



In a nutshell

We continue to enjoy life here, despite some minor run-ins with malaria: we are getting to know people better, and Rick's teaching is going well. We hope to return to the UK & Ireland for a few weeks over the summer.

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Looking Back

Things have continued to go well at the seminary. Rick has been getting to know various members of the faculty and the students better and building some strong relationships. In classes, he has been setting the students lots of reading to do this semester. This did not go down well for the first four or five weeks, but after that most of them seemed to get used to having to do a bit more reading – and perhaps to even enjoy it. Sometimes.

Alanna has been studying (when she can) for her theology degree that she is taking by distance learning at London University. She has really been enjoying the courses this year - Doctrine and Philosophy of Religion. Both of these, though theoretical, are surprisingly practical in their applications to living as a Christian. The philosophy course deals with issues such as how we can understand suffering in the light of an omnipotent, loving God, and what kind of difference prayer can make.

Asha, Conor and Jack continue to enjoy things here. They are steadily building friendships with some of the other children around, and Asha is making good progress learning to read.

Over the past three or four months we've had a few extra bouts of illness and/or small accidents to contend with. However, all of them have been either very minor, or very brief. Asha banged her head and needed some supergluing at the hospital; Conor had a funny looking rash that turned out to be nothing significant; all of us except Alanna came down with malaria. Malaria can be very serious here, if not treated well and quickly. But there is a clinic across the road from us which can do the blood test - we were able to catch it within a few hours of the first symptoms appearing – so no-one was sick for more than about 12 hours all up.

The weather here has been so different from when we arrived. October to March is the dry season – the last rains we had were back in October (except for a couple of very unseasonal showers in January, which got everyone muttering about climate change!) Everything is very dry and dusty looking. There are still a few patches of greenish grass around because of the surprise showers in January – otherwise it would look even more parched. I (Rick) am writing this in mid-March, but by the time you read it (early April?) the rains

ought to have begun again, and everything will be turning verdant green. It ought to get cooler then as well – recent temperatures have been well up into the mid-30s, which is nice up to a point. But with no air conditioning anywhere, there is no escape. However, in the past couple of weeks we have put in a system with solar panels and batteries, which means we can now run our fridge all the time. It's been great to have cold water, and less food spoilage!

The price of things here in Nigeria takes a lot of getting used to. Many things are much cheaper (e.g. tomatoes; bananas; beef), but some things are surprisingly more expensive (e.g. chicken; sausages). Two examples: butter is produced nearby, but costs £4 for 250g. On the other hand, our car picked up two nails in a tyre a few weeks ago. We took it to the tyre-repair man, who fixed both punctures very efficiently, and charged a grand total of £2 for the work.



Looking Forward

The end of semester is now approaching rapidly. For Rick that means lots of assignments to mark from about mid-April onwards, and then the exam week begins on May 6th. That same week Alanna will also be doing a couple of exams for her course, but they will be held in Abuja. The seminary also runs some intensive summer programs for part-time students. Instead of doing five or six courses across a whole 15 week semester, students do one or two courses crammed into 15 working days (i.e. three weeks). It's not an ideal way to learn as it is so intensive, but depending on circumstances it may be the only way that is viable for many

people. Rick is expecting to teach on two of these courses, which will be held in late May / early June.

We are also planning to be back in the UK and Ireland for several weeks in June / early July. We are hoping this will be a good time to catch up with lots of people, and we hope it won't be too exhausting(!), especially for the kids. Quite a bit of dashing about will be inevitable, but even we probably won't be able to get round everyone.

PRAYER POINTS

Give praise to God:

- for continued good health, and safety.
- for good relationships established so far.
- that Rick's teaching is going well.

Please pray:

- for Rick to be both clear and faithful in his remaining teaching this semester and in the summer.
- for continued health (especially with respect to malaria).
- for safety in travel – to and from Abuja, and back to the UK.
- that we will continue to build good relationships.

Postal Health Warning: Our postal address is proving more reliable than we had expected, but it is far from perfect. As far as we are aware, 100% of letters have gotten through to this address, but only about 75% of packages/parcels. However, we are told that sometimes packages can be delayed by a couple of months or more (and the reasons for this appear to be beyond the ken of mere mortals). So the eventual package delivery rate *may* turn out to be better; or it may not...

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