

November 2017

**In a nutshell:**

**Things are busy (in a rewarding way), with lots of discipleship opportunities - almost too many!**



**Summer**

We had a good time back in the UK and Ireland over the summer, catching up with many family, friends and churches. We were also able to help on a new youth camp in southern Ireland.



**Family life**

Alanna has been busy this semester. Sundays are the busiest day: at 8am she leads a 'preparatory class' for Sunday School teachers (to prepare for the following week), then there is Sunday School itself, and also Girls Brigade in the afternoon. These have all been encouraging. The new Sunday School materials (from [www.mustard-seeds.net](http://www.mustard-seeds.net)) are working well - the kids are enjoying the classes and learning. In GB the main focus this year is to help the girls learn to build each other up. One aspect of this is learning biblical principles for peace-making and conflict resolution. Alanna has also introduced the conflict resolution principles to the female students for whom she is a 'dormitory parent.'

Asha, Conor and Jack have been doing well at home school, and are also travelling once a week with Alanna to Jos to do afternoon lessons in an international school and spend a night with their good friends.

**Teaching and preaching**

This semester I (Rick) have been teaching a couple of discipleship courses, a course on 'Preaching Revelation,' one on bible interpretation, as well as helping out a bit with some theology courses. One of the discipleship courses (called 'Spiritual Life') is for brand new students who are just starting at the seminary. It is a big class (about 90 people), but it has been going particularly well. In large part that is because I have enlisted a dozen or so older students to help with the course. The first hour is all together, then the second hour the class splits into small groups, which are led by the older students.

## Counselling

We have about 100 new students this semester (making just over 500 in total). New students always means a new batch of personal issues (including things I've mentioned before: pornography use, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual immorality and theft). It's good that these issues are being raised early, so that they can be dealt with earlier. The main 'problems' on this front are to do with not being able to take advantage of all the wealth of discipleship opportunities available. Over the past four semesters I've had good/deep/significant conversations with almost 200 different students. I've been able to following up about 20-30 of those in a meaningful way. On one level, that is good going but On another level, that still leaves 170 or so.... I've been trying to spread the load, but that's not straightforward either. Other staff are also all very busy themselves - and naturally enough it is perhaps not every staff member that students would feel comfortable opening up to.

I've also encouraged a lot of peer-to-peer discipleship among students. As part of this I've been working on getting student-to-student mentoring going. This has been a bit slow to get off the ground - initial keenness doesn't always last for the longer haul - but when this has worked, it has worked well. To be properly sustainable it still needs more organisation and managing to really work effectively. My current idea is to persuade the seminary to take on some extra staff in three main areas: discipleship (as above); children/youth work (we have about 500 kids/teens at church on a Sunday and no dedicated kids/youth workers); and evangelism/outreach (there are many unchurched people in Kagoro, who are not being reached very effectively at present). There are potential people in the pipeline who would be very good but as ever finance is a major problem. The seminary is just about making ends meet at the moment - which is more than some other institutions are doing - but there's not much left over for anything extra.

## Give thanks for:

- that the teaching, preaching and counselling are all going really well;
- for ongoing progress in Sunday School and Girls Brigade;
- for continued safety and health;
- For the opportunity for Asha, Conor and Jack to spend some time as part of a school class.

## Please pray:

- that those who have begun to change for the better will continue in what they have started;
- for an increasing culture of discipleship among the seminary community;
- for wisdom and energy for Alanna in dealing with so much relationship-based work (it is both beautifully rewarding, and exhausting!);
- that the Sunday School kids, GB girls, and female students will grow to be more like Jesus through what they are learning;
- that God will provide: students struggle to pay their school fees and sometimes struggle even to have food to eat (economically things are still very hard);
- for peace and stability: there is still unrest in many parts of the country;
- for safety in travel.

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