

Reverend Dr Jan Boer and his wife Frances Boer-Prins dedicated three decades of their lives to the mission field in central Nigeria. Raised in the Reformed Calvinist tradition of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Dooyeweerd, the Boers brought to their mission work an approach anchored on the total gospel... The Boers have left an impermeable legacy in Nigeria. There is a glory that lightens the path of those who have laboured that others may find life. I commend this book to those who affirm the ethical approach to life and to living a life of service to others.

—Dr Obadiah Mailafia,
Former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria & Former Presidential Candidate of the African Democratic Congress, ADC

Having arrived in Nigeria just before the civil war broke out barely one year later, Rev Dr and Mrs Boer can be considered prime witnesses with a front seat in Nigeria's chequered history. I encountered him in my younger days during his work at the Institute for Church and Society, Jos. The Institute was a most strategic and prophetic outpost which, had we foreseen the prophetic urgency of its message then, its work would have helped the nation avert the decay of corruption and inequalities that have consumed our country. A record of Dr Boer's experience should serve as a token of appreciation for the labours of people like him and provide a sense of urgency in the struggle to use the Gospel to renew the face of the earth.

—Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, Catholic Bishop of Sokoto, Nigeria

I applaud the life of service of Dr John and Mrs Fran Boer and their impact in Northern Nigeria at a very difficult time in our nation's history. Their dedication to training pastors and evangelists, building communities and transforming lives through the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, the Institute of Church and Society (ICS), Hillcrest School and many other institutions inspired and equipped a generation of change agents. Their legacy lives on through the work of their biological and spiritual children, who continue to push boundaries and transform lives.

—Ndidi Nwuneli, MFR, Founder, LEAP Africa

On a macro level, this book is about a missionary couple in Nigeria with big ideas and big ambitions who integrated deeply into society and spent thirty years building and strengthening the church in Northern Nigeria, often working under very difficult circumstances. On a micro level, this is a story very personal to me as it gives an account of that same missionary couple and how they loved and raised a little girl from Nyankwala named Lydia to become a musician and educator, and, importantly, for me, my mother. This is a deeply important narrative about not only the shaping of the Nigerian church but what shaped me also.

—Jude 'MI' Abaga, CEO, the TASCK Agency



Jan H. Boer
Frances A. Boer

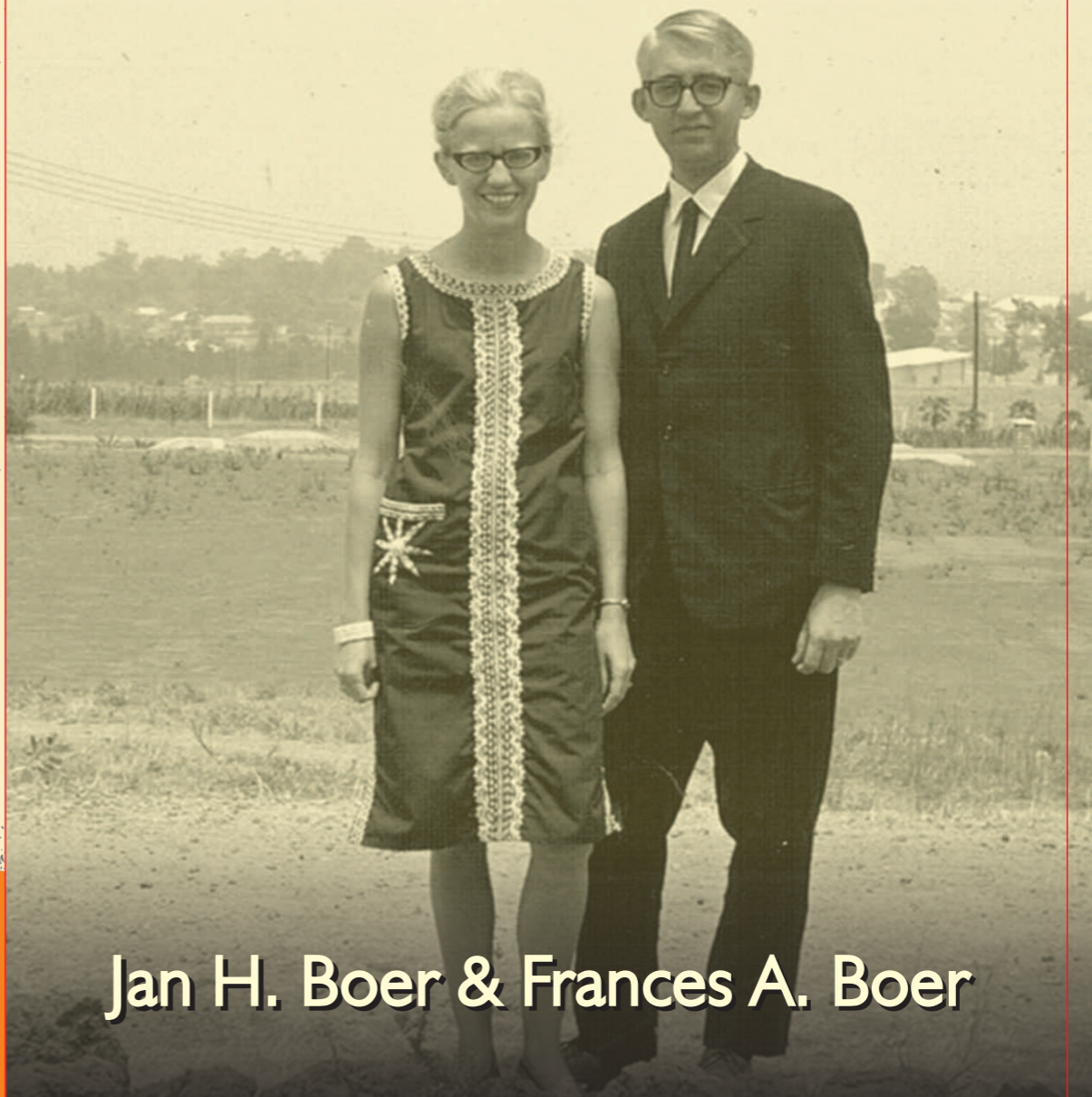
EVERY SQUARE INCH

BOOKERA
AFRICA

A treasure trove of lessons on life, missions, family, marriage, theology and God.

EVERY SQUARE INCH

A Nigeria Missionary Memoir 1966-1996



Jan H. Boer & Frances A. Boer



Dr Jan H. Boer, was a missionary in Nigeria from 1966-1996, living in what are now Taraba and Plateau states, but serving nationwide. He served the Christian Reformed Church-Nigeria, the Institute of Church & Society, the Christian Health Association of Nigeria and the TEKAN churches. He is a prolific writer with publications in Hausa and English. His writings are mostly focused on Nigerian social issues, including a doctoral dissertation about missions and colonialism in Nigeria, eight volumes on Nigerian Christian-Muslim relations and more. His doctorate is from the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. His current project is an Online Reformational Academic Library (ORAL) contained in his website www.SocialTheology.com along with all his other writings.

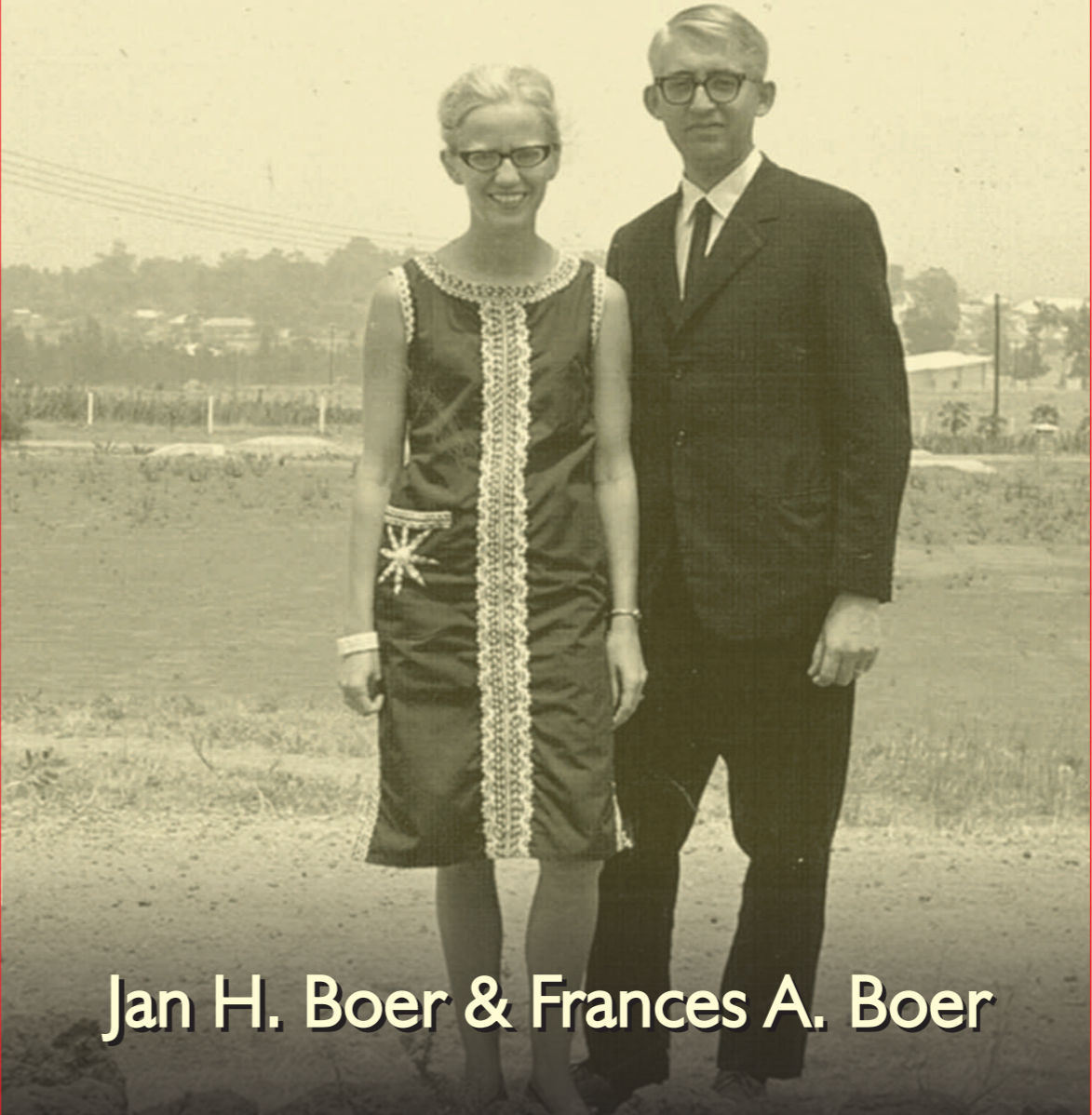
Mrs Frances Ann Boer-Prins, spent nearly two decades of her thirty years in Nigeria as a professional teacher. In addition to teaching Hausa classes to both Nigerians and expatriates, she taught a wide range of subjects and grade levels at Hillcrest School in Jos. She also served in various volunteer functions in Nigeria, including editor for many of her husband's publications, managing a Christian literature ministry and a mission guest house.

The Boers currently reside in Vancouver, Canada, and have four adult children, ten grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

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BOOKCRAFT

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—Jude 'MP' Abaga, CEO, the TASCK Agency



Every Square Inch

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A NIGERIA MISSIONARY MEMOIR
1966 - 1996

Jan H. Boer & Frances A. Boer

BOOKCRAFT

Ibadan

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Jan and Frances Boer assert their right to be identified
as the authors of this work.

PRAISE

Rev (Dr) Jan Boer was one of the long-serving Christian missionaries that worked with the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN), having arrived in 1966 with his wife, Frances. His contributions are clearly evidence in today's CRCN, as many of his ideas and vision are still being pursued.

