

Nigerian Christian Children's Home



January 2022

Dear Friends and Family,

Here in Nigeria, people are fond of wishing you a happy New Year, even weeks after January 1, if they have not yet seen or greeted you in the New Year. It may seem strange to have someone wish you a happy new year in late February, but it is quite normal here if you have not had the chance before to wish the person well in the new year. In keeping with that solid tradition, we wish you well in this New Year 2020, although the first of 12 chapters has already been written.

We do wish you, our friends and brethren, all the best of God's blessings in the coming time, whatever He allots us. The past year was very challenging on many different levels, so we hope and pray for better days ahead. That hope is all many times I have had to hold on to. And the faith that God, who sees all and knows all, will continue to work things to our good, according to His will.

I stand amazed at the great generations who have gone on before, and the strength they had to face life's difficulties. I was blessed to have witnessed many great men and women who faced world wars, financial depression, poverty and lack of opportunities, medical hardships, etc. and yet faced life with grace and joy. I hope to mirror some of that, and am thankful to see such sterling examples in the lives of many of you as well.

I just looked back in my files of last year's letters, and was surprised to see that my December note was not completely saved in my computer. I cannot remember anyone's comments so maybe an incomplete note came to you, which would have made little sense. So if you did not receive any mail from us in December, then please forgive me. I wrote and sent, but do not know what you received. Hopefully, you did receive, and that our short note in some way was a blessing to you. Each time I write it is with anguish and difficulty, praying for the right thing to say that will educate and encourage us all.

I must say that the holiday season was one of encouragement and joy. Because of COVID, we have not had the level of support and visits from local friends that we enjoyed pre-COVID. But this year the pantry was filled, and we had so much to share and be thankful for. We made new

friends, we enjoyed being with old friends. We cooked huge meals both on Christmas and New Year's Day which we ate in fellowship with the many who came through our doors. Joy and other friends from Saipem, an international company, hosted a great Christmas party for the kids. Seeing the kids happy, with our son Innocent, who came back from a medical school after more than eight years, and others gather around, was a much needed lift in spirit for this tired old soul. I could not have asked for more, though it would have been great to have the whole family together, and we definitely got more than we deserved. The Lord continues to amaze us by the way He provides and sustains us.

One of the gifts we received was an annual bull, donated by a Mr. Bank Anthony. In truth, I prayed we would not receive such a gift. Everybody was against such a prayer, and the many prayers outweighed my single prayer. In truth, I have to admit I was being selfish. It is not easy to kill a large animal in the field, skin and process it with just a butcher knife. I was hoping that I could deworm, medicate, and fatten this fellow up, and sell him and take the money and buy fresh clean beef at the supermarket, without the sights, sounds, and smells of home butchery. However, after he got loose twice, and charged and knocked me down with his big horns, his fate was sealed. The gift of his life fed a lot of little boys and girls, as well as adults, and that is something to be thankful for.

Something else to be thankful for was the new birth of Samson, a precious young man who has been with us since he was an infant. Late in the first Sunday of the new month and year, he came to me to ask to be baptized. I am always hesitant, when a very young person comes for baptism. Does that seem strange to hear a parent say? Perhaps it is. But I have seen many who were baptized without fully understanding what they were doing, based on emotion or because others are doing it. It is harder for the very young to understand what a huge commitment, a lifelong commitment this is. So what a burden this places on us older ones, to be able to flame and protect that young faith, to help guide and nurture them to a fuller, sustaining level of faith and knowledge. Please say an extra prayer for Samson, and for the other young souls placed in our hands. It is an overwhelming responsibility to help mature those who come to be a part of us, whether old or young. We need an extra measure of grace.

But what an absolutely great way to start the year. To witness the death, burial and resurrection of another obedient soul is one of our greatest blessings. I know that Samson was brought to us for a special reason, and that he has been kept for a purpose. Pray that that purpose will be fulfilled.

I feel this way, not just I believe we all have a purpose in God's eternal plan, but also because of an incident that happened when Samson was hardly past his toddler years. He and Blessing were both born premature, and that itself is a testimony to the special grace of God on their lives. It also means that their lungs were not fully formed before birth, so they have struggled with asthma and other lung difficulties. One night, around two am, Nkiru and Uloma the child care

worker came banging on my door. Uloma was hysterical, shouting that Samson had died in her hands. In truth, he did look dead. He had stopped breathing and his eyes were rolled back in his head. I took his limp body and shook him upside down. He gasped for a breath and we all started rushing for the car and the hospital. All of us were dressed in whatever we could snatch on. I was in my jeans and a tee shirt. Chima drove the bus for us, and he didn't even stop to put on a pair of trousers. What a sight we must have been, the driver in his underwear driving at breakneck speed, the rest of us crying and praying. Two am is not a time to be out on Nigerian roads, but thankfully we arrived safely and the doctor and staff at Bosom of the Lord Hospital were able to revive and sustain Samson. This is just one of the many amazing things God has done in the lives of our children, and I believe that He has already, and will continue to do great things in their lives.

