREENBRIER AR 72058 TELEPHONE 501-679-2120