A generation before the arrival of Dr Boer in Nigeria, there were indigenous Christian leaders, among whom was my grandfather, Rev Istifanus Audu from Takum, Taraba. When the first congregation of the Takum Church was organised in 1930, Mallam Audu became one of the first five indigenous elders. After that, he became one of the greatest helpers to the pioneer foreign missionaries in the area. When his teacher/friend Ashu Angyu died in 1935, my grandfather became the leader in the Takum Church and its environs. Although Christian missionaries, in general, contributed greatly to the development and growth of the Church, Jan Boer's contributions and commitments are particularly laudable.

As this history shows, the CRCN has had a profound impact on shaping myself personally and Taraba State as a whole. My father knew Dr Boer as one of the missionaries who was at the forefront of building on the foundations set by my grandfather and ensuring the church and its institutions were Nigerian led and decisions made were in the interest of Nigerians, sometimes clashing with his own missionary colleagues to make this happen.

This wonderful memoir paints a picture of what life was like in rural southern Taraba in the 1960s and 1970s and how intrepid missionaries like the Boers, in close collaboration with Nigerian pastors and evangelists, built the CRCN into a solid institution that would stand the test of time and contribute immensely to the development of the region.

Darius Dickson Ishaku Istifanus Audu,

Executive Governor, Taraba State, Nigeria

As described vividly in this memoir, Dr Jan Harm Boer, known and called ‘John Boer’ by Christians in Nigeria, was a missionary who came to Nigeria with his wife Frances in 1966, at the brink of the Nigerian Civil War. As a missionary of the Christian Reformed Church-America/Canada, he came to ‘spread the word’ (gospel) of salvation in Taraba (then part of Benue-Plateau State). Dr Boer and his wife were engaged with the Nigerian Church in leadership, evangelising and building the Church. In the history of the Christian Reformed Church-Nigeria (CRCN), it is common knowledge that Dr Boer connected honestly and sincerely with indigenous Christians, like no other.

Dr Boer did connect so powerfully with the Nigerian Christian community, devoid of any racial or discriminative tendency. This man loathed poverty in the lives of the indigenous followers of Christ, especially those he had reached with the Gospel of our Lord. A confirmation of this claim is in the testimony of Rev Habila Istifanus, who had served together with Dr Boer at the Institute of Church and Society, Jos: ‘He (Dr Boer) was largely involved in empowerment and mobilisation for ‘social action’’. Besides, Dr Boer left in his trail several publications on areas affecting the socio-economic development of Nigerians, especially the Christians, including members of the CRC-Nigeria.

Dr Jan Harm Boer was and is still a great blessing to the CRC-Nigeria. Mr Bulus Ali, who served with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), remembered Dr Boer and his wife as dedicated missionaries who loved their work and loved Nigerian Christians among whom they spent their years of strength, giving labours of love. Rev Philip D. Aboki, chairman of the CRC-Nigeria Board of Trustees (BOT), describes Dr Boer as a caring man who never blew his trumpet, one with a heart of gold and a friendly and hard-working man, a lover of the youth. He said Dr Boer’s wife ‘influenced Christian Religious Knowledge in primary schools and was involved with her husband in the training of leaders for the Church (CRC-Nigeria)’. Rev Adamu Eyab corroborated early testimony of Dr Boer’s love for the salvation of sinners, identification with native believers

in Christ, and a busy missionary. CRC-Nigeria misses the Boer family.

Rev Caleb Ahima,

President, Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria and

Vice-President, Christian Association of Nigeria

Reverend Dr Jan Boer and his wife Frances Boer-Prins dedicated three decades of their lives to the mission field in central Nigeria. Raised in the Reformed Calvinist tradition of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Dooyeweerd, the Boers brought to their mission work an approach anchored on the total gospel. Dr Boer has been a mentor and a friend whom I cherish dearly. He not only counselled and prayed with me as a young man; he opened the door of his impressive library at the Institute of Church and Society in Jos when I was on the pilgrim quest to find meaning and purpose for my life. The Boers have left an impermeable legacy in Nigeria. There is a glory that lightens the path of those who have laboured that others may find life. I commend this book to those who affirm the ethical approach to life and to living a life of service to others. Blessed are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of Peace!

Dr Obadiah Mailafia,

Former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria &

Former Presidential Candidate of the African Democratic Congress,ADC

Having arrived in Nigeria just before the civil war broke out barely one year later, Rev Dr and Mrs Boer can be considered prime witnesses with a front seat in Nigeria's chequered history. I encountered him in my younger days during his work at the Institute for Church and Society, Jos. The Institute was a most strategic and prophetic outpost which, had we foreseen the prophetic urgency of its message then, its work would have helped the nation avert the decay of corruption and inequalities that have consumed our country. A record of Dr Boer's experience should serve as a token of appreciation for the labours of people like him and provide a sense of urgency in the struggle to use the Gospel to renew the face of the earth. This work is as much a labour of love as a record of the work of a truly good and great ambassador of Christ.

Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Catholic Bishop of Sokoto, Nigeria*

In the 1980s and at a time the growing Church in Nigeria was largely polarised by divisive perspectives on such issues as the tension between evangelism and social action, faith and science and Christian-Muslim relations, a prominent voice stood out as a point of reference, particularly in Northern Nigeria and beyond. Long before terms like ‘holistic’ or ‘integral mission’ became more widely used, Dr John Boer’s irrepressible engagement of such matters and others, not only in seminars and conferences but in ‘everydayness’ of life challenged some of us to reflect more deeply on the sacred/secular divide that limited effective witness of the church both then and now.

Dr Boer’s voice through the Institute of Church and Society (ICS), backed by his numerous publications on Wholistic health care, Christian involvement in politics, economics, justice and development issues, contributed in significant ways to my own journey in challenging people to bring the Lordship of Christ to bear on all spheres of life. His influence and that of Uncle John Stott eventually led me to initiate the Institute for Christian Impact (ICI), which I lead today, to challenge Christians to walk the talk of following Jesus.

The ethos of Boeriana and Kuyperiana (for those who understand these terms) are very much part of our vision to see the Church in Africa engaging biblically and effectively with the complex realities in our context. In this regard, and as we often say in various parts of Africa, the words of our elders like Boer, Stott and Kuyper remain with us as words of wisdom.

Rev Dr Femi B. Adeleye,

Executive Director, Institute for Christian Impact

I applaud the life of service of Dr John and Mrs Fran Boer and their impact in Northern Nigeria at a very difficult time in our nation’s history. Their dedication to training pastors and evangelists, building communities and transforming lives through the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, the Institute of Church and Society (ICS), Hillcrest School and many other institutions inspired and equipped a generation of change agents. Their legacy lives on through the work of their biological and spiritual children, who continue to push

boundaries and transform lives.

Ndidi Nwuneli, MFR, *Founder, LEAP Africa*

Dr Jan and Fran Boer were missionaries in the true biblical sense. As these memoirs show, they came to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not Western civilisation which many wrongly equate with Christianity. They maintained a Biblical stance on issues and relationships and identified with those to whom they were sent, in the essence of their culture and worldview, not superficially. They respected them and interacted with them as one image-bearer of God to another and were respected in return. My wife and I love them as brother and sister, fellow travellers on our journey to heaven and co-workers with Christ in His vineyard.

Professor Timothy Gyuse PhD, FNITP, RTP

*Former National Director, GCM of Nigeria and
Director of West African Affairs for GCM West Africa
(Campus Crusade for Christ International)*

and

Professor Elizabeth Gyuse PhD, FSTAN,

Former Director of Women Ministry and Prayer, GCM West Africa.

For thirty years, Rev Dr Jan Boer and my late father, Rev Dr David Angye worked tirelessly together to build and strengthen the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) in particular and the Christian Church in Northern Nigeria in general, becoming closer than brothers in the process. The most memorable occasions in their partnership were when Dr Boer would speak in Hausa and my father would translate into English. This memoir is an important record of the missionary journey of the Boers in Nigeria. My only regret is that my father did not live to read this publication.

Clara Angye Lanki, *Daughter of Rev Dr David Angye*

My late father, Rev Luka Agbu, led the translation of the Bible into Jukun, which had a profound impact on the CRCN in particular and the Jukun people generally. He could not have achieved this

remarkable feat without the theological training and tireless support of missionaries like Rev Dr Boer as described in this wonderful missionary memoir. The Boers' love for Nigeria did not end when they left, such that when I made it to the US in 1997, it was their house I went to first. The family connection is now in its sixth decade and the third generation. It was a lovely moment in 2017 when I presented the Boers' grandsons to the Aku Uka of Wukari, who still fondly remembered their grandfather and gave them all Jukun names – Hiko, Matswen, Makai, and Chivoma. Their family and their story is now also a Jukun one.

Mathias Agbu, *Subsea System Expert Engineer, TechnicFMC*

Rev. Dr. Jan and Frances Boer spent twenty of their 30 years as missionaries in Nigeria based in Jos, where they were involved with so many of our most iconic institutions including Hillcrest School, the Sudan United Mission, TEKAN, the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, the Jos Main Market, and St. Piran's Church.

They also worked to promote so many ideas, many that were ahead of their time, ranging from the role of Church in Society, Rural Development, wholistic healthcare, Christian views on Nigeria's external debt, and so much more. They advanced the cause of evangelism and propagation of the Christian faith, using practical attributes of sacrifice, love and compassion. This book, *Every Square Inch*, is as much a history of Plateau State from 1977–1996 as it is a missionary memoir, providing insight in to so much of what makes our State special as a microcosm of Nigeria where new ideas and approaches are both welcome and allowed to flourish.

Relishing the account of a peaceful, diverse, accommodating and vibrant Plateau which Rev. Dr. Jan and Frances Boer describe in this book, many readers will definitely be inspired and encouraged to play their part in building a stronger Plateau State that lives up to its name as the Home of Peace and Tourism, whether they are visiting or residing.

Their account also raises the bar to leadership and followership at all levels to rise to the challenge of building a society that embraces all people irrespective of their faith, ethnicity, economic status and

socio-political orientations. This is the vision of the Plateau Rescue Agenda under my leadership.

Rt. Hon. (Dr) Simon Bako Lalong, KSGG

Executive Governor of Plateau State & Chairman,

Northern Governors Forum.

Jos, Nigeria

I fondly remember Mrs Boer as one of my best teachers. Mrs Boer taught me how to write well in my 8th-grade year at Hillcrest School in Jos. We had weekly writing assignments and sometimes daily homework to submit the next day. Her red pen was legendary. I didn't like red ink all over my assignments then, but I am very grateful that I had a teacher who was stern but caring. Whenever I receive compliments about my writing, I think about the woman who laid the foundation and was unbiased to all my classmates, including her own son, Kevin.

Oluwatoyin Adegbite-Moore,

Executive Director, Africa Venture Philanthropy Alliance, West Africa

When I think of Jan and Fran Boer, the following words come to mind: *Thoughtful*. Jesus commanded us to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. A major part of the Boer ministry focused on the 'mind' part. *Prolific*. I don't think I personally know of any missionary who has worked harder or written so much material as Jan Boer. *Relevant*. As these memoirs reflect, the Boers had a healthy restlessness to go beyond basic missionary activities like baptisms and training pastors to address the major problems of society like poverty, injustice, inequality and corruption. *Comfortable*. The Boers served in Nigeria with 'all their heart'. They spoke the local language, ate the local food and interacted freely with the local people. They did not just minister to the people but became part of them. My special thanks go to Jan and Fran Boer for not only living among and ministering to us in Nigeria but sharing their testimonies with us in this memoir.

Danny McCain,

Founder, Global Scholars &

Professor of Religious Studies, University of Jos

On a macro level, this book is about a missionary couple in Nigeria with big ideas and big ambitions who integrated deeply into society and spent thirty years building and strengthening the church in Northern Nigeria, often working under very difficult circumstances. On a micro level, this is a story very personal to me as it gives an account of that same missionary couple and how they loved and raised a little girl from Nyankwala named Lydia to become a musician and educator, and, importantly, for me, my mother. This is a deeply important narrative about not only the shaping of the Nigerian church but what shaped me also.

