

Nigerian Christian Children's Home



July 2019

Dear Friends and Family,

The Apostle Paul's Divinely inspired greetings to the brethren in Philippi express exactly what I have in my heart for you; "I thank God every time I remember you in all my prayers for all of you. I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Phil 1:3ff We do thank God for you and for your faithful service on our behalf.

This note highlights recent events. I hope it is an encouragement and communicates some of what God is doing through you in this place and time. First, we were honored to be asked to be of some small help at Nigerian Christian Bible College at Ukpom Abak. We hope to be able to visit the campus from time to time, and offer whatever encouragement we can. We have been invited to speak at the annual lectureship, which is a large gathering of Christians in our area, and we look forward to that on the 6th of August. Please pray we may be found useful in these circumstances.

Our niece Megan was married in July, and we thank God for that blessing. Some of you may remember that Megan had stage 4 Non-Hodgins Lymphoma, and survived. She has since graduated, and begun serving as a Customs and Border Protection Officer in Montana. Please pray for her health and safety, and for God to lead and bless them in their new marriage.

We celebrated the Fourth of July in grand fashion, the first time in many years. One of the few American friends we have left here came over and helped us grill hamburgers. The kids also enjoyed roasting hot dogs over the flames, as well as other treats. We all had a chance to stop and think of the courage and sacrifice of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. We owe such debt to those who have sacrificed so much for us to have our freedom. We owe the most to Him who sacrificed Himself for us to have spiritual freedom, the most important of all.

Thankfully, three more persons put on their Lord in Baptism, availing themselves of the offer for true freedom. Joel, Vivian and Samuel all entered into covenant relationship with their Lord, as we celebrated their decision. Please pray they will grow, and serve God faithfully all the days of their lives.

The kids are all out of school now, and Wisdom was our only high school graduate this year. The other 23 were promoted to the next level, some on more merit than others. Promise, Light, and Precious all got admission to Gregory University, where they hope one day to graduate as Medical Doctors. We thank Dr. Massey and others who have helped Janna and Innocent in their medical studies in Guyana. Jilinda and Lois are studying Medical Lab Science, and hope to have their own lab like their big sister Tessy in Abuja. Hopefully we will have several graduates in the health care industry.

I had a little spell of malaria, or something pretty much like it. Malaria is such a common occurrence here that we more often self-diagnose and self-treat. While struggling with the disease, after sleeping for almost 48 hours, I woke with this poem in mind. I include it now in hopes it will encourage those of you who may be in a similar situation as us, and also to let you know some of the struggles those who serve in foreign fields face. I wrote it for my sister, who carries this burden in her heart.

Mourn, But Not Too Long

If I should die upon a foreign field one day,
Sent forth by causes greater than "I" or "We",
Embattled against forces more evil than imagined,
Mourn, but not too long. Let tears of sorrow
Mingle freely with tears of joy.

If they lay my mortal body neath some dry and dusty plain,
Kept unreached by distance and chance,
Instead of the green grass of home, enveloped by those loved and cherished.
If that small measure of comfort be denied you,
Mourn, but not too long. Memorial me not with fading flowers
But with warm remembrances of shared love.

If the cross you are called to bear is to face life here without me,
Then carry it faithful, measured, true.
Carry it till that final hill crest, and trade it for a treasured crown.
Mourn, but not too long. Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.
I loved you with imperfect fervor, but let that bind us
Till that bright dawn.

My sister Donna, who has so lovingly supported us over the years, has struggled with this worry of not being able to bring my body back and have the grave near her. Those of you who have loved ones overseas may have this same struggle. She kindly wrote this poem in reply, communicating acceptance and surrender.

If...

If you were to die upon a foreign land,
Serving God Almighty in a way you didn't plan
My loss would be great, my sorrow deep
Knowing I didn't get to kiss you goodbye whilst you sleep.
The hole in my heart would be deep and wide
And often I would think of you and cry.
My joy would be in the tales I share
About how you lived and how you cared
How you shined a light in a world so dark
How you loved so much you were torn apart
How you sang with passion in a voice so true
How you kept your pain inside when you were blue
How you smiled amidst strife
How you kept climbing each day of your life
And always encouraged us to do the same
Not because it was easy, but because of the Name.
You chose to follow despite the cost
The cost you paid helped save the lost.
And on that day on a foreign land
Your reward will be great and the goodbyes grand.
But until then...Lord lift you up on higher ground
And Lord willing we will have together a few more rounds
Of love, of laughter, of pain and fun
And at long last reunite in the Land of the Son.

You will agree that my sister is the better poet. I hope these poems are not seen to be out of order or seeming to be self-seeking. I just wanted to share what is a personal struggle for many who serve overseas. May the Lord forgive me if it is seen in any other light.

I have mentioned of increasing security concerns. Over 153 murders have been recorded in our city over the past several weeks. Add this to the endemic diseases, traffic congestion, and so many other problems, one wonders in moments of weakness why we should continue to struggle here. A recent Sunday's events helped answer that nagging question.

I have mentioned that we worship under a canopy, one that has quickly become torn in places. So when it began to rain early on Sunday morning, with no signs of letting up, we decided to try to squeeze everyone inside. Joseph had asked to be able to share a Word that was on his heart, so I had usher duty on the front porch. I

was busy trying to squeeze in late comers, most of who had to stay on the porch with me. I found myself with so many distractions; I hardly could concentrate on the message. I do remember the central thought though; it was a call for us to fulfill our destiny, our purpose in life. I looked around with me on the porch and saw why we are here doing what we are doing. Sitting on an old backless bench next to me was a young lady with her toddler, both shivering under a towel I had gone to get to help dry them. Her husband has left her, shattering that story book dream she once had. Sitting next to her was a lady we minister to. She is struggling with aids, being widowed from the husband who gave it to her. Her two teenage children, one mentally challenged, are more of a burden than a help. Next to her was a first time visitor, who had walked with her daughter for quite some time to find us. She told us later of her struggles as a single mom, and of her turning down a recent offer to be taken to Europe to serve as a prostitute. All I saw at the moment was a mother who walked in the rain with her daughter to come to worship. Next to her was a young mother who was already withered and tired beyond her years. She had struggled to breast feed her restless child, but the child could not be comforted. Not with her small, dried breast that had already given more than they could. I found some rice for the toddler, and she ate more than I could have imagined possible for such a small child. There sitting on that old, damp bench was a miniature version of our life here. And in those hungry eyes of a crying child, I saw a purpose, one that calls us to continue to sacrifice. I know that the service we render seems often so little in the face of such need. It is far from the grand dreams I once had for my life. But for a brief moment, a child was quietened by a full belly and I remembered Jesus saying that "In as much as you have done this to the least of my brethren, you have done it unto me."

Folks, we love you. We thank you for continuing to being a part of our lives. We pray for your strength, as well as other blessings. Please pray for us as well.

Next time,
Cliff, Nkiru and family