

Dear Friends and Family,

We are thankful to once again be able to visit with you with this medium. Daily we are reminded of your kindness and support. We know many of you regularly pray for us. All of these gifts and expressions of love and concern sustain us as we labor together in the Lord.

In our last letter we wrote of our plans to come to the States and visit with as many of you as possible. We had an agenda and confirmed speaking appointments with congregations. I felt good about the precision with which I had composed time tables.

As you may imagine, leaving here is a big undertaking. We invited our son and daughter in law to step in and take the reins. Nkiru spent endless hours arranging the many details necessary to run a household this large. Bags were packed. We were to have left on Wednesday the 19th of April. The congregation gathered to see us off. We had a load of people follow us to the airport to support us. Reaching there we were turned down because Nkiru did not have a covid vaccine. They were quite willing to sell us the card stating we had taken the vaccine, when in reality we had not. We did not want to willingly lie, so everyone who had waited through this long ordeal in the cold, wet evening air went back home disappointed.

Over the next few days we urgently appealed, giving our exemption documents as to why we were to be allowed to travel. However, the gatekeepers refused to let us board, for reasons I can only speculate, and so we still have not traveled. But we have been reissued a ticket for Monday the 15th, and hope that this embarrassing episode will not repeat itself. As always, we need your prayers for His Will to be done.

There were many lessons to learn and relearn from this event. One is, God's time is always the best. It reminded me of when we were to travel to the refugee camps up north. Our bus got stuck in the deep mud on the way to the airport. We tried all possible to reach on time, but arrived at the airport just as the flight took off. However, when we did finally get a flight two days later, we were seated next to the state Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Welfare. She led us directly to the camps, allowing us access we would not have had otherwise. A delay led us to a more successful outcome than we could have possibly had on our own. I do not know what was the purpose for this delay. I can only believe by faith that our Father, who loves us and works all things for our good, has a plan yet to be revealed. It is for us to quieten our spirit and wait patiently.

Secondly, be careful what you say when you are angry. We presented a letter of invitation from the United Nations where we were to attend an international convention. This entitled us to exemption according to the guidelines stipulated by the CDC. It was normal, considering the consequences of not traveling according to schedule, to be angry and upset. However I learned long ago, even before I first reached Africa in 1971, that the louder you shout, the slower a mule will go, until it will finally leave you and run back to the barn. No need of burning a bridge that I will still have to cross in the future. I try, and my wife does a good job of helping me, not to abuse those who mean you harm.

And thirdly, one can never over estimate the value of a faithful witness. Our position was that we were not prepared to knowingly tell a lie, even if it meant we would not be allowed to travel. It would have been very easy to get a vaccine card, regardless of whether we took the vaccine or not. That is what everyone does and everyone expects. But someone came to me later and said that the airport was

abuzz about our story. Maybe it will serve to remind us all of the need to be truthful, even when it is far easier to tell a little white lie.

We have good news to share about the birth of another granddaughter named Excel. Her parents hope that her name will help her to aspire to Excel in all she does. Her mother Lois is at home with us while the husband had to travel. We are so thankful that both baby and mother are well. Your prayers are so needed for this young couple and their first child. There are many challenges all around us. Only the Lord can see us through.

We also request your prayers for our daughter Jodie and her second pregnancy. She and her family live in Pinedale, Wyoming, a good ways from any hospital. Her last check up showed that the placenta did not attach in the normal place, putting her and the baby at risk. They may have to relocate to Texas to be closer to good health care. Having received many children into my home because their mothers died at childbirth, I am acutely aware of the dangers of pregnancy. I know God loves them more than we can, and He knows His purpose in all this.

Talking of new births, we are glad to announce the new birth of 4 women who have made the brave decision to follow Jesus, accepting to be baptized for the remission of their sins. Women here have so many trials, so many burdens and many come here for help. These are all younger women my wife has talked with and taught. We pray they can find the help and warm fellowship in the church we all desperately need.