Jude ‘MI’ Abaga, *CEO, the TASCK Agency*

J.H. Boer, a friendly, warm, outgoing and outspoken person. As described in the memoir, his willingness to integrate with his host community clearly demonstrated by his mastery of the Hausa language was particularly striking.

Bishop Nathaniel Yisa, *Former Anglican Bishop of Niger State*

Dr Jan Harm Boer came in contact with the work of the Christian Council of Nigeria’s Institute of Church and Society when our father, Rev (Dr) Adeolu Adegbola was the director in Ibadan. He was so much drawn to the work that he later got appointed an assistant director to head ICS’s Northern Nigeria operations based in Jos, working directly and in close contact with our father as described in this memoir. Records indicate that he was a most effective assistant director. We all recall our father talking about him with relish and expressing ‘great expectations’ whenever Dr Boer was billed to visit Ibadan.

Dr Boer organised two important conferences that produced two great books on the ICS list. He also ran a bookshop in the market in Jos, through which he propagated the work of the ICS and also generated revenue that impacted the sustainability of the work.

A lot of his work at ICS centred on the injurious effects of multinational corporations on Africa’s development and its mitigation. His interest later shifted to the Muslim-Christian relationship in

Nigeria. He remains an indisputable expert on the subject.

Dr Tunde Adegbola,

Executive Director of the African Languages Technology Initiative (Alt-i)

I first met Dr John Boer at a conference of Church and Society in Jos, Nigeria, in 1989. His shared thoughts on the Nigerian society struck me then as counter intuitive but still highly original. He propounded a theory of societal pluralism, which I judged to be highly controversial and against the popularly accepted theory of societal secularism propounded by many Nigerian intellectuals. By societal pluralism, Dr Boer meant the synergy of Christian-Muslim worldviews in Nigerian polity and culture.

Dr Boer blamed the incessant religious conflicts in Nigeria on the competition for dominance in the Nigerian political space among these two worldviews: Islam and Christianity. These two worldviews had edged out African Traditional Religion and Secularism in the Nigerian religious space. But now, they have brought their fight for dominance into the political space. The question that Dr Boer wrestled with was how the two religions would co-exist peacefully in the Nigerian political space.

Dr Boer's proposed answer to this question was that Nigeria should be a pluralistic society rather than a secularistic society. Under pluralism, as Dr Boer envisaged it, no worldview would have a privileged position, whether in the religious or the political realms. Instead, these two dominant religious systems would tolerate each other's practices. Implicit in religious toleration is that Muslims and Christians would forego their absolutistic attitudes or tendencies in order for them to co-exist peacefully in Nigeria. The many years of my interaction with Dr Boer have impressed on me that Dr Boer's critical involvement in the ongoing cultural, political, and religious discourses in Nigeria stems from an abiding love for Nigeria. Even those who disagree with his proffered solution to the ongoing inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria can readily concur with me that Dr Boer has a deep-seated love for Nigeria. In so doing, Dr Boer meets the central Christian maxim for missions in foreign nations, namely, love

your neighbours as yourselves.

Professor Tersur Aben, *Theological College of Northern Nigeria*

As missionaries and comrades for Christ, particularly in ICS, Rev Akila W. Machunga (and family) subsequently became closely drawn to Rev Dr Jan Boer (and family) and shared a very intimate bond.

Dr Boer, being thoroughly Nigerian and gifted by God in many ways, immediately draws people to himself like a light bulb upon meeting him for the first time. And he pays genuine attention. Even though, as with God's work, there were many challenges encountered in his work at ICS as described in this memoir, he nevertheless made great gains by God's gracious might.

Nuhu Machunga, *For the Family of Late Rev A.W. Machunga*

I first came to know the Boers when I arrived at St Piran's Church in Jos as a young pastor, where in the early days, I even taught Sunday School with Mrs Boer. I got to know the Boers better over time, and if there ever was a foreign missionary who had his hands and feet and heart solidly planted in the native terrain, it was Rev Dr John Boer. He disregarded the racial barriers and shared the challenges of a church seeking relevance in a society fraught with a mix of potential, hiccups, and convulsions typical of the throes of nationhood.

Bishop Emmanuel Egbunu, *Anglican Bishop of Lokoja*

What I remember about elementary school at Hillcrest School in Jos was the lack of corporal punishment and yet the total obedience of all pupils to rules and regulations. I give credit to the skill and psyche of the teachers, of which Mrs Boer was a classic example. She was my 5th Grade teacher and had a wide smile but still commanded respect and discipline from her pupils with but a look. Before she taught me, I generally saw her as a strict teacher (which she was), but her passion for teaching and guiding young children became quite evident to me when she became my teacher.

Looking down the years with more knowledgeable eyes, I see that she helped set me on a path of greater understanding of compassion,

peace and patience... all virtues needed to be a good Christian. What more can a missionary's job entail?

Mr Okechukwu Uwakwe, *Basketball & Life Skills Coach, AfriCare*

I first met Jan Harm Boer through his groundbreaking book, *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context: A Case Study of Sudan United Mission*. This book inspired and spurred me on until the publication of my book, *The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria*. We finally met in 1980 in Jos. We became united in our pursuit of justice, equality, rights, and freedom in Nigerian society. At that time, Jan Harm Boer was in charge of the Institute for Church and Society Office in Jos, and I was at Jos ECWA Theological Seminary, Jos.

Jan Harm Boer re-modelled my theological life. I came from an SIM/ECWA background with a heavy dosage of American Fundamental-Evangelicalism. I met my mentor, Professor Roger R. Nicole of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, USA. He introduced me to Reformed Theology, being Swiss himself. By the time I finished from Gordon-Conwell and moved to Boston University, I had Reformed Theology well-formed in me. From this background, it was easy for me to work with Jan Harm Boer, who studied at the heart of Reformed Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. I can sum up our activities in Jos and Nigeria at large as 'Christian Social Activism'. Jan Harm Boer was that rugged and fearless driver who drove this movement. His office organised a series of conferences and seminars on Church and Society. In most cases, we did that together. The third person in our team was the late Iyakachi Garba Shelley, an Islamic Scholar of great repute among his peers nationally at the Jos ECWA Theological Seminary. Islamic and social issues were dominant in our Christian Social Activism.

The more I worked with Jan Harm Boer, the more I got deeper into Reformed Theology to the extent that I got picked up by the Reformed Theologians in both Amsterdam, The Netherlands and Potchefstroom, South Africa. These are the two important centres

of Reformed Theology in the world. Jan Harm Boer introduced me to many Reformed Theologians and one who became my theological Father in the person of Professor Bennie van der Walt of Potchefstroom, North-West University, South Africa. Both Professor van der Walt and Jan Harm Boer taught me Christian Social Activism and inspired my theological writings on social issues.

I describe my good and dear friend, Jan Harm Boer as a Christian leader with a selfless ambition who set an example for us, the younger and timid Christians then. A leader with a humane, purposeful, active, vibrant, vocal and strong personality as the chief advocate and pacesetter of Christian Social Activism. A leader with a merciful, gracious, and righteous spirit for justice, fairness, and equity to all, whether Christians or non-Christians. A leader who is all-embracing, non-discriminatory, unbiased, and reconciliatory at large. Jan Harm Boer would always advise me to tone down my harsh rhetoric on Muslims. His nine volumes on Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria is a great testimony of his non-discriminatory, unbiased, and reconciliatory advocacy for both Christians and Muslims. Jan Harm Boer ably provided this needed Christian-Muslim leadership for us in our vexing, trying and difficult times as Christians and Muslims in Northern Nigeria.

His entire life with us in Nigeria reminds us of his hard work, discipline, sense of purpose and direction, and love of us.

In all that I have said of Jan Harm Boer, Lady Fran Boer deserves more compliments. She is the mother none other can be greater than. I salute Lady Fran as Jan's co-labourer in the Lord's Vineyard, Nigeria, for her immense contributions to the success of the ministry they both shared in Africa.

Rev Dr Yusufu Turaki, PhD, MNIM, MELI, mnc,

Distinguished Professor of Theology and Social Ethics,

Jos ECWA Theological Seminary; Former Provost of Jos ECWA

Theological Seminary; General Secretary of the Evangelical Church

Winning All (ECWA); and National Vice-President of the Christian

Association of Nigeria.

*'There is not a square inch in the whole domain of
our human existence over which Christ,
who is sovereign over all, does not cry, 'Mine'!*

Quote from Kuyper's inaugural address at the
Free University Amsterdam, October 20, 1880.

DEDICATION

We dedicate this book to:

Pastor Habila Adda Angyu, one of the first evangelists throughout the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria area and the first pastor of Wukari CRCN;

Pastor Iliya Galadima Lena and Na'omi, spiritual pioneers of Nyankwala CRCN and dear friends who entrusted their daughter, Lydia, into our care;

Lydia Abaga, who till this day remains our loving and beloved daughter, along with Kevin, Cynthia and Wiebe

Elder Ifracimu Nyajo, Rev Dr David Angye and Alhaji Ahmad Muhammadu for having guided us through our initiation into our Nigeria Mission;

Dr Eugene Rubingh, a former Director of Christian Reformed World Missions.

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FOREWORD
by
General Yakubu Gowon (Rtd)

Jan and Fran Boer are very special people whose story reminds the rest of us of how impactful those who have been fortunate enough to find meaning for their lives can be. Everything from their earliest periods in this world point to lives woven together before they were conceived. Their birthplaces – Groningen and Friesland – were only 18 kilometres separated within the same country, the Netherlands. Their birth years – 1938 for Jan and 1942 for Fran – were four years apart during the dark period of World War II. How ironic, because they would both meet as young adults on the campus of a college in the United States named after a 16th century Protestant Reformer who lived to dispel darkness; they would dedicate their entire lives to bringing the very light of God to my homeland.

I have always admired Christian missionaries. They are those men and women who make incredible sacrifices for the sake of sharing the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ with a world desperately in need of it. For the rest of us, the sacrifices they make are often difficult to comprehend. This is the path Jan and Fran chose at very young ages. It was a choice that would lead them from the comforts of the Western world to Northern Nigeria, the part of my country where I come from and where the couple would make their home for 30 years between 1966 and 1996.

From Wukari to Baissa to Jos, Jan and Fran experienced both the rural and urban aspects of Nigeria at a time that included some of

the most turbulent events of Nigeria's history. They experienced our military coups, our civil war and our painful struggle to attain true nationhood. They saw how difficult managing our diversity was for us. Through it all, they shared God's love and His Word with us. They learnt the Hausa language and used it effectively as a tool in fulfilling their God-ordained mission. They preached, they taught, they wrote, they gave everything.

This book is about those significant thirty years. It is not just a narrative of their experiences in Nigeria but also a treasure trove of lessons on life, missions, family, marriage, theology and God. Apart from these, *Every Square Inch* is a book that significantly helps in preserving aspects of Nigeria's history. The heritage of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), which both Jan and Fran shared, prepared them for the work they would do in Nigeria with the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria, TEKAN, the Institute of Church and Society (ICS), the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), the Christian Health Association of Nigeria and Hillcrest School, among others. The work Jan did in fostering an understanding of Christian-Muslim relations will continue to prove indispensable and are well documented in this book. His quest to offer important ideas on the dialogue between the church and society and direct Christians in Nigeria to get more involved in the discussions on the social issues of the day stand out in his narratives. He clearly wanted a more practical thrust from the pulpit, one that would help people see the application of the Bible in daily affairs. This was something I was personally able to enjoy from time to time when I attended St. Piran's Anglican Church in Jos.

Perhaps, above all, this book shows the power of family and its ability to serve as an appropriate analogy of God's Word and His Church. Fran typified this more than anyone else and the excerpts from her letters in this book point the reader in that direction. The love Jan and Fran shared with each other and with their children – Lydia, Kevin, Cynthia and Wiebe – is truly inspiring.

