

FEBRUARY 2019



In a nutshell

The new semester is well under way and things are going smoothly so far. However, it would be great to pray for peace and stability in the aftermath of the upcoming elections.

Rick

As I (Rick) write this, I am in Jos in the middle of a busy sermon patch. I was preaching at a friend's wedding on Saturday and on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday I'm speaking at a 'Spiritual Emphasis Week' at a local church here in Jos. On Wednesday I'll be back in Kagoro as I have a sermon to do in Chapel. It's not normally this busy – I probably average about one sermon every two weeks. Most of the church contexts here are bilingual (English and Hausa), so I usually get the sermon translated into Hausa. I think that works quite well – there will probably be a few people who would struggle with a sermon in English anyway, but even for the people whose English is fine, it gives them a chance to get used to my accent without any embarrassment.

My Chaplain role means I've continued to be involved in preaching at Kagoro each week (from Genesis this semester), and I'm also involved in counselling. It's still relatively early days this semester, but there are good indications that new students are again feeling that the seminary is a safe environment in which to ask for help.

I have three new classes this semester – a couple of MA classes (one on theology and ethics and one on pacifism and the use of force – particularly topical with the elections coming up!), and also a PhD class (on systematic theology, particularly looking at the doctrine of the trinity and the doctrine of Christ).

'Fun in the Sun'

There is a weekend away called 'Fun in the Sun' that happens over the Easter long weekend. It's a bit like a low-intensity conference or retreat, or an Easter-themed family holiday, with a number of Easter services and seminars but also plenty of free time and fun activities. It happens at a Christian Conference Centre in Miango, part way between Kagoro and Jos. The person who started it 10 years ago, and has been running it since, is no longer able to do so, so I have volunteered to take over the running of it (though I'm planning that a number of the Kagoro students will provide me with very substantial help in this). It will probably have about 150 in attendance – three quarters Nigerians, one quarter ex pats. Since Easter is very late this year, rainy season may be in full flow, so Fun in 'the Sun' may be a less accurate name than in previous years.

Children's Centre

The Children's Centre is underway in the sense that there is a site and a somewhat elderly and ramshackle building to use. I think there's a good fighting chance that the roof might make it through the coming rainy season, April to October (so long as there are no unusually big storms), but I'm less confident that it will make it through the next rainy season. We have made a reasonable start on raising funds to build a new building and, from one perspective, the roof-situation provides some 'helpful' pressure to keep on with it.

Asha has gotten involved in helping to run a toddler group. At the moment we are doing that at our house – or, more precisely, in the garden. We were able to make a sort of patio area during the Christmas break – this has already been useful for several things, not just toddler groups, but also homeschool. As and when the Children's Centre is in somewhat better shape the toddler group will hopefully relocate there.

Presidential Elections

The Nigerian Presidential Election is scheduled for Saturday 16 February. This is a very major event for the country and tensions are high. The aftermath of the last election (in 2015) was calm and peaceful throughout the country and people are hoping it will be the same again this year. That is certainly possible, but far from guaranteed. In 2015 the losing candidate conceded defeat promptly and gracefully, which helped matters greatly. It would be good to pray that things go well this time around also.

Alanna

Homeschool has been going well. We've been making some adaptations to respond to the ways the kids are developing as they get older. Asha's toddler group involvement is part of this. We've also been trying to include them in more social activities outside the seminary. We've spent a bit more time in Jos this month and they have been able to attend a Burns night celebration (including real haggis - the children were not so keen on it, though), a wedding and a school fun night. Do continue to pray that we would have wisdom in being aware of our kids' changing needs and working out how to deal with them.

In Girls Brigade this semester we are planning to teach basic knitting skills and also some safety and basic first aid. Please pray that these would be genuinely useful. We will also continue bible studies in the book of Ephesians. Pray that the girls would have a good grasp of the Gospel and understand how knowing what Christ has done for us should affect our lives.

Praise points

- **A restful Christmas / New Year break.**
- **A good beginning to the new semester.**

Prayer points

- **Elections – for God's will to be done, for a clear result and sensible concession from the losing candidate, and for peace and stability following the result.**
- **For wisdom in knowing how to manage the kids' changing needs.**
- **For wisdom in organising the 'Fun in the Sun' Easter retreat.**
- **For faithfulness and effectiveness in preaching, teaching, counselling and other ministry opportunities.**