

Dear friends and family,

We thank God that we have neared the end of what for many of us, has been a long and difficult year. We know that is only by His grace that we have made this journey together, bound by the ties of love and purpose that have stood the test of time. I have every reason to be happy and thankful for that unity, which has enabled us to still continue to serve the acute needs of children, widows and others. Thank you all for your continued love which makes our stay here possible.

In searching for words to encourage you, I can think of no better news than reporting that five precious souls put on their Lord and baptism since we last wrote. There is no higher good that we can do aside from sharing the gospel to others and assisting them to begin their lives in Christ. It has been a long process of trying to raise up a congregation. Like most things in my life, it was unplanned and unscripted. What started by necessity with my family worshipping together in our living room till now where almost 200 folks meet under a crude structure we put up in our front yard. Many have come and gone along the way but a core has remained that God has called together to praise Him. We pray this ragtag group, in need of so much help at so many different levels, will continue to grow and mature and multiply. Thank you for your part in making this happen. Your efforts enable the gospel to be preached and God has given the increase.

Among other causes to rejoice was I celebrated my 68th birthday with my family here. I told everyone that there was no need during these hard times to spend money unnecessarily. But they insisted on a proper celebration, unscripted and unpaid for by me. Though I protested mildly to see money spent, deep down I was happy to know the others love me.

One big surprise during the party was the unexpected return of Jared from his blessed trip to America. Jared has overcome so many obstacles to be where he is today. Abandoned under a tree near our house in the village with deformed legs, he survived this plus turbulent teen years to be a winner of national and international athletic competitions. Red Bull sponsored his trip to New York where his eyes were opened to see life from a different perspective. We thank you for not giving up on us, being God's provision to Jared to the point he is now university graduate capable of standing on the world stage. Only God could do such miracles.

Another celebration we did was an American style Thanksgiving. My late wife Pamela was a big believer in keeping tradition alive. Since her death I'm afraid I've let many such things slide. But this year we did it right. My brother and his wife sent extra money so we were able to buy two hams and a turkey with lots of sides and desserts. I only invited three other missionaries, who like me, may have felt lonely with all the memories of celebrations past. But true to form, the house was full and all was eaten and enjoyed. I was able to remind all of us that there is need for us to stop often, not just on one special day, to return thanks to the one who made it all possible. We know we are living testimony to His grace, kept and provided for by good folks like yourself whose hearts He has touched. Thank you for making our Thanksgivings possible.

And the list of celebrations would not be complete without mentioning the church wedding of Lois and her husband Chibuke. Lois was another scrapper who overcame much to be where she is today. To be walking her down the aisle, remembering how long and difficult this journey has been, was enough to have an old man shed a tear or two. Thank you for all the seeds you have sown over the years that allowed her to grow now to this major mile stone. Please pray for the new couple.

Of course not all of life is celebration. There must of necessity be periods of mourning as well. Recently Nkiru had three aunts, a cousin, and ex brother-in-law die. It was sad to see dementia and other medical issues take the persons long before the Spirit left the body. There were funeral planning meetings, burial, after burial condolence visits, and of course unexpected contributions family members are expected to make. When it rains it pours.

Others we know also lost love ones who passed recently to their reward. Long time missionary and preacher Lowel White left a legacy of love for the Lord and his family. The Whites were a great encouragement to us when they served at Nigerian Christian Bible college. A friend in California suddenly lost her sister unexpectedly, just before it planned family get together. Brother Glenn Boyd passed away after a long and fruitful life of service. He was president for many years of the African Christian Hospital Foundation and was the one who invited us to serve here in Nigeria. Also Brother Steven Okoronkwo was buried this past Saturday beside his beloved wife in his native village. He served many years as a church leader and Christian educator. What a huge impact these folks have had, not just on our lives personally. but on a vast number of others as well. We pray for their families and friends who will be missing them during this holiday season.

Speaking of holidays, we wish you all the best that this season brings. With temperatures up in the 90s here, it is hard to imagine white Christmas. But we still feel the love of many who gather around us as different schools, social and church groups make their annual donations. The man who normally sends a cow sent a goat this year, which is an indication of how hard times have become. We know that many are facing financial challenges and this makes each gift more impactful and more appreciated.

We pray for God's richest blessings to be upon you all. We can never repay your kindness. Only God can. He promised in Matthew 10:42 and in Mark 9:41 that not even a cup of water would lose its reward. Our labor together continues to bear fruit. There's still so much to do. We pray for the Lord to continue to bless our efforts and cause us all to grow.

With sincere love and appreciation,

Cliff, Nkiru and Family