As someone who has had the rare privilege of being the Head of State of Nigeria and leading the country during a very difficult

dispensation, I know first-hand how challenging and lonely leadership can be. In very different ways from politics and statecraft, Jan and Fran understood and demonstrated leadership at the level that truly affected lives, communities and faith. *Every Square Inch* conveys just how much their leadership influenced fundamental changes in the lives of many people in Nigeria, a country that is very much theirs, as much as it is ours.



General Yakubu Gowon (Rtd)

Head of State of Nigeria, 1966-1975

INTRODUCTION

A poster in my office shows a cat looking in a mirror and seeing a lion. The caption underneath reads, ‘What matters most is how you see yourself.’ It’s been on that wall for over a decade, for I love its sentiment – except for one thing. Yes, it matters how you see yourself, for it will largely influence your thoughts, actions and, really, your entire life; it’s very important. But the *most* important thing is how *God* sees you. So, I scratched out the word ‘most’ on the poster so that it now reads, ‘What matters is how you see yourself.’ Yes, that matters very much.

Fran and I, when *we* look in *our* mirror, we see missionaries. Hopefully, God sees us that way as well. We may be a lot of other things, but to us, viewing ourselves as missionaries is central to our lives and to the story about to unfold.

The experiences you will read in this book played out in Nigeria, a fascinating country located in West Africa. As it has been for decades, if any African scholar wishes to conduct research on any of the missionary organisations his country has hosted, he usually has to go to the European or North American headquarters of these missions for information because that’s where most of the archives are lodged. It is a sad situation that few missions so far have sought to rectify. By making our story available, we hope to spare Nigerians the trouble of having to come to Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, to research our missionary contributions to Nigeria. Besides, herewith, we offer this to any African, scholar or not, who is curious about

missionaries. And we offer this to the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN) within whose bosom so much of this story has taken place, with special love and many thanks.

We are not only missionaries, but, I at least, am also a missiologist, one who academically studies the world of missionaries, their mandate, their history, their successes and failures and their theories. In pursuing my doctorate in this discipline, I spent much time studying missionary archives in the United Kingdom (UK) and discovered how much valuable information is hidden in them. Such studies bring into the open all kinds of foibles, personal, theological and cultural, but more than anything else, they force you to gain respect for a remarkable subculture and its members.

Perhaps you think of missiology as an arcane discipline, but actually, there is an entire academic subculture pursuing studies in this area, writing books and publishing academic journals and magazines. It's a whole world that is found on both public university campuses as well as in specialised private tertiary institutions at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Since we have had a rather unusual mission career and sought to develop an unusual holistic approach, we offer this story to fellow missiologists, especially those of future generations when there may no longer be such a critter as a Western foreign missionary going to a so-called Third World country to share the Gospel. Things are beginning to turn around: missionaries from the South are now coming to the West.

We have a particular take on missions that some people will recognise immediately from the title: *Every Square Inch*... That is a famous term from Dr Abraham Kuyper, former prime minister of the Netherlands, who insisted that the Lord Jesus Christ has dominion over the entire world, over every square inch. Our mission was geared to make that the overall vision for the Nigerian Christian community where we served.

If you are Nigerian, you probably have many questions about missionaries living among you either now or in the past. You may know about them from your own experience, but that is different

from how missionaries see themselves. In this book, you will discover how my wife and I ministered in Nigeria and how we reacted to various situations that may have been common to Nigerians but were very strange to us, at least, at first.

This book aims especially at three targets. The first is Nigerians who are simply curious about missions and missionaries in their country. If you, our Nigerian friends and colleagues, get to read this book, we dare say that much of your curiosity will be satisfied. We've tried to be honest and detailed. The second target audience are missiologists who like to study the archives of missionaries. The third targets are adherents to the Kuyperian worldview who may be interested in the introduction of a Kuyperian mission approach to Nigeria.

I do confess that I have sometimes acted brazenly and spoken up with impatience towards other missionaries, many of my own colleagues, who had a different view of missions. Sometimes, my personality got in the way, but if you realise the high stakes, then perhaps you can muster some understanding for my impatience. A mission is not a debating society where different opinions can clash freely without consequences and be analysed in an irresponsible academic style without any further accountability. It is, first of all, *praxis* or *doing*. For a group to be *doing* something as important as missions, it needs to be united in its basic perspectives and goals. We were not.

This book also tells the story of our *family and social life* over the same years. Most readers are more interested in people than in missions and missionary theories. In this book, you will encounter the story of our family that has grown up in the midst of a culture that was originally foreign and exotic to us but to which we gradually became accustomed and learned to appreciate and enjoy. This is a story of our children learning to speak local languages in a context where it is normal for people to speak four or more languages, from which they switch in and out through much of their day. You will read about their interesting and confusing multiple language experiences,

as well as how they related to both peers and adults in the host culture. Nigerians may similarly find it interesting to read how our family experienced living amongst them. And again, sociologists of missions, a sub-division of missiology will find a lot to study on this topic. It is a story of how our family would frequently run into cultural surprises that sometimes would annoy us, stump us, but just as often stretch our understanding and appreciation for other ways of thinking and doing. It is also the story of extremes in hospitality that continues to be part of our lives even twenty-five years after our return to comparably inhospitable North America.

This is not about missionary theory or practice but about the people involved in all of this. Of course, the theory and practice are never far away, for even personal and family life is affected by the missionary context. Well, relax and join us on this journey. We have every reason to think you will enjoy the trip, for we'll take you into a world of fascinating thought patterns and assumptions that, in turn, lead to equally fascinating action, but all of which, given those assumptions, are as rational as their equivalents in the West, only not as rationalistic – and that's a gain.

And now a few housekeeping items. This publication is a summary of two volumes of a five-volume series of our entire life stories, starting in the Netherlands where we were born and ending in Canada, where we have retired. A popular publication has to be limited in length to have an appeal, and so for those interested in the deeper detail, they can always refer back to the full series, available online at < www.SocialTheology.com/boeriana > under the same title.

Also, it is important to note who is who in this book. In most of the chapters, the first person singular pronoun, the 'I' is me, Jan or John. Where Fran is the subject, the 'I' refers to her. In all the other instances, except where noted otherwise, Fran is referred to in the third personal pronoun as 'she', while 'I' refers to Jan. Before we made that clear-cut distinction, things were becoming clumsy and murky. This decision was made on Fran's clear insistence that I, Jan, am the main writer in the family, not she. The result is that

except where she is explicitly quoted as in paragraphs lifted out of the letters she wrote – and they are many – first person singular personal pronouns refer to Jan/John, not usually to her.

The *main* sources for *this* book were the letters we wrote to our parents and which we asked them to save for just this purpose, which they faithfully did. Fran wrote more than her share. Since one of us wrote almost every week, except during Home Service periods and study leaves, we ended up reading through around 1,300 letters. These letters were supplemented by our memories, photo albums and a variety of other saved documents, including my other writings.

As for the organisation of this book, the dates cover our Nigeria years. A major problem we faced was the division into chapters. How could we delimit each chapter and not make any of them too long? We decided to employ the framework of the Home Service periods as ends for each chapter. It is kind of an arbitrary framework, but it was the best we could do.

WORDS OF APPRECIATION

Before closing this Preface-Introduction, we want to express our sincere thanks to the entire Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in North America for their wide view of global missions. I have often felt at cross purposes with her because she often does not live up to her own theology and worldview, after all she, too often, is guided by Evangelical rather than reformed Inspiration and too often sells out to the prevalent dualistic worldview of the West. As CRC member, Prof. Nicholas Wolterstorff, a Reformed philosopher emeritus at Yale Divinity School, has publicly lamented, the CRC has been much too conservative for her revolutionary roots, the very source of my conflict with its world mission establishment. Nevertheless, in spite of these frictions, she did often support our ministry in surprising ways.

Sometimes I may not have expressed that clearly enough. Today, I acknowledge it and regret some of my expressions of annoyance and impatience. Among others, we have dedicated this book to Dr Eugene Rubingh, a former Director of Christian Reformed World Missions,

who may have borne the brunt of some of my exasperations, even though he probably had a greater appreciation for our holistic approach than any of his successors during our days. He, too, was hemmed in by the politics that resulted from the same CRC conservative dualistic framework. If you are now becoming curious, well, read on.

Our thanks also goes to II Highland CRC in Highland, Indiana, USA. They dared to call, ordain and support a missionary couple they did not know from Adam. We remain grateful for their support over three decades.

Over the years, as II Highland began to diversify its support of missionaries to include sons and daughters of their own congregation, a number of Western Canadian churches came aboard, especially the three Edmonton congregations, First CRC, West End CRC and Covenant CRC. Towards the end, a few others joined us as well, including Lethbridge and Medicine Hat in Alberta and Surrey CRC in BC. We thank all of them for the faith they showed in us and enabled us to continue.

Much thanks must surely be directed to the Nigerian Church for embracing us and for giving us space to operate, but especially to the CRCN within whose bosom we learned to navigate the culture and the country's church and make the mistakes all young missionaries inevitably make. When I think of some of these early mistakes, I still cringe, but the CRCN graciously overlooked them and enabled us to move on and grow.

Of course, our greatest and deepest thanks goes to our heavenly Father, a spirit that pervades this memoir from beginning to end.



Map of Nigeria – 2014

Wukari, Baissa, and Jos: three major centres of our ministry are circled for easy identification.



Map of the Netherlands



Map of North America

ABBREVIATIONS

NOTE: The words in parenthesis behind a full name refers to another organisation with which it is closely affiliated.

| | |
|-------|---|
| ABU | Ahmadu Bello University |
| CBM | Church of the Brethren Mission |
| CC | <i>Calvinist Contact</i> |
| CCN | Christian Council of Nigeria (ICS) |
| CDP | Community Development Programme |
| CHAN | Christian Health Association of Nigeria (WHC) |
| CLA | Christian Labour Association |
| COCIN | Church of Christ in Nigeria (SUM; TEKAN) |
| CRC | Christian Reformed Church (Mission/ SUM-CRC) |
| CRCNA | Christian Reformed Church in North America |
| CRCN | Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (SUM/CRC; TEKAN) |
| CRK | Christian Religious Knowledge (course in schools) |
| CRWRC | Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRC) |
| CTJ | <i>Calvin Theological Journal</i> (Calvin Seminary) |
| CTS | Calvin Theological Seminary |
| D.V. | <i>Deo volente</i> – Latin for ‘God willing.’ |
| ECWA | Evangelical Churches of West Africa (SIM) |
| ED | External Debt |
| ESL | English as a Second Language (a course) |
| EU | European Union |
| FCS | Fellowship of Christian Students |
| FCT | Fellowship of Christian Teachers |
| GCF | Graduate Christian Fellowship |
| GM | <i>Globe & Mail</i> |

EVERY SQUARE INCH

| | |
|--------|---|
| IBS | International Bible Society |
| ICS | Institute of Church & Society (CCN) |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| JETS | Jos ECWA Theological Seminary (ECWA) |
| KLM | Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij (Royal Dutch Airlines) |
| Km | KILOMETRE(S) |
| LA | Latin America |
| MCC | Mennonite Central Committee |
| MK | Missionary Kid |
| MPF | Ministers Pension Fund (CRC) |
| NC | <i>Nigerian Christian</i> (CCN; Daystar Press) |
| NEAC | Northern Education Advisory Council |
| NKST | The Church of Christ in Nigeria Among the Tiv |
| NRC | Netherlands Reformed Church (SUM; TEKAN) |
| RBC | Royal Bank of Canada |
| REC | Reformed Ecumenical Council |
| SIM | Sudan Interior Mission (ECWA) |
| SUM | Sudan United Mission (CRC Mission/TEKAN) |
| TCNN | Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TEKAN) |
| TEKAN | Tarayyar Ekklesiyoyin Kiristi a Nijeriya (SUM) Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria |
| UJ | University of Jos |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| Unijos | University of Jos |
| US | United States of America |
| WCC | World Council of Churches |
| WHBL | World Home Bible League |
| WHC | Wholistic Health Care (CHAN) |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |
| WLC | World Literature Committee (CRC) |

SECTION ONE

The Missionary Beginning and the Christian
Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN)
Decade (1966–1976)

CHAPTER ONE

NIGERIA: IN-COUNTRY PREPARATION (1966)

I remember going to grandpa and grandma's on Sunday mornings after church, and if a letter arrived from you, my dad sitting in the corner chair, reading it over and over and smiling. I would venture a guess that more prayers for "John and Fran and the kids" were made at our dinner table than all other of my parents' siblings combined!

