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Subject: January 2021 news

Dear Friends and Family,

As we spend the last days of our visit to America, let us once again share a moment of your time, to let you know how things are going with us. I can say this has been a period of trials and difficulties, but also a period where we have seen God's grace and mercy, as well as His timing.

The year began with a somber tone. There was no area church singing and praying to bring in the new year. There was no party with family and friends. But we were blessed to be in the home of my sister and her husband Brian. It gave us time to reflect together on the difficulties of the year, the many blessings God has provided and to look forward to better things in the new year. That was our prayer for ourselves and for you as well. May we continue to confess that we are more than conquerors through Christ our Lord.

One of the things that became so unexpected during this period of time was more death in the family. Brian's dad, having just turned 91 a few days before, passed away quiet suddenly in California. This made the total of five members of the family to pass away in less than a month, and only one was somehow expected. This sudden loss of core members of the extended family is hard to fully absorb. We know God is a loving God, and His mercy endures forever. May His mercy be granted to each departed soul and may He continue to sustain us all.

We were able to be blessed to be able to drive to San Antonio for a brief visit with the Massey family and others in the NorthWest congregation. These faithful friends have sacrificed to be able to share with us over the years, and it was wonderful to have time to be with them. Don and Debbie Locke were also able to come up from Houston to join us, so it was a very special time of strengthening fellowship. We had a few moments to share with the congregation news of our common labor, and a brief video of Treasure Jaja. Treasure was gifted money for a life changing surgery from friends in San Antonio and it was good for them to see her progress. We ask for prayers as she still continues a long and difficult road to full mobility, as well as for the faithful brethren at NorthWest Church of Christ.

On our way back to Mississippi we passed through Houston and Lake Charles, Louisiana. As we reached the outskirts of town we heard a loud noise underneath our car. We stopped to investigate but saw nothing. But as we reached the center of town I could feel the air going out of our tire. Late at night, cold January wind blowing off the lake, I found myself struggling to change the tire. Triple A did not respond to our call, the proper wrenches were not available, the wind was whipping down my back. Yet even then God was providing a way. We were able to change the tire, a friendly clerk helped us with the last hotel room available, and the next day we providentially found a tire repair shop on a side street. Because of the two hurricanes that devastated the city of Lake Charles last year, these provisions were not common or taken lightly. In the midst of difficulty, when my spirit wants to complain or forget, God shows His mercy and goodness. Please pray for the many in Lake Charles who lost so much, and especially for our friends the Bells. Mr Ed Bell came with his son Matt to Nigeria and was a big

blessing to us then by providing for us work. He too died during this end of the year period.

Meanwhile, back in Nigeria God has continued to provide and protect. Joy did have an emergency appendectomy and her life was spared from a serious infection. It was discovered that she is in her early stages of pregnancy, her fourth in a short time. We pray for her strength and for a safe delivery. One of the sisters we have worked with for a long time is close to the end of her battle with HIV, requiring a lot of extra time and attention from those in the house as well as funds. And Boaz was also hospitalized, though he is much improved. Your gifts made it possible for these souls to be cared for, and for that we are eternally grateful.

One great news we received from Africa was that our daughter Jodie and her husband are expecting their first child. I remember Jodie coming to us as a newborn 27 years ago. What a wonderful testament to God's love that He has provided a family for her when her mother died giving her birth, allowing her to grow to the point where she now has her own husband and expected child. God is good...all the time.

One more testimony to His provision and timing was when I called Healing Hands in Nashville for assistance. They are a great ministry that helps so many in so many places, especially in times of crisis. I called to ask for used microscopes, since they collect donated medical items to share with others. I got much more than expected. As I explained my need and my desire to ship a container of items to Nigeria, Joseph Smith, director of operations explained that he had just gotten off the phone with an executor of an estate. The person was looking for a place in Africa where he could donate tools and other items. This has expanded well beyond my initial imagination. So my brother came back to help us continue to settle our dad's estate. I was able to collect some of his many woodworking tools, and other items that will be able to help others learn skills to help them to survive. This plus the items from Nashville will be a blessing to so many. A deep and sincere thank you to my brother and his children, his friend and family who hosted us over night in Nashville, to the friends at Healing Hands and so many others who have and will have a part in this effort. As funds become available, we will ship this container from Nashville and it will change the lives of not only our children but other homes and schools as well.

One last story before we go. My brother, brother in law, sister and Nkiru and I went to have a last meal together. We all met at a favorite restaurant on the TennTom waterway. My sister had my dad's billfold, and it held enough for him to buy us one last supper. This is definitely something he would have done had he been alive. As I looked over the scene, I remembered our visit with our last meal with our dad last year at that same restaurant. At that time a replica of the Santa Maria was docked below the restaurant. I also remembered where I had dug in an archeological dig for Native American artifacts before the area was flooded as well as the hard labor I spent helping to build the lock and dam I could see in a distance. All that played around in my head. I thought of the generations that had come and gone, in the landscape that lay before me. Each living their lives, not knowing the changes that were to come and the effect their lives were to have on the folks coming behind them. I do know that God sees the beginning and the end. He knows the purpose for which He sent us. He alone has the full perspective, though He gives us a glimpse now and then. The Indians came and left. The explorers came and left. My daddy has come and gone, playing his role. Soon

you and I will join them. We pray all we do together will be to His glory. Perhaps someday someone will look and see the effect of our time here on earth. By His grace others will see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven.

Remember we always love you,
Cliff, Nkiru and family