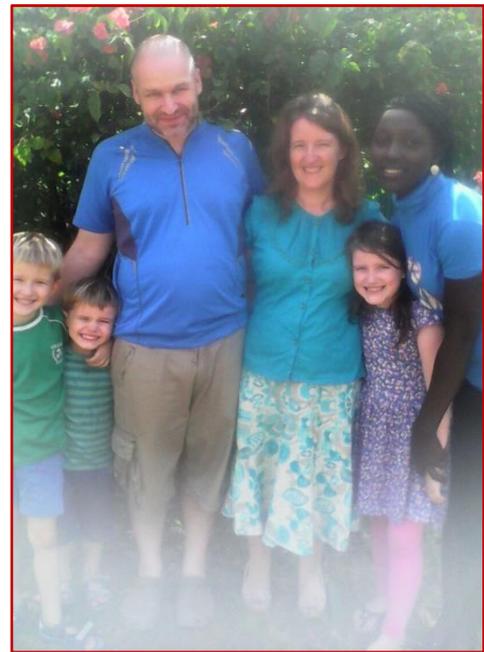


March 2017

With warmest greetings,

In a nutshell:

Alanna, Asha, Conor and Jack have headed back to the UK and Ireland (to get passports renewed). Rick will be joining them in May. All else is going well.



Summer plans:

Our plans for the summer have been changing back and forward over the past few months. We knew there was going to be some extra paperwork this summer, because Asha's passport is due for renewal in April (Jack's is also due, but more conveniently his expires in July). We explored getting Asha's passport renewed in Abuja — but the security checks on this have increased in recent years, and it now requires a vast amount of supporting documentation which was not available to us in Nigeria. So we planned that Alanna and the kids would travel to the UK shortly before Asha's passport expired — which would have been late April. However, Abuja airport was scheduled to be closed in February and part of March for runway repairs — but the start of project got delayed several times — it is now slated to be closed for March and most of April; allegedly re-opening just about exactly when Asha's passport expires. So because of all this, we've decided that the safest thing was for Alanna and the kids to travel even earlier — just before the airport shuts. So they left Kagoro on Saturday 4 March and are now safely back in the UK.



The kids have been less than delighted to discover that they will still be having to do their schoolwork while they are in the UK this time. Normally the six or eight weeks we are in the UK count as their summer holiday — so no need for schoolwork; maybe just a few museum trips or something. So that's the pattern they are used to and were expecting. However, they have (someone grudgingly) accepted the logic, leaving early for the UK, and being there longer, means that they haven't got their schoolwork for the year finished — and so being in the UK and Ireland is not the same as being on holiday this year.

Family life

Alanna has still been busy with home-schooling. Also her involvement in Girls' Brigade, and Sunday School has been on the increase — including more counselling some of the people involved, especially the teenage girls, some of the mums, and

some of the female seminary students (Alanna is also still finishing off her own theology degree — she just has her dissertation left to do this year, which is due in in May). The kids are doing well too. They enjoy life here in Kagoro but also look forward to being in the UK every year to see everyone again. They have been finding March in the UK rather cold — in Kagoro it is just starting to get warm at this time of year (which means it's around 33 or 34 degrees Centigrade most days).

Teaching and preaching

My classes are again going well this semester. I've had a nice mix of courses to teach — some bible courses (particularly bible overview and/or biblical theology courses), some theology courses (looking at contemporary African writers, and issues of identity, peace and conflict) and a course called 'Spiritual Life' (looking at putting our Christian faith into practice in how we live). This semester I've also been doing a bible overview series in the seminary chapel, working through from Genesis to Revelation.

Counselling

Just like before Christmas, I'm still involved in lots of pastoral counselling. The students continue to be open to dealing with spiritual issues and many are taking advantage of the opportunity to talk about things that have been troubling them for some time. The issues include things like pornography, alcohol and drug abuse, smoking addiction, sexual immorality and theft among other things. I have again involved some of the later-year students in the 'Spiritual Life' course that I am teaching to the first year students — getting the later-year students to do testimonies/interviews. This continues to be very effective — people are more willing to come forward and talk about issues when they have heard someone else speaking about overcoming similar issues.

The Nigerian church struggles with a fair bit of 'nominalism' (i.e. people identifying themselves as Christians in name, but not necessarily living out the Christian life faithfully), and that means there is a certain amount of nominalism in the student intake at the seminary — for example, there is a small trickle of students who become Christians each year — after having already started training to be pastors!

With warm greetings,

Rick Creighton

PRAYER POINTS

Praise points:

- Give thanks that the teaching, preaching and counselling are all going really well
- Give thanks for continued safety and health.

Prayer points:

- Pray that those who have begun to change for the better will continue in what they have started
- Economically things are still very hard: students struggle to pay their school fees, and sometimes struggle even to have food to eat. Pray that God will provide.
- There is still unrest in many parts of the country. Pray for peace and stability.



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Crosslinks, 251 Lewisham Way, London SE4 1XF Tel: 020 8691 6111 pletters@crosslinks.org
Crosslinks, 32 Montgomery Road, Belfast, Co. Antrim BT6 9HL Northern Ireland Tel: +44 (0) 28 9079 6028