–Steve Prins, Nephew of Fran

PRELUDE: OUR MISSIONARY BACKSTORY

‘Unto us a son is born!’ Thus my father proudly announced the birth of Jan Harm, his first son after four daughters and ahead of five more sons. This took place in Lutjegast, a village in the Northern Netherlands, on February 18, 1938. My parents' names were Wiebe and Elsiena Boer, ‘boer’ meaning ‘farmer,’ a last name adopted by my ancestors, most of whom were subsistence farmers though at the time, Father Wiebe was the village's chief barber. According to Dutch tradition, as first son, I was named after my paternal grandfather.

Within a couple of weeks, I was baptised and thus was intro-

duced into the church that became a strong force throughout my life. What's more, that baptism meant God had put His finger on me and claimed me as His. What followed was church attendance twice every Sunday, singing my heart out and, afterwards, setting up a small makeshift pulpit at home to preach to my siblings. At around age eight, I decided on my future. I would become a preacher, a writer and would achieve a doctorate. My first publications were crossword puzzles in the local provincial newspaper. No idea where the doctorate idea came from. Those decisions eventually faded away only to resurface in my late 40s, when I was amazed to find I had fulfilled all those dreams!

Fran's introduction to the world was quite different from mine. In fact, it was almost the exact opposite! Her parents' names were Tjalling and Jantje Prins, farmers by trade, as were most of their ancestors. Her birth in 1942 was not announced throughout the village. Instead, she was born in a very isolated farmhouse literally at the end of the road in Hantumhuizen, Friesland, the Netherlands, within walking distance of the North Atlantic coast. She was not the first-born son, but the last-born daughter; the youngest of seven children, the fourth daughter and was given the name Foekje, after an aunt. She was born during the middle of the very dark days of German occupation during World War II. Though we were born only 18km apart, we were born in separate provinces – Groningen and Friesland – and likely would never have met if our families hadn't emigrated thousands of miles away.

In spite of those beginning differences, throughout our early years, there were similar or parallel influences that led and prepared both of us for eventual missionary ministry. For me, a strong emphasis among local Christians was the lordship of Christ over all of life, a dominant teaching of the Reformed Church. The Christian faith was to shape politics, business, science and everything else, for Christianity was a full-orbed faith, leaving nothing outside its orbit. I picked up on that and took it with me when the family emigrated to Canada in 1951.

The Boer family ended up in Port Alberni on Vancouver Island,

British Columbia (BC), along Canada's West Coast. That's where I spent my teenage period from thirteen to twenty years of age. During those years, I became heavily involved in the local Christian Reformed Church (CRC), a small Dutch immigrant church, but way beyond my age. At fourteen, I became the custodian for the small church building at \$2 per week. I learned English fairly quickly and had a strong singing voice. So, I was appointed as song leader to teach the congregation the English hymns used in the CRC. Even though the youngest in the group, I became the president of the youth club and taught Sunday School.

Like me, Fran was baptised in her village church in 1942, when she was only four days old. From her earliest memories, there was always Bible reading and prayer at every meal and every Sunday, there were two worship services at church. The Christian faith was the very air she breathed.

She learned very early that there was more than one language spoken in her world. Frisian was the local language of the heart and of her tribe, but Dutch was the official language used for prayer, Bible reading and church. She was not taught which language belonged where; she just knew! While she was immersed in two different languages, I was speaking two different regional variations or dialects of the Dutch language. So, again, somewhat common linguistic experiences that prepared us for learning the Hausa language later on.

Fran's family emigrated in 1948 when she was six years old, but to Michigan in the US, while I went to Canada. Her Frisian name was Anglicised to Frances, and now she needed to learn a third language. Apparently, she managed well enough so that three months later, upon entering first grade, she could speak English quite fluently.

Back in Port Alberni, at age sixteen, I quit school to work in the local lumber industry to help support my parents and siblings getting settled in Canada. I took a British Columbia Government High School correspondence course in my spare time with the aim of going to a university to become an accountant. That routine taught me to become very disciplined, something that later proved useful in my initially unsupervised ministry in Nigeria.

During that time, I received a very definite call from the Lord Himself that I was to become a pastor. After all, I was showing great interest in church and related spiritual activities. I resisted the call at first but eventually had to surrender. It turned out to be a win-win situation for both of us. In the CRC at that time, this meant going to Calvin College and Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. I completed my high school in 1958 and promptly headed for Calvin at age twenty.

As for Fran, from a very young age, she sensed that she wanted to be a teacher. When she was playing with small dolls, she would line them up in orderly rows and proceed to 'teach' them. This was the teacher equivalent to Jan's playing preacher after church.

She loved going to school, and the idea of becoming a teacher kept on growing stronger. When she was in junior high, she assisted in correcting test papers for busy teachers in the early elementary grades. In high school, she was part of a Future Teachers' Club and became a Sunday School teacher at her CRC church. Living in Grand Rapids, the home of Calvin, she enrolled there in 1959 and majored in education.

It was at Calvin that Fran and I met. We were very similar, both of us coming from the Netherlands and both sharing the Reformed heritage of the CRC. I was training to become a preacher, while Fran was aiming to become a teacher, two very compatible professions. Both of us were members of the Mission Club at Calvin and that was the context in which we first met.

After we were married in 1962, I continued as a student at Calvin Theological Seminary, while Fran was now ready to begin her teaching career. The challenges were there, of course, but she knew she was in the right place at Godwin Christian School, the place where the Lord wanted her to be.

Seven years after I enrolled at Calvin College, just before I finished seminary, we were told of the need for ordained workers in central Nigeria by Dr Eugene Rubingh, a CRC missionary teaching at Harga Bible School in Benue State and author of *Sons of Tiv*, which was the seminal history of the Tiv people for a long time. Before Rub-

ingh's charge, neither of us had thought of or knew anything about Nigeria or Africa as a whole. This brought a radical change in our plans. For me, it meant giving up my dream for a pastorate in a Canadian city. For Fran, it was excruciatingly difficult to leave her much-loved teaching job, but we both felt led by the Lord to face this new challenge. We had no real reason or excuse not to go and fill a need in the CRC in Nigeria. So, we offered ourselves to the CRC World Mission for service in Nigeria.

There were many hoops to go through before we were considered prepared. A major hoop was to find a place to do some primary Africa studies, which we found at Michigan State University, where we did two semesters and took courses in African history and literature as well as in the Hausa language with the renowned Dr Margaret Kraft.

And thus began our 30-year adventure with Nigeria and with the Lord. Our Christian and disciplined upbringing, our knowledge of languages and our training as teacher and preacher would all stand us in good stead as we plunged into a new world – with many new challenges ahead to learn Nigerian ways. It was the beginning of an exciting and rewarding future that changed us more than it changed any Nigerian we encountered over the three decades of service.

ON THE WAY

Most of the international travels by Nigeria CRC missionaries were done through KLM. This being a Dutch airline, it naturally would first fly us to its hub, Schiphol Airport at Amsterdam. That allowed us the wonderful opportunity to arrange for a layover there in order to spend a few days visiting our birthplaces at little personal cost. And so we did. We rented a car at Schiphol and drove North across the famous Afsluit Dijk to visit our birthplaces in Friesland and Groningen as well as some relatives, mostly uncles and aunts, who all received us very graciously. There was my picturesque Uncle Berend, the village musician, town crier and volunteer undertaker. It was also the first time since 1951 to see my childhood friend Henk Rozema. The last time we saw each other, we were children on the threshold of our teen years. Now we were adults, married, and highly educated, he as

an engineer as well as an accomplished inventor.

All in all, it was a wonderful experience to re-visit these people and places that we had only experienced as children and now saw as adults. I realised that that long, high bridge at Eibersburen, a kilometre north of the village, where as children we had played so much, was not so long and high after all! Neither was the man-made long sloping incline leading up to it, the only semblance of a hill for many kilometres around, as long and high as I remembered. I was taken aback that that huge cathedral of a church in which I was baptised in Lutjegast was a normal village-sized church. It was a thrill for me to attend a Sunday morning service, especially to sing Dutch Psalms and hymns, most of which I knew. It was the church in which I sang my heart out during my childhood. Nostalgia at its best!

While for me, it was reliving history as I actually experienced it, for Fran, it was an experience of history as told by her brother, Ray, the Prins family historian. After all, she was only six when she left for America in 1948. We saw the farm where she was born. She was my 'mermaid' since she was born on land claimed from the Wadden Zee, the section of the North Sea bordering on Friesland. Today, a painting of that farm, surrounded by a heavy gilded old-fashioned decorative frame, hangs in our living room, a proud reminder of Fran's origin.

She thought she remembered many things about Hantumhuizen, her birthplace. She proudly showed me the bedroom, kitchen, living room of the farmhouse. Alas, her cousin, who now lived there, gently told her everything had been totally remodelled, so none of her memories were accurate. However, the place where she had learned to skate was still there and had not been 'remodelled!'

This quick trip to the Northern provinces was just a whirlwind visit because we wanted to see as many relatives as possible. Both her dad & mom had given her names and addresses of some *omkes* (uncles) and *muoikes* (aunts). We were able to visit two of her mom's sisters, Muoike Detje and Muoike Rika, and her dad's sister, Muoike Foekje, the aunt she was named after. They all welcomed us profusely and were genuinely happy that we had taken the time to come and see them. They paid her the greatest compliment possible: 'Foekje,

wat kist do nog goed Friesch praete!’ (Fran, you still speak Frisian amazingly well). And then a quick visit to her childhood nanny, Douwina. It was wonderful to see her and her family, but as it is true for so many memories, she was no longer the ‘Mary Poppins’ look-a-like, but quite an average middle-aged woman with troublesome teenagers to look after.

The stage was set for a new phase in our lives, one in which we would experience an entirely different world and people. Leaving home and those you love is always a difficult thing, but a conviction that you are pursuing a calling can, at times offer you strength and courage. In reality, nothing can really prepare you for everything you will encounter when you find yourself on the other side of the world.

INTRODUCING NIGERIA

Nigeria covers an area of 923,773 square kilometres or 356,668 square miles. Originally, it consisted of some 400 separate nations or ethnic groups – some very tiny, others extensive. Then the British came to trade during the 19th century and by 1914 had them all in a colonial box they called Nigeria, though not without some stiff battles. Nigeria was granted independence on October 1, 1960. This entire story can be found in my doctoral dissertation *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context* (1979) and its popular summary *Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?* (1984). See < www.SocialTheology.com/boeriana >.

Prior to the development of the Christian Church in the area now known as Nigeria, most of its people were Animists, also known as Traditionalists and, formerly, as Pagans. Their historical beginnings are all wrapped up in mythical stories difficult to trace but going back an untold number of centuries. Muslims had populated the far north for centuries that can easily be traced, but even there, Animists preceded them by many more centuries.

