

November 2016

In an nutshell:

The chaplaincy work is going well; particularly the pastoral counselling is bearing fruit in people's lives and continuing to grow.

Teaching

My classes are again going well this semester. I've had a nice mix of courses to teach—some bible courses (on the books of Ezekiel, John and Mark), some theology courses (looking at topics like salvation, who Jesus is, and identity, peace and conflict) and a course called 'Spiritual Life' (looking at putting our Christian faith into practice in how we live).

Preaching

This semester I've been doing a series from Ezekiel in the seminary chapel. I had never preached through Ezekiel before. It can be a bit off-putting because there is some Israelite history you need to get to grips with in order for things to make sense. But once you get over that first hurdle, the book is actually very straightforward. It has lots of challenging things to say about putting God first, and not allowing anything to be a rival to him. Two weeks ago I did a sermon from Ezekiel 18—talking about the seriousness of sin—and also included an testimony/interview with a student who had been watching pornography, hating himself for it, resolving to stop, stopping for a while ... and then falling back into it. The interview focused on the mess he had been in, and how he got out. The interview/sermon combination worked really well, each reinforcing the other. (We have it on mp3—if you are interested to listen to it, drop me an email and I'll send it next time I'm in Jos; email me at rick.creighton@gmail.com with a subject line something like 'Ezekiel sermon/interview').

Counselling

I'm still involved in a fair bit of pastoral counselling. There continues to be openness among the student body to be dealing with spiritual issues that need dealing with. In fact, if anything, this is growing. The interview I mentioned above is part of the fruit of that counselling work—and the interview led to even more. After the sermon that day, another 26 people indicated that they had things they wanted to talk about. Some of those have been relatively small issues; others were bigger (like pornography addiction); and other issues were bigger again.

The scale of all this means I'm continuing the pattern of having the first big conversation with people—as, for whatever set of reasons, they seem more comfortable having that first conversation with me—and then, having cracked the issues open in the first conversation, setting them up with



someone else who can keep talking to them further (it seems that, having had the first conversation, people find it much easier to have the second, third and fourth conversations).

There may even be a bit of a 'snow-balling' effect going on. For example, the interview I mentioned above was the result of previous counselling conversations—and has itself led to 26 more. Indeed, quite a number of students are now willing to talk about problems of sin that they have been struggling with and how they are now making progress—which makes it easier for other people to also ask for help. Also, I have involved some of the later-year students in the 'Spiritual Life' course I am teaching to the first year students—again getting people to do testimonies/interviews. This has also resulted in lots of new people wanting to discuss issues. One of the new students in that class was even keen to organise something similar in his home church. So last week three of the later-year students went with him—and about 40 people from the church wanted to talk with them about personal issues(!)

Partly as a result of all this, I've been putting together a mentoring/discipleship program. Nothing too fancy—largely just based around some of the discipleship things that have been happening here anyway. The main addition is having a little manual that tries to make things more organised and deliberate. I've been trying it out with the students who have come forward for pastoral counselling—i.e. after that first conversation, I try to set them up with a mentor (usually an older student) who can work through the mentoring manual/program with them. It is early days, but so far the response seems very positive (again, if anyone wants to look at the manual, drop me an email and I'll send you a pdf. I'd be glad to get feedback, suggestions, etc. Email me at rick.creighton@gmail.com with a subject line something like 'mentoring manual').

An Apology

On the topic of email, I am conscious that I have been worse than normal with internet communication over the past 12 months. My email responses are slow, and Facebook is largely dead to me. Partly this is down to increased busy-ness; but our internet connection has been particularly poor of late in Kagoro (though it is much better in Jos; we just have not been to Jos as often this year). Not that it has ever been that good in Kagoro, but it feels like it has sometimes gotten worse rather than better. So apologies to those of you who have been in touch by email, and then received rather delayed responses. Sorry! I'll try to do better over the next 12 months.

Family life

Alanna remains busy with home-schooling and with her involvement in Girls' Brigade, Sunday School, and Reading Club. (Not to mention finishing off her own theology degree—she just has her dissertation left to do this year.) 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.

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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