



December 2013

In a nutshell:

The family is enjoying campus life, especially the enriching friendships with seminary kids and students. Rick has been able to contribute to a renewed focus on expository preaching at the Seminary.

Rick

As we write this, the Semester is just ending. Exams are happening this week, and Rick is already getting started on the marking. This is not his favourite task, but then writing exams is not the students' favourite task either ...

One of the main things on the agenda this semester has been the issue of preaching. In the past few weeks we've had plenty of good sermons in the seminary church/chapel, but early in the semester we had a run of weak sermons. Dud sermons are a recurring problem world-wide, but this time we had four in a row that were especially bad. In itself, this was far from encouraging as a start to the academic year – after all, the Seminary is meant to be modelling good preaching to the next generation of church leaders – but good has come from it. This run was bad enough to be widely recognised as a problem, and that may have spurred on the speakers in recent weeks to make an extra effort. The general recognition of the problem also made it easy for Rick to push for extra ways to address the issue. Several positive developments have come from that process: the Seminary is launching a “Preaching Centre” (to promote expository preaching in the Seminary and beyond); we have started a preaching mentoring system for some of the students; the Seminary will start offering a version of its degree program that focuses more centrally on expository preaching; and next semester the Seminary will be hosting a preaching conference.

Alanna, Asha, Conor and Jack

The kids are well adapted to life in Nigeria. They are starting to pick up a tiny bit of Hausa, but their playmates tend to speak to them in English. One goal for this academic year has been to learn to speak it better. So far there's been limited progress.

Life in the house during the day feels quite different from last year as Rick now works mainly from his office in the library block when he's not teaching. As a result most students now meet him there

rather than in the house. There are nevertheless many daily visitors, the majority of whom are kids from the campus.

It has taken a while to adapt the daily pattern to something that works well, but they now try to have school activities in the mornings, followed by a more relaxed family-only time after lunch. This little break is particularly refreshing for Alanna.

In terms of study for her degree, Alanna hasn't got very far with my introductory Hebrew, but is finding her ethics module very interesting.

The younger visitors

Visiting kids arrive later in the afternoon. They come to read books, play in the garden and watch DVDs. They also occasionally have Lego or craft sessions. By 4pm it is normally shady enough for the Creighton kids to play in the garden, so everyone goes outside. Alanna has been successfully teaching two boys to read as part of their afternoon visits. They are both eight or nine and have been at school for several years, but were unable to read at all. They have both proved to be enthusiastic to learn and got on well with the Oxford Reading Tree books that Asha started with last year.



Asha and her best friend

All the kids who come have been enthusiastic about reading the children's books, and about a month ago Alanna was blessed by a surprise offer of two boxes of books from a distant contact who was leaving Nigeria. This was an answer to prayers that had not yet been voiced. She had been thinking of starting a reading club and making books available for loan as well as for reading on site. She still has not formalised this, but the books have been in regular use since they arrived.

The student visitors

While the overall number of student visitors has decreased there are a number who we drop into the house on a regular basis. Alanna has been learning how to adapt meals so she can offer lunch or dinner to one or two extras. It's nice to be able to do, especially for students who, at the end of term, have several weeks with only plain rice left to eat at every meal.

Please join with us in thanking God for the following:

- strengthening relationships with students and staff
- good friendships with campus kids
- the encouragement of being able to help students' kids with reading
- good health
- our kids thriving socially and learning well in homeschool

Prayer:

- For good refreshment over the Christmas vacation for us, staff and students
- for continuing development in strong relationships with staff and students so that we may help one another grow in Christ
- for engaging, clear and faithful teaching in the seminary
- that students may learn well and that their learning would result in greater love of God and the desire and wisdom to live for him in all things

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