



### October 2014

**In a nutshell:** The new semester is under way and going well. Rick is particularly enjoying teaching a new course on "Preaching John's Gospel". Alanna and the kids are learning lots in practical, physical, and more academic areas.

#### **Alanna writes:**

We've been back in Kagoro just over two months. Rick has six courses to teach, including a new one based around preaching John's Gospel. As I'm studying John's gospel and letters for one of my degree modules this year I've been attending some of his lectures. I've already made a good start on the reading for the John course and have been enjoying it a lot. Now I really need to get stuck into introductory Hebrew, which I meant to do last year, but never got beyond learning the alphabet.

From the comments various students have made, they seem to enjoy Rick's classes, and to be learning useful stuff. This is particularly true of the new course on John. The students are enjoying looking in depth at that part of the Bible, and they can see how it will directly help them in their preaching and teaching outside of the seminary.

Please pray that Rick's students would learn lots from his classes that would help them to grow in their knowledge of Jesus, and ability to serve him.

Please also pray that my studies would have the same result. Pray in particular that the preaching class would help students learn how to teach others God's word faithfully to the churches they will serve.

I'm also grateful to God for answering my prayers and helping me be more hospitable in our home. This hasn't come naturally to me, but since I started to focus on learning how to do it last year I have seen great steps forward in my competence and willingness to feed numbers of extra mouths, often at short notice. Over the past month we have had a house guest staying Sunday to Thursday each week, and a group of nine of Rick's students joined us for dinner a couple of weeks ago. I have found myself able to deal with all of that without too much stress and was delighted with the feedback from one guest that I was like 'a real African'. That was a compliment that I really appreciated! Thank you for praying with me for this area of our ministry.

#### **Family life**

We are grateful for continued good health for all of us, with any health problems over the past year being minor ones. We have a good, reliable doctor.

We started school for the kids the Monday after we returned. We learned a bit about fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy eating week, and are planning to plant a few of the kids' choice of

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vegetable seeds in the garden and see how well they grow. In the meantime the guava tree has had a good crop this year and we've discovered that coleslaw made with French dressing is a big hit with all three kids. As cabbage and carrot are always plentiful this makes a great addition to our lunch menu. We've also been playing a bit of rounders, an interesting experience, as the kids are still at the stage where being out in a game is a major tragedy, even when it occurs every five minutes or so.

Please pray for me as I try to teach the kids to look after their bodies in terms of healthy diet and activity levels. These aren't my strong points, but I'm aware that as their teacher as well as their Mum it's mostly up to me to set a good example as well as give them advice and make the opportunities happen. I'm becoming more aware as I get older of the importance of looking after my own body as good stewardship of the gift that I've received from God. I recognise that health problems can be limiting, so it makes sense to live in such a way as to avoid those that are avoidable.

Jack turned three in early October. Much fun was had with various party games ('Duck, duck, goose!'), and then a Bob-the-Builder-inspired, construction-site-style cake (with some specially delivered, and very tasty, Crunchie bars forming the building site rubble).



### **Nigeria**

There are plenty of uncertainties in Nigeria at the moment, with tribal and terrorist conflict causing heightened concern as next year's elections approach. Pray for wisdom for community leaders in dealing with tense situations. Pray that Christians would take seriously Jesus' words that they should love and bless their enemies. Pray that they would seek peace and that they would be prepared to work together with others for reconciliation.

### **Ebola**

There has also been concern about the Ebola virus. The government has done a good job in containing the set of cases happened in Lagos, then Port Harcourt. Many organisations have made (some) contingency plans, and tried to raise awareness. This includes ECWA (the Nigerians denomination that the seminary in Kagoro belongs to), which has been developing plans to manage any spread of the disease to other parts of the country, and has been giving advice to church leaders and church members. People are certainly very glad that there are now no active cases in Nigeria; but now that the disease has such a strong hold in other parts of West Africa there is certainly concern that it will come back in again via travellers (just as in Spain, the USA, etc).

An important aspect of dealing with Ebola includes raising awareness of accurate facts about how the virus spreads, and how the risk of catching it can be lowered. One helpful piece of advice that came from one doctor was that "Victims of Ebola are roughly as infectious as they look." In other words, in the early stages of the disease, when people have few, if any, symptoms, they are not very infectious at all. In the later stages of the disease, when they are really sick (vomiting, and bleeding lots) – that's when the infection risk becomes high. Good information is important because rumour and misinformation can be dangerous in themselves. A few weeks ago in Nigeria a text message went viral. It told people there had been an outbreak in a town near them (which was false), and that bathing in salt water, and drinking salt water, would help keep you safe (also false). Many people acted on this message, giving themselves salt baths, and forcing themselves to drink lots of salt water. Sadly, it was reported that a number of people (who had pre-existing medical conditions) died as a result of drinking too much concentrated salt water.

Please pray that the spread of the disease in West Africa generally would be slowed and then halted, that the international community and local governments will work together well, and that the churches will play a beneficial role in spreading useful and accurate information and advice.

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