

August 21, 2021

Dear Friends and Family,

I was strengthened by a verse someone sent me yesterday. Psalms 50:15 reads, "Pray to me when you are in trouble! I will deliver you, and you will honor me." I appreciate that much needed reminder of who is our comforter and deliverer, and our need to thank Him for His past and present blessings. Please continue to pray for us in our times of trouble, as we do for you as well.

So much has happened since I wrote last that it has blurred in my mind, but let me hit one or two high spots, and then on to some important news.

First, we rejoiced to witness two baptisms over this past period, though as new babes in Christ, they have a long way to grow. One young man James came during our worship service and requested baptism. He said his desire was to start a new life, and not to repeat the mistakes he had seen in others. We rejoice in such a desire. Unfortunately for James, he suddenly lost his job and housing, and this threw him into a mental breakdown. His family requested he be sent back to the village, and we are glad to report he is now much better. I pray he will find the support he needs and that we can still have opportunity to encourage and help him. As a new Christian he needs your prayers that there will be others who can help him along his journey. The other gentleman was older in age, but had been deep into African traditional religions. He yearns for safety and peace of mind that he can come to know Christ better. Small seeds have been planted in their lives, and much nurturing is needed.

We were able to go twice to Uyo, the capital of neighboring Akwa Ibom state. The first journey was to witness and participate in the ceremonies honoring our late brother Okon Mkpong. Br. Mkpong was a giant figure in the church here in Nigeria, and a testimony to how God can work wonders in the life of a willing servant. His legacy was great, and it was encouraging to see so many from so many walks of life come together and testify of the good God had done in and through Br. Mkpong. It was a special treat to be able to visit with several of his family members that came from the US to help honor their father and grandfather. They, along with the schools he founded, remain great treasures he left behind. May the Lord raise up more of his tribe.

Br. Mkpong stood beside us when we had little hope. In 1998 we completed 5 years of intense labor at Nigerian Christian Hospital. We had during that time cared for in some way a good number of Nigerian infants and orphans. We had also assisted 60 widows and their small children with rent for farm land, money for food, clothes, school, etc. Most of the orphans we had cared for we tried to reunite with families, but several still remained with us. It was expected that we would abandon these children to their fate, with no one willing to step in and take the responsibility of their care. God used Br. Mkpong to help us be able to stay in Nigeria and continue sharing God's love with these and many other children. He was able to see some of these children grow to be graduates, marry, have children of their own, and he rightfully felt proud to be a part of

their progress. The children gathered around us today remain a part of his legacy as well.

Our second journey was to participate in the 67th annual lectureship at the Nigeria Christian Bible College at Ukpom. For many years this has remained a highlight of the calendar of Christians in this area. Akin to the Brush Arbor meetings of years past, it provided a forum for brethren to meet for a period of intense teaching and fellowship. We were honored to be invited to speak on the opening night of the forum and my assignment was to give an overview of the book of Galatians. It was good to be warmly welcomed and to revisit brethren that we had worked with in times past for the good of the school. We were encouraged to see evidences of growth in the school, and we pray this will continue to be a place where God's Word is taught and lived.

Our lives here consist of daily challenges as we seek to share the love and Word of God. This year we have had an unusual amount of sickness to deal with. The diagnosis usually is malaria and or typhoid. But the severity and duration has been unusual. And it has affected mostly the older ones. I have written of this before, but it continues to be a challenge, not just for us personally but also those we help serve. One sister that attends services had a partial stroke and lost her five month pregnancy last week. Please pray for the Kingsley Nwankwo family as they grieve this loss and for Sis Joy to overcome her problem of high blood pressure.

The big challenge we are facing at the moment comes from an unexpected source, the State Ministry of Social Welfare. The state government put into law this week an updated Child Rights Act. Though we have supported the efforts of the Ministry in times past and they also have helped us at times, a new approach to child care, along with "a new pharaoh that knew not Joseph" has suddenly put us at risk. There are threats of closure, of forfeiture of property, of forced relocation of children that have spent years with us, of even possible imprisonment and public humiliation. None of these threats do we take lightly, judging from their source nor the current atmosphere in the world.

While we try to pray for and exhibit the wisdom from above while dealing with people that are very aggressive and not very open to dialogue or reason, we know that our firm hope remains with the God which we are trying desperately to serve. If our efforts meet with His Will and approval, then all such challenges will result in His being glorified. And that is why we continue. It is a task and destiny I could not have humanly known or welcomed. Our failings are many and evident, but the grace of God has kept us trying our best to serve Him by serving others. Where we go wrong, we know He will discipline and correct us. We rely on His infinite mercy to still hold on to us and find us useful for His purposes.

Friends, once again we come to you and to the Father on bended knee. I don't like to ask for help, but the Lord continues to humble me to realize that is necessary to depend on Him for the provision of His grace, in whatever form it is to be manifested. Please help us to petition Him that we will remain faithful while expectedly waiting for His purposes to be made known in our lives. Does He want us to move to another location

that is for His purpose? Much of my life has been spent this way, going from place to place without our plan or foresight. Is it to move the children to another destiny? So many questions as to what and why and how, and for now no clear answers.

We remain committed to strive with all our being to serve Him faithfully, and we feel honored to have you in our lives. We respect your sacrifices on our behalf, and ask our Father to richly bless you for each of your efforts. May He keep us bound together in love and purpose.

With warm regards,  
Cliff, Nkiru and family