Though history tells us that Christians first arrived from Nubia in what is now Bornu State in Nigeria in the 11th century, this did not result in a lasting Christian community. They were followed by Catholic Portuguese traders starting in the late 1400s, but again not

much remained of that interaction. Missionaries, indigenes as well as Westerners more firmly established themselves during the 19th century in what is now southern Nigeria and by the beginning of the 20th century, many denominations had been firmly established there. In the Northern Region, missionaries arrived in full force in the early 20th century but were largely restricted by the colonial regime to the Middle Belt part of the Northern Region. The British Sudan United Mission (SUM) arrived in Wase. Eventually, the SUM grew into a complicated missionary body simultaneously interdenominational, non-denominational and international. Every member body was allotted its own area and worked according to its own principles, but as far as immigration and government relations were concerned, they all were covered by the umbrella of SUM. They accepted each other's baptism, whether infant or believer and membership of those who moved around.

The SUM *policy* was to establish churches independent of mission control, raising their own funds and led by indigenous clergy. They completely succeeded in this. Their *hope* was that somehow one united church would eventually emerge from these efforts, but here they did not succeed. However, the resulting denominations eventually *did* form TEKAN, the acronym of its Hausa name, *Tarayyar Ikilisiyoyin Kiristi a Nijeriya*, by which it is popularly known, but which in English is the Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria. Under its auspices, these churches cooperated on many fronts. The TEKAN secretariat in Jos is next door to the Church of Christ in Nigeria, COCIN, the denomination to emerge from the SUM British Branch.

During the early decades of the 20th century, a few individual CRC lady missionaries joined the SUM, including the mother of them all, Johanna Veenstra. They worked in the Takum area you will read about soon. Though they were supported by individual CRC congregations in the US, they were not hired by CRWM. In the early 1940s, CRWM joined the SUM and formed the branch known by Nigerians until this day as SUM-CRC. It took responsibility for the CRC missionaries already there and for the work out of which emerged the

CRCN – the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria.

The CRCN did not start out under that name. They started out as 'EKAS Benue,' with 'EKAS' indicating its membership in TEKAS, an earlier designation of TEKAN, while 'Benue' refers to the river that at the time formed the northern border of this church by comity agreement with other missions. Over the years, this and the other TEKAN churches, responding to ongoing political re-alignments of internal borders, went through a series of name changes. Eventually, the church became tired of constant changes and decided to take on a denominational name that would not be affected by further political changes. They chose 'CRCN,' the name of the 'mother church.' It was their own choice and not foisted on them or encouraged by the missionaries. By the time we arrived in 1966, the denomination was already well-established and officially independent, formed along the traditional Reformed church order. Missionaries individually were ordinary members of the local congregations, but the CRWM remained a separate organisation partnering with CRCN through agreements and contracts. They had been training Nigerian pastors in the Hausa language at Lupwe, near Takum, a programme that later morphed into an English pre-seminary class.

Islam already had a staunch grip before the advent of missions in what today is often referred to as 'far North' or 'core North' for many centuries and had placed a firm stamp on the culture. The hostility that exists today between the two religions in the North has its beginning in the pre-colonial Muslim invasions into former animist areas to capture slaves. For details, see my 1979 or 1984 publications. It was brutal and left destruction in its wake year after year after year. The colonial regime did not allow missions to work in that core Muslim area, breaking the myth that in Africa, Christianity and colonialism were one and the same. Missions had to await independence before they gained access there, but by that time, it was mostly Nigerian evangelists who would go there. Today, Nigerians are about 10% Animist and the rest is evenly divided between Christians and Muslims. That means about 20 million Animists and 90 million each of Christians and Muslims. It is the only country in the world where

the world's two dominant evangelical religions represent two such equally massive blocks. I consider it a unique laboratory for Christian-Muslim relations.

ARRIVAL IN NIGERIA

Our first physical contact with Nigeria happened when we touched down in Kano on April 22, 1966, and immediately noted the tropical heat of the place. A quote from a letter dated April 24 to my parents shows our first experience in Nigeria:

We were met by a KLM travel agent. Trouble promptly started as we were going through customs. First of all, Fran was told that her passport had expired some months ago. This was, of course, impossible, since she had applied for it only a few months ago. Then we were told we could not really stay in the country because we had not received cholera shots. Later, we found out that no one in this country has them or needs them. Then they made us open our suitcases and went through our stuff with a fine-tooth comb. We ended up paying 100% duty on our camera and 66% on the tape recorder. The total amount equalled about the average annual income for a Nigerian worker!

The KLM representative had arranged a bus ride for us to a hotel where they had reserved a room for us. The 'bus driver' gave us conceptions! He seemed to pay scant attention to the road or other drivers and talked a blue streak with both hands gesticulating in the air! We felt very uncomfortable, not to say afraid. Why, we would have an accident any moment; it *had* to happen with such driving! Then, one of us remembered: in Nigeria, traffic was at that time on the *left* side of the road, not the right as we were accustomed! We had been told about that and should have remembered. The 'driver' was not the driver; he was a passenger just like us. We wondered what else we had forgotten.

The reservation included a free meal in the hotel dining room, but we did not know it was on KLM. Seeing that prices on the menu were very high, we chose a lower end entrée. At the time we were about to pay, we found out it was free. Suddenly, in retrospect, the

meal tasted a lot better! We rested in our room for a few hours and then were whisked back to the airport to be flown to the Jos airport by Nigerian Airways.

CRC MISSION STATIONS

Jos

It was late Saturday afternoon when we landed at the Jos airport and were warmly welcomed by a number of our new colleagues. They immediately tested our Hausa since we were the first missionaries to have studied it prior to coming to the 'field'. They greeted us with some traditional Hausa greetings and we passed their test with the correct responses. Everyone was encouraged and clapped. We were checked in at the Mission's Mountain View Guest House and then spent the rest of the evening at a welcome potluck in the Hillcrest student hostel on the same compound. All in all, a good introduction.

The following morning, being Sunday, we were taken to a church service operated by what is now known as COCIN. They are the major indigenous denomination in Jos and a sister church to CRCN. Our hosts were Rev Edgar and Mrs Nelle Smith, our Mission's pioneer missionaries. They took us to a COCIN church, since there was no CRCN in Jos at the time. The service was conducted in Hausa. We understood some of it, but not much. Mostly isolated words instead of sentences. It was a communion service. I remember being moved to tears at this first communion in Hausa in an emerging church. It was such a wonderful experience of the unity and universality of the Church of Christ that I had never experienced before. After the service, Smith took us to the parsonage, where he introduced us to the pastor, all of it in Hausa.

Smith gave us an exceptional treatment that surprised other missionaries. After serving us a fine dinner at their house at the 'CRC Compound,' he took us to the Gbong Gwom Jos, the Chief of Jos, and an elderly Christian. At the time, we did not realise that such a visit was a very special privilege that was seldom extended to missionaries, let alone new recruits like us. He drove us around Jos to show us some of the sights, especially the church sights.

Later, we would wonder about this special treatment and concluded that it was because I was an ordained pastor. The arrival of newly ordained missionaries was a rare event. Whatever the reason, we were grateful for these helpful introductions.

Monday presented us with another adventure: shopping! Though we were to be stationed at Wukari, we were first assigned to further Hausa study in Baissa. It was, we were told, a small town with nothing to buy. And since we had shipped very little food supplies, we would do well to stock up in Jos. We remembered the opinion of the Lemckes that most missionaries prefer not to eat off the land but to bring their own. But when the lady missionary assigned to take us shopping kept advising us to buy cans of American foods and other prepared American items, we were wary and resisted much of her advice. There were, after all, Nigerian foods available as well as from other nations. Why then buy only American? It reeked of ethnocentrism to us. We did buy, but far less than advised. Besides, we found it difficult to imagine a town without supplies. It could not be that barren, we reasoned privately.

Years later, in 1980, when we lived in Jos and Fran was occasionally responsible for helping newcomers shop, she wrote, 'It's a hard job to convince people what food items they should buy because they don't know what is or is not available where they are going and because of the high prices.' This one particular couple resisted buying eggs at \$3.20 a dozen, 'but there really isn't much choice for breakfast food.' She predicted, 'They'll come around!' What goes around comes around, even many years later.

Sometime during that week, we also were taken to the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), located in what was then a remote farm country near Bukuru, some 20 kilometres south of Jos. It was and still is the joint theological school of TEKAN and a group of missions that had recognised the need for a joint Evangelical school for the training of their pastors. There arose a need for a more advanced level than the Hausa-language schools most churches were offering. Edgar Smith had been one of the pioneer promoters of this effort and the first chairman of its Board of Governors. CRWM

missionary, Dr Harry Boer, no relation to us, was the first principal. Most, if not all, of the lecturers at the time were missionaries from various Western countries. Today, the school provides masters level education and is totally in Nigerian hands, with only a couple of missionaries on the staff. We have always had a close relationship with this school, including teaching stints. You will hear more about this college as we proceed. Just remember TCNN.

Mkar

After a few days in Jos, we were driven to the airport to meet Ray Browneye, the CRWM's mission pilot, who is actually a distant relation of ours. At the time, the Mission – that's how we will mostly refer to CRWM in Nigeria – had one plane and one pilot to reduce travel time for missionaries, to avoid the mostly atrocious unpaved roads, and thus use their time more efficiently. It was a single-propeller plane with room for only three passengers.

Browneye flew us to Mkar, the first of many flights to come. At the time, Mkar was the centre of the CRC Nigeria mission as a whole, but especially for its work with the NKST, The Church of Christ in Nigeria among the Tiv, with the Tiv being one of the largest ethnic groups in the country. This community and church used the Tiv language, not Hausa. The denomination was growing in leaps and bounds and was at one stage known as the fastest growing church in the world!

This mission area was inherited from the South African Dutch Reformed Mission that was forced to leave Nigeria due to apartheid politics. This meant that we also inherited their South African style houses with their thatched roofs as well as South African style church buildings. The Mission's Nigeria administration was located here: the general secretary's office, the treasury, the literature department, the garage for servicing all mission cars, a large leprosy settlement and, not the least, the huge Mkar Christian Hospital along with a nurses' training school. There were also two secondary schools: Mkar Teachers Training College and Bristow Secondary School in Gboko, the large town just ten kilometres away. Altogether, a huge missionary establishment with many missionaries. For years we would travel to

Mkar for various reasons, but mostly for committee meetings, supplies or repairs. The supplies would often include books from the literature department and the repairs were usually for our mission car.

Several of the mission ministries had their own staff housing on their own compound. The hospital staff was living in a row of houses strung along the main Mkar dirt road. Many of them had large front porches, where some of them ate in plain view of the passing public. We were royally treated during this initial visit but also during subsequent ones. Among the missionaries were the Lemckes, with Bill as Mission Treasurer. We built upon the relationship that started in Grand Rapids and bonded naturally and quickly till they left Nigeria years later.

We splurged when we first came through Mkar. Since we came with little food, Lemcke advised us to order food from Lagos, the capital and major port of the country. We could place the order with him, and he would facilitate the rest. So we did. My memory has it that we ordered around twenty-five cases of mostly Australian canned goods. He arranged for our payment through the mission books. We left the order for him to process and went on our way. It would take a couple of months for the order to arrive.

Takum-Lupwe

The next day or so, Browneye flew us to Takum, another centre for our Mission. There were two beautiful mission stations there with simple but fine houses lined neatly along dirt roads. The one near Takum town was another mission hospital compound. The Takum Christian Hospital, as it was called, was a large hospital run by medical and nursing missionaries alongside Nigerian nurses and other trained locals. It was a popular place and efficient, with an unending stream of patients crowding its doors. There was also a chaplain, a Nigerian pastor.

The other local mission station was Lupwe, some ten kilometres from Takum town. It was the location from which Johanna Veenstra worked. The station comprised several missionary homes, a dirt road that formed a square block within which there was a grass field with

palm and fruit trees as well as a tennis court. Later, an outdoor swimming pool was added. The compound also contained a workshop from which missionary maintenance staff would service all the stations in the CRCN area. Then there was the Johanna Veenstra Pre-Seminary, a school that prepared CRCN students for admission into TCNN. Rev Les Van Essen was the principal.

