

December 2020 Report

Dear Friends and Family,

Warmest greetings to you all. As we close this most unusual year, I wish to remind us of the words of the Apostle Paul, found in 2 Corinthians 9:10-15. "Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourself, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift." We do thank God for His grace that has brought us together, that together we may accomplish the works for which He has created us.

In the November letter, which some of you did not receive, I mentioned that my dad was critically ill. Unfortunately for us, he did not survive covid, and left this earthly realm on Dec 9th. Nkiru and I were somewhere over the ocean when he transited, and we missed being with him for his final minutes, but my sister said his last moments were peaceful. We are thankful that he was able to have my sister Donna and her husband Brian as well as my nephew Walker with him, and that the love and support of many were with him.

My brother and his sons Will and Wyatt drove down from Kansas City to pick us from the airport in Memphis, to drive us to Fulton, Mississippi. How many memories followed us, as I remembered the many times Daddy had ferried us as we traveled from Africa. Thankfully we were able to be together as his children and grandchildren, to make the necessary arrangements and the final service of burying his mortal remains. My sister, brother and I spoke from the heart in love and respect for our father. We did not fail to point out that he was a man of both greatness and weakness, and that the Grace of God allowed him to be a servant to many. Hopefully, our words were respectful and gave honor to our dad, and pointed the way to the One who comforts in times of sorrow, and warned that we must all prepare for our own inevitable appointment with death and judgment. Over 800 persons viewed the ceremony online, and I believe it can still be viewed at the website of McNeeceMorrisFuneralHome.com. A number of folks also made great effort to join us in person, to extend words of love and support to us. For every kind gift, prayer and encouragement, we remain eternally grateful. We were gifted a fellowship meal after the burial by the ladies at Saucer Creek Church of Christ, where Daddy labored many years. This is now the third time they have done this for our family.

As we all settled to the huge task of cleaning and settling my dad's estate, my brother received a midnight call that his mother in law had suddenly had a heart attack and passed away. In less than a week, his children lost two of their grandparents, an irreplaceable loss. But even at their young age, they shared a common faith that their grandparents trusted in God's promises of salvation, and a resurrection into a place far better than this temporal dwelling. Though the grief of saying good bye to those we love is sharp and real and abiding, we do not grieve as those who have no hope. And that hope is an anchor to our souls. And it is that message of hope that we want to share with as many as possible.

They sometimes say things happen in threes, and so we experienced another loss in one week, though this one not fatal. My sister, while trying to help my brother prepare to leave for the funeral of his mother in law, slipped and fell, breaking her ankle in three places. This turned everything upside down in the twinkling of an eye for all of us, as it will be sometime before she is truly mobile again. Right now she is waiting for the swelling to go down so the surgeon can attempt to screw and plate the pieces back together. The unexpected blessing of this event, is that Nkiru and I are able to be with her, to care for her in a time of need. Please pray that Donna will be completely healed, and that long term she will be able to resume her active life blessing so many others.

Meanwhile, back in Nigeria, the children are facing challenges of their own. Nkiru's brother is very ill with what may well be covid, as well as Joe in our house. Joy is hospitalized with appendicitis, and may require surgery. On the positive side, the older ones are trying to see how they can arrange a little Christmas cheer for the small ones. Someone has generously supplied a ram so the menu of day is now set. Japheth has come home from culinary school, so he hopes to show off his talents in a meal of goat stew, fried rice and beans, plus five unlucky chickens.

As this difficult year comes near to closing, let me once again say thanks to you and to God who has used you to bless us and others. At the beginning of the year, some faithful brethren gave unusual contributions, larger than our need at the time. I have learned that when God gives us an extra blessing that He is equipping us for greater ministry. And so those extra funds, and the extra gifts that came through the year, helped us survive the year and even expand what we were able to do. Gifts from our Nigerian friends decreased considerably, but our American brethren made up for the loss. Nigerians often gave rice to support us. Now we are buying it at two and a half times the price at the start of the year. All food prices have jumped up similarly. Yet God has not left us to hunger, and has provided, in ways we do not understand, enough to keep our large family fed. We also have fed many extra mouths this year. Covid has hit the poor the hardest, and up to 30 kids from the nearby slums come each day to share our evening meal. As hard as this sometimes is, it provides us with a chance to share God's Word and love, and gives us a special sense of joy and fulfillment. I hope that you can realize, as you eat your evening meal, that your love has helped to see that a little child will not go to bed hungry.

Please allow me to close with a word about my Dad. It is in large part because of his efforts and influence that I have lived in foreign mission fields for thirty four years plus 7 years in church-sponsored children's homes. I cannot tell of all the efforts he made to support us in these ministries. Though he worried about my well being, though he struggled to have a small farm I could settle on if I ever was released from service overseas, though he desperately needed my presence in the last years of his life, he continued to insist I stay on the firing line, caring for neglected and abandoned children. Did I neglect my duty to my parents to be able to care for other people's children. Yes I did, and it is a guilt I will always struggle with. Yet I did so at the insistence of parents who believed that what I was doing was important enough that they were willing to give up what I could have served them with to be able to share God's love with someone else. I can never never repay such love. Neither can I repay the many acts of love and kindness you have shown, including that of my brother's mother-in-law. All I can do is to try to pass that love on to as many as possible, for as long as God allows.

We love you all. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Your gifts are a fragrant offering, and acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Philemon 4: 19,20)

We love you,

Cliff, Nkiru and family

PS. Trouble does not just come in threes. In the last few days of the year end we have lost two friends, an aunt, a first cousin and my brother in law's father. Never have we seen such a cluster of deaths in such a small space of time. Keep praying My phone number is 719 459 0003 while we are in the states