I already mentioned that we were blessed to have Innocent be with us for a short while. I look back in time as we saw him grow into maturity, and thank God for the mercy bestowed on his life. To know his beginnings, and to see him struggle and succeed to become a medical doctor is a thing of joy. I have worked construction, and done other jobs were at the end of the day were you could look back and see what you had accomplished. But with working for children, you may not see the effect of your work even in their generation. So I felt a great deal of gratitude, pride, fellowship, accomplishment, etc., etc. to know how God has blessed and used him. Innocent has since accepted a new post in Jamaica and will be leaving Guyana soon for a new life, an increase in salary and more opportunities. Please pray for his continued faithfulness.

We are also happy to announce the birth of Master Jason Jarrell to our son Joseph and his wife Mary. He was born on January the 13th, the same day as my grandfather back in 1903. Mary had to have a second C-section, which is hard on the body, but both mother and child came through safely. We have seen so many health problems here, made worse by lack of an adequate health care system. So each new child, resting safe in their mother's arms, is one of life's greatest joys. I can remember when Joseph first came into our life and to see him now as a mature responsible man, with two sons of his own, is again a cause for rejoicing. Thank you all who have sown seeds in these young lives. Your seed is growing and maturing to the Glory of God. You have truly practiced James 1:27, and lived to see it bear generational fruit.

The kids are back in school and we are thankful for that. So it is back to 7 am school runs. Boma, Divine, Issac and Naphtalie are all seniors this year, so they are busy preparing for their WAAC exams. This is a series of exams, set over more than two weeks, that mark their passing from high school. How well you do on these exams bears a lot on your future. These are the leaders in our house now, as the older ones all had to move to our second house at the edge of town. A lot rides on their shoulders at this time and prayers are needed and appreciated.

Please also pray for the congregation that meets at our house each Sunday. The number continues to increase and what a huge load this is. I struggle with sermon preparation, praying

for guidance on the topic and delivery. My only hope and confidence is that God promised that His word would not return to Him void, but would accomplish the purpose for which He sent it out. So as long as I try to faithfully preach His Word, I know it will do His will. We have set out as goals for this year to be more evangelistic, to educate ourselves more, and to encourage ourselves more. This has grown well beyond the time when we all met in our living room. We have a simple structure in our front yard, but have had to expand it and need to do something more permanent. I counted a couple of weeks ago and there were 25 persons standing outside in the sun because there were no more chairs or shelter. We have been working on extra benches so that we can accommodate everyone.

Part of the reason some come is the meal we share afterwards. We started years ago giving out eggs to the children who came before service, because I realized that many came hungry without breakfast and stayed until the service was over past noon. Gradually it has increased until we fed a portion of jollif rice and a piece of meat to well over 100 persons. Last week it was over 150 lunch packs. This too is a lot of work, as someone has to start the rice around 3 am on Sunday morning. I am grateful for Nkiru's hard work and for those who support her. Issac is responsible for making the gallons of ice less tea we drink. I told Br. Massey we had ice tea on Sundays. He asked where do I get the ice. I told him we just put the water in the fridge to have the coolest drink most will have. So technically we have ice less ice tea. Anyway, this gives us a chance to eat and fellowship after the spiritual food we enjoyed. Even if some come for the loaves and fishes, they will also hear the word of God.

This past week we were blessed to have an experienced preacher share the Word of God with us. He is looking to move back to the East to be closer to aging parents. What a blessing this would be if he would agree to come and work with us. I do not know where the money will come from but I know if it is the Lord's Will, He will make a way.

I am writing this in a hotel room in Lagos. We finished out the month by traveling to meet old friends Lawrence and Vickie Adu. We were together when we first came to Nigeria, and Lawrence was then a young doctor at NCH. By God's Grace they were able to move to the US, were they have had opportunities they would not have had here. Vickie's mom passed away and was buried last week. The roads were deemed too unsafe for me to travel on, so we flew down to briefly meet them here. What a blessing it was to meet friends after a long time, and to see their progress. It once again gave me reason to thank God for allowing us to weave a small thread in the life of others.

Friends, once again we thank you for sharing this tiny moment of time with us. I pray that things will improve for us all. I know it is not easy for many on a fixed income. Inflation has reared its ugly head again. For us the official rate is over 30 percent over the last two years, so we can sympathize with those of you affected by rising costs of living. May He continue His work in us all, allowing us to grow and prosper spiritually, and even physically as He sees fit.

Once again, happy New Year.

Love,

The Jarrells