There was still a third compound that housed the Wukari Combined Secondary School, at the time mostly run by our Mission, but not belonging to us. We had a couple of missionary teachers there who worked alongside Nigerian colleagues. The principal at the time was a missionary, Corny Korhorn, an amazingly gifted person in many areas from philosophy and theology to mathematics and electronics. It was a new school that had started on the Wukari compound, where we were scheduled to move but was transferred to Takum.

FURTHER LANGUAGE STUDY

Baissa

The point of these various visits was to acquaint us with the entire CRC mission in Nigeria. But after we had finished these visits, had our meals, teas and coffees at missionary homes, and after we had been introduced to all the mission ministries, it was time to fly to our temporary station, Baissa. We were welcomed at the airstrip by the Kuiks and Ruth Vander Meulen. But we had a strange sensation of just dropping out of the skies into some isolated place in the middle of the jungle, quite unlike our previous landings. Few mission staff and a smaller station in the middle of an isolated jungle village. Literally, in the middle of the rainforest in the process of being denuded. The place was sparsely populated and so much of the original forest still stood. Unlike the other places, this was a rain forest, cooler and much more fertile. Also, less influenced by modern developments. Only one 80 km of dirt road ran through the town from the Cameroon border to Marraraba, where it would meet up with the road to Takum, 50 kms further. There were just a few cars in the town and a couple of trucks that would bring in the town's supplies; before long we could identify each vehicle by its sound as it approached the village.

The station comprised a number of buildings. There was a dispensary and maternity clinic along with a number of small round huts for patients to stay in. There was also a Bible school with several buildings used for training Christian leaders. In another part of the compound were the houses of the teachers and students. A larger building was used as a storage shed and also contained a room Gord used as his office and radio room. And then there was a one-room guest house.

There were three houses for missionaries. The Kuiks and Ruth each occupied one; we were assigned the third one. It was a dilapidated, creaky old place that emitted all kinds of noises during the fierce tropical rains and windstorms. In short, kind of spooky. With no electricity around, only rooms in use at any given time would be lit sparsely by kerosene lamps. Originally, the house was built for Dr Harry Boer, who spent two years in the area before moving on to TCNN. A five-minute walk from the compound, there was also an airstrip for the mission plane to land. A short walk down the hill in another direction would take us into the village.

LOCAL MISSION STAFF

Here we would do four more months of concentrated fulltime language study under the tutelage of *Malam* or *Likita* Garba Kunknaba and under the supervision of the local missionary Gordon Kuik. Garba was a highly respected local man who had done well as a dispensary or health clinic attendant and was also one of the founding elders of the local CRCN. He would sit down with us for an hour or so every afternoon after his dispensary work was done. Kuik would often spend an hour with us during the mornings. In between, we were on our own, and, being disciplined people, we made good progress. We were happy that they agreed we could continue to use Charles Kraft's textbook with which we had started our Hausa training at Michigan State University in Lansing, Michigan. During the week, we would often socialise with the students at the Bible school on our compound or go to town to chat with the people – always in Hausa. We might also visit the nearby leprosy settlement, a shamefully neglected amenity

started by the Mission but handed over to the government.

Besides Gordon and Helene Kuik, there was also a single missionary nurse by the name of Ruth Vander Meulen from Holland, Michigan. She had been there for twelve years, an interminable period in our mind that simply amazed us. *Twelve years?! How could she possibly have put up with these conditions for so long?* Kuiks had been there only five and they were already planning to return home. Fran was especially impressed with Ruth's ability to cook first-class meals on a two-burner kerosene stove in the light of a single kerosene lamp. Ruth was amazing in other ways, as well. If someone would come in seriously ill, day or night, she was always ready to drive them to the Takum Hospital under whose supervision she worked. That was some 130 kilometres by dirt road. She would always come back with mail that had piled up at Takum. That was always a special event for us.

On Fran's first attempt at cooking with such kerosene equipment, the thing almost blew up in her face and the food was all burnt! She was much discouraged and wondered how she would hold out. She often said during those first months that if we could return home without leaving a record of failure, she would have jumped on the first available plane! Eventually, though, she caught on and did well.

CHURCH STUFF

The first Sunday, we attended the local Baissa CRCN. As honoured guests, we were placed on the front pew. From there, we listened intently to the Hausa-language proceedings. The next morning, Pastor Yohanna came to greet us at home, but we did not recognise him. So we asked him in Hausa, '*Mene aikinka?*' 'What work do you do?' We were so proud that we could put this short sentence together without having had time to practise it, only to notice his obvious annoyance. Had we not sat right in front of him when he preached the day before? What could we say except, '*Ka yi hankuri,*' – a traditional way to calm someone's spirit: 'Please have patience with us.'

The next Sunday, the missionaries were invited to participate in the dedication of a new church building in a village down the road. It was quite an experience for us. The building consisted of mud blocks

covered with a thin layer of cement. The roof was a rough traditional thatch. Windows without glass. Seats same as the walls and without backs. As special services go in Nigeria, it was interminably long, something we largely got used to eventually. Lots of singing by the congregation, choirs and the women's fellowship mostly in Hausa, some in other local languages.

Then dinner time. The meal consisted of cooked corn pounded into a ball. Before touching the food, eaten as it was with bare hands, everyone washed their hands in a bowl of water that was passed around. They did not use soap, for since they eat with bare hands, soap would affect the taste of the food. Each ball was placed in a pan to serve a group of about four people. Each would break a piece off the ball, dip it into a chicken-and-oil-based sauce and eat. We got used to this mode of eating, but it sure seemed strange that first time. When Gordon expressed his delight in the meal, we were sure he had been here too long! After the meal, another bowl of water for washing hands again was passed, but this time accompanied by soap. The drink was *kunu*, a grain-based home-made brew that would ferment within a couple of days and turn alcoholic. Christians allegedly drink it before it reaches that stage. Missionaries do not generally drink this, for it is mixed with 'raw' contaminated water. It simply is not safe to drink. So we didn't, at least not at first. The people had become used to missionaries not drinking it and would provide a warm Coke or Fanta – 'mineral' as it was called.

On several Sundays, we accompanied Pastor Yohanna and Gord to various village churches for adult baptismal ceremonies. We were amazed at the numbers involved. Large groups of thirty, fifty or more would be baptised in one shot! We had arrived in the midst of an ongoing people movement from Traditional Animism to Christianity. It was triggered by a widespread and well-organised evangelism campaign based in Jos called 'New Life for All' (NLFA), but more popularly known by its Hausa name '*Sabon Rai don Kowa*' (SRDK). It brought thousands upon thousands of people into the Church throughout Nigeria's Middle Belt, the region where our Mission was operating. For some time, it was such a prominent movement that

non-Christians, but especially Muslims, would derisively nickname Christians as 'Sabon Rai', meaning 'New Life', to which Christians would often respond with 'don kowa', meaning 'for all'.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE EXPERIENCES

I mentioned a Bible school in our compound. Gordon was the principal with a number of Nigerian teachers under him. Like other CRCN institutions, the school was conducted in the Hausa language, though no one was Hausa by tribe or first language. The students spoke a variety of languages, but Hausa was the *lingua franca* that united them. After some time, Gord gave both of us an assignment in the school. Fran was to teach a lesson in the pre-literacy women's part of the school, while I was to speak in the morning chapel period. It took both of us much time to prepare. It was time well spent, even though the level of communication we achieved was not high this first time.

Fran wrote,

I actually didn't know what 'pre-literacy' meant; I couldn't comprehend such a concept. I decided to teach a lesson on what the Old Testament prophets wrote about the birth of Jesus. I chose verses from the books of Zechariah and Malachi. The women walked into the grass shed 'classroom' clutching their tattered Bibles, accompanied by their children and many clucking chickens. I had written out some of the Bible references together with the page numbers on the 'blackboard', which was really just a piece of poorly-painted plywood. I had looked up the words I needed in the Hausa dictionary and tried to speak clearly and slowly. However, the women didn't even know which way was up or down in the Bible nor what I meant by these high numbers, so I had to help each one find the correct place. By the time each woman was ready, the class time was over! Thus I learned the meaning of 'pre-literacy' the hard way.

I, John, don't recall the subject of my speech, but the *questions* were all about my wedding ring they noticed.

After some weeks, I was also assigned to preach in a village church. Again, I do not remember the content of the sermon, but I did take a check in the middle of it by asking the congregation a ques-

tion to which they had to answer either 'yes' or 'no'. They gave the correct answer, 'yes' overwhelmingly. That increased my confidence!

We had learned a lot about Nigerian culture at Michigan State University but, as you will recall, we forgot some of the simplest things, including the left driving arrangement. Here's another. One day we walked down the hill to town when we saw a man in front of his house with his back towards us. He would stand up and hold his hands open and forward. He would kneel on a mat and touch the ground with his forehead, all the while mumbling. So we wondered if he was ill – 'sick in the head?' When we asked someone, he answered, '*Ai, yana sallah ne*' – He is doing his Muslim prayers! Of course, he was, and we should have recognised it readily. That man was a tailor and often did his work on his front porch, greeting passers-by and chatting with them. We also learned to chat with him in our gradually-improving Hausa. But, like most northern Muslims, he would always be somewhat restrained with these missionaries whom Muslims do not readily trust.

A 'HAUNTED' PLACE

One dark stormy evening, as Fran and I were studying Hausa in the sparse light of our house as it was creaking and moaning, we heard weird sounds coming from the outside. If not scared, at least we were ill at ease. What could be causing these strange noises? After a few moments, Gord showed himself and confessed to trying to scare us! Let me say that we did not appreciate this attempt at humour! On another similarly stormy evening, Fran had gone with Helene to some women's church meeting, leaving me alone in the house. During the course of the evening, flying ants entered through all the cracks in the place, something that happened quite regularly during the rainy season. But I got more guests. A small snake found its way into the room, while a couple of bats living in the attic managed to work their way into the living quarters and were flying around. I have seldom felt so discouraged and bedevilled as I did that evening. I turned off the lamp, crawled under the mosquito netting around the bed and hid myself under the blankets. I'd had enough for the day!

Whenever it was a new moon, the village down the hill would come alive with drumming, singing, and dancing until deep into the night. It was the Animist culture of the place that was coming alive and doing its rituals. I was often tempted to go down and check it out but was discouraged by Gord, who explained that it would be taken ill of us if we showed up. It would be regarded as some kind of attack on their traditions; it was a local affair that was to be shielded from strangers.

Spying on them would set back the good relationship with the community that the missionaries had nurtured over the decades. The two communities knew and adhered to their mutually agreed – upon boundaries. Of course, I adhered to Gord's advice/order, but it would have been tremendously interesting to just sneak up on them and peek at the goings-on. Though over the years I have been in similar situations in other villages as well, I always adhered to this lesson and never ventured going outside, not even, as it sometimes happened, when it practically surrounded my sleeping hut.

MORE FOOD STUFF

I have mentioned shopping in Jos for food earlier in the chapter. It turned out that the lady helping us was right: apart from the traditional, the availability of food was very minimal. The list of the most common supplies included onions, tomatoes, a local type of spinach, peanut and palm oil for cooking, salt and cubed sugar, instant coffee and tea bags, canned sardines, small cans of coffee cream, biscuits, and, of course, major local crops such as okra, corn, guinea corn, yams, cassava and peanuts. Eggs were hard to get and, if available, they would have to be checked for freshness. They would be placed in water and, if they floated to the top, they were not fresh and opening them would not be a positive experience. Available fruits were oranges and bananas most of the time as well as in-season avocado and mango. In terms of meat, a local butcher would come to our door with a pail full of undifferentiated beef, everything mixed together. Occasionally we could buy a chicken. Pork was not usually available, though later on, we found a way of getting around that.

Since our colleagues had various basics such as sugar and flour in their storerooms, they allowed us to buy from them. We could also order some supplies from Jos that would arrive whenever the mission plane would land in Baissa.