Your contributions go to help so many in different ways. This month you were able to help three families with their housing needs. One sister who has gone through so much, having two young sons close in age. She refused to lie in court to support her landlady, so she was dumped on the street. She moved close to us, comes regularly to help fix the girls hair, and her two sons join our kids to school. It has worked out well for them all, and this because she listened to Nkiru's advice not to tell a lie. Another sister we were able to help relocate near here, along with her sons. She and her sons have attended faithfully each Sunday the worship service in our compound, even though it is over a two hour round trip from the motor park where she lived. Her shelter was more like a goat shed, measuring maybe 6 by 10 feet. The rusty tin roof leaked everywhere, and a portion of it was caved in. She and her three sons slept on the bare dirt floor, with no money for a bed or mattress. She managed to cook fish and yam or plantain for those who came to the park. If you could see the difference she now faces, and their smiles of gratitude, you would know that your gifts have been well spent. Another older lady was helped similarly, and for this we thank you. All three of these cases are for those who had acute need.

An appeal for help has also come from a young man named Goodluck. He seems misnamed, as his circumstance recently does not seem so blessed. He has been faithful in attendance since his baptism last year. But a week and a half ago, he went home after service to meet an empty house. His wife had fled with their one year old son. He works at a gas bottling plant where we buy cooking gas, and that is how he came to know us. His place of business has been closed for renovations for almost three months and has just recently reopened. When he and other workers asked to be paid their overdue salaries, they were all fired. And then he reached home that day and found his possessions had ben tossed on the street and his rented room locked. So in one week he lost his family, his job, and his accommodation. Please pray for him that this will not cause him to go astray, and that he will see the rewards of being faithful.

Another way your contributions serve the Lord here is by assisting with medicine or medical bills. We have a standing account with a local pharmacy and a nearby children's hospital. By referring a needy person there, I can be sure they are getting the attention they need. One special case handled recently required surgery for a sister who had elephantiasis in her leg. They removed over 25 lbs of flesh from one leg alone. The church rallied around her to support her in this difficult time. Two other cases are needing attention of a surgeon. One is a case of a three year old who has an extremely warped leg and the other case just came to us last Sunday. A mother brought her 10 year old son, who looked a bit stunted in growth. He had been pushed down and shattered his elbow. This was three years ago. She could not afford the almost 900 dollar demanded by the hospital to repair his arm, so by now it is frozen and immobilized. Both of these we hope to attend to when we return, Lord willing.

Another medical need comes occasionally, and that is those who are mentally ill. You would weep if you saw how the mentally ill are handled here, often left to roam the streets naked to eat whatever rubbish they can find. We took one person we know to the mental hospital after he barged into our service causing quite a ruckus. No doctor was available for admission, since it was a three day holiday. So we left him with an injection only to be called the next day to say he was in jail after smashing a lawyer's wind screen. To keep him from going to prison, we had to bail him and pay for the repair of the car. I hated to spend the money but I hated even more to see someone to go to a Nigerian prison. The other case recently was someone we have helped over the years who has gradually lost his normal senses. He claimed someone put a nail in his ear and could not leave us alone. So we took him to the doctor and washed his ear out so the "nail" could go away.

A special contribution allowed us to take the kids to the amusement park here in Port. It is nothing like the amusement parks of the US, but it is a very welcome chance for the kids to get out. We have to divide the big kids from the little kids and then the little little kids. We can't all fit in two cars. They have a big sandy area with swings and exercise equipment and foot paths to take walks. The little ones have a merry go round. The big kids found they like put put golf, their first time to try it. The big finale was hot dogs, cokes, pop corn and ice cream. Wow, what a treat. Thanks for this special memory.

And let me close with a word about Easter Sunday. We don't do the easter baskets and the new outfits as we once did. But our kids still cherish the memories of egg hunts. So we boiled 300 eggs, of which 150 went to the normal Sunday meal. Meat has become so expensive, so we serve rice with a tomato paste and a boiled egg every Sunday to those who gather. But the kids dyed 150 eggs and waited for the rain to stop. It rained the whole afternoon. So everyone got tired of waiting for the hiding of the eggs and went straight to the eating of the eggs.

Of course, the real focus remains on what happened almost 2000 years ago on what we now call Easter Sunday. The resurrection of our Lord remains the cornerstone of our faith, giving us hope for our own resurrection and salvation. That message is what pushes us far out of our comfort zone, as we try to share the good news of that gospel with as many as possible. Thank you for working with us so that we can continue to serve, in a world that seems more and more lost.

We love and appreciate you all,

Cliff, Nkiru and family

