



August 2015

In a nutshell

We had a good summer in the UK and Ireland and we have settled back into Nigeria well. The new academic year in Kagoro is now in full swing and everything is off to a good start – rather busy, but settling down nicely!

Alanna writes:

We had a very successful trip to the UK and Ireland catching up with family, friends, churches and supporters. We enjoyed good, encouraging conversations and precious time together with many people who are important to us. As usual the kids enjoyed the experience and showed themselves to be adaptable and sociable, which was good for all concerned! They particularly enjoyed a holiday club they attended, run by their Uncle Colin and Auntie Tanya. We were grateful to take advantage of this opportunity for them to join in structured activities with other kids of their own age, and will look out for similar events in future years.

It was also a pleasure to get back home after our trip and see our Nigerian friends, and a joy to see that our kids are equally happy at home and away. We had a couple of weeks to readjust and then our homeschool term started – just before the Nigerian kids broke up for their summer break! We have been enjoying school a lot, using some great new books from Oxford International Primary English and Maths. They are aimed at international schools and are good at reflecting the experience of kids who have links with more than one culture. We have also been getting into PE. We brought back rounders and cricket bats and have some good bouncy balls, so we've practised a range of ball skills.

It's also been great to enjoy group activity sessions with a couple of neighbouring Nigerian families. Julianna and Florence are both married to teaching staff and we have been walking (and even jogging) with them and their kids, and playing the odd ballgame. I have really valued getting to know these two families better – it's good to have kids of similar ages, and mums in similar situations as neighbours. We are going to do a weekly bible study together and join the Woman's Fellowship, which is mostly conducted in Hausa. Florence doesn't speak much more Hausa than I do, so we can encourage one another as we try to join in.

I'm also starting to feel more competent as a Sunday School teacher, having spent much of last year observing and trying to understand how to communicate with the kids. I led sessions for nursery and primary classes for the past two weeks and was pleased that they went well. Our kids

are starting to feel much happier about attending Sunday School, which has been a difficult cultural experience for them.

All of this has been very encouraging. We feel that we are gelling more and more within the community and learning how to play an active role alongside others. Our family life here mixes exposure to Nigerian culture, with quintessential UK habits like watching Doctor Who and eating Angel Delight.

Rick writes:

As I write this (in mid-August) we are just coming to the end of our first week of the new academic year. This semester I am reasonably busy teaching seven courses: two on theology (e.g. looking at topics like who Jesus is, what salvation is, etc.), two on church history (Reformation, and Early Church), one on thesis-writing and two New Testament courses (one of those is on Mark's Gospel, and one on John – the John course is called "Preaching John" and is part of the new Expository Preaching degree).

That course-load is considerably above what is normal, but I'm off-setting that by working with several teaching assistants this time around. The teaching assistants are a couple of senior undergraduate students, plus a couple of graduate students. So far, the teaching-assistant-thing looks like a win-win situation: I'm helped (because I end up with a much more reasonable workload!), and they are helped too (they get some experience of lecturing in a fairly gentle and introductory way; and they get a little bit of very welcome income also!). I also get the chance to do some direct mentoring with the teaching assistants.

A few other things have happened, already work-wise. The day after we got back to Nigeria (i.e. 6 July) was the beginning of a three-week summer intensive at the seminary, which I was teaching on (that was a couple of theology subjects again). Also tomorrow I am going to Abuja to take a weekend of teaching at a NIFES expository conference (NIFES is a Nigerian student group – the equivalent of UCCF in the UK). I will be doing a Bible Overview, and also some sessions on the book of Judges. And in September the one-year preaching program (similar in style to the Cornhill Course in the UK and Ireland) will be relaunching. I hope to be involved in that later in the year.

All in all it has been a fairly hectic start to the academic year here – as well as the teaching there has been a stack of admin things to do too – but everything should start to calm down to a more normal, and more sustainable(!) pattern from the end of next week.

Praise God for:

- chance to maintain close links with British and Irish friends, family and supporters
- successful family integration into both cultures
- developing relationships with our Nigerian colleagues
- his help to Alanna in integrating into the college community and Sunday School
- safety and generally good health

Please pray for:

- ongoing strengthening of relationships
- the Sunday school teachers team – that we may teach the kids to know Christ and build up all team members in their ability to lead and teach
- homeschool to continue well - wisdom and perseverance for both teacher and pupils
- Rick to manage his teaching/mentoring roles well, and for students to learn more of Christ, and his word, and how to proclaim him clearly and faithfully
- continuing safety and strength

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