After a couple of months, the foods we had ordered through Lemcke arrived in Mkar, but they would only trickle in for us, one or two cases at a time. Initially, we were very disappointed at the quality or taste of the food. The first can of curried chicken looked so good, we were already licking our chops, only to find the taste very disappointing – artificial would be the word. Most of the goods, including vegetables and soups, had a certain peculiar taste or spicing that we did not relish. However, we had no choice but to persist and eventually got used to the taste. Should we have bought American after all? Were we paying the price for stubbornness?

The first few weeks, we were frequently and graciously invited for dinner by our colleagues. That was so helpful. Also, we were offered the service of the wife of a Bible School teacher who was prepared to cook for us. We would hire her once and later twice a week to cook a Nigerian dinner for us. We gradually got used to it as well and, in time, even liked it. It might be rice, or pounded yam, or corn served with a tough Nigerian chicken or beef stew.

Of course, an important component of foods and menus is water. During the rainy season, we would collect water in barrels standing on a raised base set up to catch the water from the roof, and from there, it would flow into the house, including the bathroom. However, we would flush only when really necessary to avoid running short. After use, it would go into a septic tank. We would boil our drinking water on the woodstove in the outside kitchen. The ‘raw’ water for that would be available in drums on the ground, from which Ibrahim – see next paragraph – would fill his kettles. He would also use that water for dishes and other cleaning activities. During the dry season, we would hire a person for a few hours a day to go down to a well way down the hill, carry buckets of water up to the house, fill all the drums, those high up near the roof as well as those on the ground.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Gord had taken the liberty of hiring a male steward for us, though we had to pay the salary. His name was Ibrahim, a young bachelor and graduate of the Bible School. Having so graduated also meant he had a smattering of English, which was helpful to us. All missionaries had an employee, some more than one. Though that sounds colonial, those so employed were considered most fortunate by the people, for they were comparatively well paid and, an important perk, paid on time! Ibrahim stayed on with us when we moved to Wukari and worked for us for some time. Eventually, he entered the Hausa-language pastors training course in Lupwe and became a pastor in the CRCN. Because he served very isolated churches and communication channels were basically non-existent, we gradually lost contact with him, though we remember him fondly.

There was the question of driver's licenses. The mission supplied the station with a couple of vehicles. We were legally allowed to drive with our foreign driver's licenses only for a few months. So, the time came when we had to drive to Makurdi along some 330 km of mostly dirt road as well as across a wide river by a primitive barge. Harold De Groot was the CRC resident missionary in that city, a man who knew his way around, including wheeling and dealing with local officials. The main roads in the city were paved but narrowly so with very sharp drop-offs and people walking everywhere, often disregarding cars. Harold gave us a few hints as to what we could expect and how to react and off we went for the test. Fran and I made different decisions about just where to drive. She chose driving on the left; I, in the middle of the pavement where there were fewer people. I passed; she did not. We returned home with one license only. Several months later, we returned to Makurdi. This time Fran succeeded.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications with the outside world become very important when you are living in an isolated place – no telephones, no post office, pre-computer. Well, officially, there was a post office, but it was basically non-functioning. The nearest telephone was Makurdi,

around 330 km away! Intra-mission communications were conducted by 'mission radio,' a licensed radio system that served many missions in Northern Nigeria. Every mission would have its allotted time slot when all of its stations would log in and send information, ask for help or supplies, or whatever. The CRC slot was dominated by Browneye's plane landings and take-off schedule so that he could be met by mission staff at the local airstrip. He might come to pick up or deliver a passenger or supplies, including mail.

The mail would include intra-mission mail such as minutes and reports from committees and departments, and international mail from CRWM in Grand Rapids and, more important, from family and friends at home. If the plane did not come over a two-week period, Kuik would send someone to Takum by bicycle to bring and pick up mail from our mailbox at the hospital – 260 km round trip by dirt road! Out-going mails would be flown to Jos, where it would be gathered from all staff and mailed at the Jos post office. Later, it would be sent by weekly courier to Grand Rapids, from where it would be forwarded to its ultimate address. Missionaries would be charged according to expenses incurred. This method would be much faster. But in our early days, incoming mail would come in through the Mission's post office box in Jos and distributed in various ways to the stations, mostly by the mission plane. Either direction, a letter might take up to six weeks or more to reach its destination.

Fran and I decided on a commitment to write weekly letters to our parents, she to hers and I to mine. She was more faithful than I was and usually did both. Sometimes she would make one original and one carbon copy. One week her parents would receive the original, and the following week mine.

Due to the political developments we summarise in the following section, mail traffic became even slower. Our families at home would often be worried about our security and might call CRWM for updates. We extracted promises from our parents to save our letters. They did, mostly at least, so that today we have them as a source for these memoirs. Decades later, the Boer parents said they knew more

about our children than their other grandchildren, simply because of our letters.

All the women in our immediate family circle took the primary responsibility of responding to our/Fran's letters. Both of our mothers did the writing. Fran's mother Jennie's letters were an interesting amalgam of Frisian, Dutch and English. You really had to understand all three to read them. Fran had no problem; I struggled with the Frisian part. Jan's mother, Ellie, continued her tradition of writing only English letters, never a Dutch one among them. I always admired her for it. After all, she knew no English at the time of our immigration when she was in her forties.

We recall receiving a few letters from Fran's father, Tjalling Prins, and a few from Jan's father, Wiebe Boer. I was kind of happy that Father Wiebe did not do the regular writing, for his handwriting was even more difficult to decipher than mine!

THE POLITICAL SITUATION

So far, we have hardly referred to the political situation in the country. A coup had taken place on January 15, 1966, a few months before we arrived in Nigeria. The processes the coup set in motion remained with us for many decades. We had barely arrived in Baissa when a second coup occurred, this time installing General Yakubu Gowon, a Northern army officer and son of an Anglican evangelist, as Military Head of State, the man gracious enough to write the Foreword to this book. The combination of the two coups triggered a Northern Muslim killing rage against the mostly Christian Igbo traders from the South-East, who had for generations lived, traded and performed many essential services in the North. Ibos fled by the thousands by every means available to them. The entire country was terribly upset and insecure. As a result, via the mission radio, all staff were advised to minimise travel between stations and stay at home as much as possible. The spouses and children of some staff in the Tiv area temporarily moved to safer locations, and all staff were given the option by the mission headquarters to leave the country. To their credit, no one took them up on that; everyone stayed put.

Probably due to its isolation, we did not have much violence in Baissa. However, the military government took security measures that did affect us. For one, because of its proximity to the Cameroon border, the airstrip was closed. That measure increased our sense of isolation even more. Among other things, it meant mail traffic would become even slower. Radio messages had to be formulated more carefully since they were monitored by the government. For example, reports on the situation in bloody Jos were codified: 'the patient was restless last night' or 'the patient slept well'. Roadblocks, manned by police and/or soldiers, were installed in many places along the road, especially in our area due to it being a border area. This paradoxically led to a greater sense of insecurity on our part since they would often harass us and demand bribes.

FINAL INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Well, we have told you a lot about our entry into Nigeria and the Mission. In the process, you have probably learned a few things about the Mission and related lifestyle issues. This CRC mission, you should realise, was huge at the time: more than 80 paid missionaries, not counting spouses. Most were married with families. We were partnering with two Reformed denominations, the CRCN, where we served, and the NKST. We were also members of other missionary organisations, most of which were based in Jos, including the Sudan United Mission and its Nigerian equivalent, TEKAN.

With this, we close this chapter and move on to Wukari, our more permanent location. It was some 130+km North-East of Baissa. Language-wise, from here on, it would be sink or swim. We intended to swim.

CHAPTER TWO

WUKARI, OUR EARLY DAYS (1966–1968)

Fran and I lived in Wukari from 1966-1974. Wukari is located in Nigeria's Taraba State, which borders Cameroon, a former German, English and French colony that shares a coastline with Nigeria on the Bight of Biafra, part of the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean.

But technically, we never really lived in Taraba State even though we were in Wukari. We lived in the Northern Region of Nigeria, in Benue-Plateau State, and Gongola State. Wukari did not move. It was the political configuration of states that changed several times. Wukari found herself within the different states mentioned above over the space of just a few decades. Before it finally became known as Taraba State, we had moved on to Plateau State.

Though we lived in three different communities, Wukari, Baissa and Jos, with Jos several hundred kilometres from the other two, our postal address remained the same throughout – P. O. Box 261, Jos. The reason being poor postal services then in Wukari and Baissa.

Hence, the mission had a post box in Jos through which all the mail for the missionaries was routed. From there, the mission's pilots would carry the mail to the various stations and drop it off. They did not have special mail flights, but as they landed at the various missionary stations for other reasons, they would also drop off the mail.

That Jos post box became a very popular address for hundreds of Nigerians who had a close connection with missionaries. They would have their mail from abroad channelled via their missionary friend. In fact, that one tiny box was the address of choice for people over an area of several thousand square kilometres. It became a problem to the post office, so that they finally ruled that only the staff of our mission could use the box. That was reasonable enough, but it was difficult for missionaries to explain this to their friends. Many of them took it as a lack of cooperation on our part; they felt we did not want to help the people.

Moving to Wukari and getting settled took time. Like every other thing that involves transportation in Nigeria, you need extreme patience. We had stuff in Baissa, in Takum and in Mkar besides the items that had already been transported to Wukari. We left Baissa with the mission's Chevy panel truck full of foodstuff but had to leave fourteen boxes behind for later delivery. The items stored in Takum would trickle into Wukari as either we or other missionaries would travel between the two towns, an 80 kilometre journey along a very sandy and washboard road. We also took two trips to Mkar to pick up what items were stored there, with the rest from there also to slowly trickle into Wukari. So, yes, it was a time-consuming process that required lots of patience, a good virtue to learn for our future ministry.

Our arrival in Wukari brought immediate demands for patience on our part. Arriving from Baissa, as I was about to turn the Chevy into the mission driveway at Wukari, both our brakes suddenly failed, and our gears refused to budge out of the second level while moving. It was, fortunately, not a high traffic road. We came to a slow stop, then backed up and worked our way along the long driveway to our 'new' house. The former missionary resident of the house, now living in Takum, came by just at that time. Like most missionaries other

than me, he was very handy and was able to fix the gear problem, but not the brakes. He went into town to buy brake fluid and another part. Alas, due to the violence, all the Igbo shopkeepers had fled and the market was totally shut down, as was almost every local institution, as I discovered subsequently. There were no supplies of any kind available anywhere, something we had already experienced in Baissa.

Dorothy Sytsma, the only resident missionary then in Wukari, was on her way back from furlough and would be arriving in two days. So we sent a radio message to the mission garage at Mkar to tell them to provide Dorothy with the needed parts on her way through. She arrived on time, but without the parts! Now we had to send someone to Mkar to bring the parts, but he came back the next day without the brake fluid. This ensured there was another trip to Mkar by the messenger. I found the only local mechanic in town who installed the part. All in all, it took a whole week for the car to be repaired.

During that week of waiting for the car to be repaired, Dorothy wanted to drive in her Volkswagen to Enugu, a city far down South and the capital of Eastern Nigeria, home of the Igbo people. The reason was that there simply were no more supplies in the North with the Igbos fleeing. We went along with her and saw a totally different Nigeria, a relatively modern one with paved roads and streets, electricity, working phones and well-supplied stores. Especially on the way back, we were held up frequently by soldiers and police who were wondering what we white people were doing driving through such dangerous territory, but they released us every time.

Not long after our return, the mission truck brought the drums we had packed in Grand Rapids with my library. The drums were all there, but not a large crate that was part of the shipment. It somehow got separated from the drums and lost along the way. The insurance company promptly paid for the loss. Later, we learned that it was found in the Congo, of all places. At least it was in Africa. It took well over a year before it arrived, but by then, we had replaced everything we needed from it and were no longer interested in its contents.

Our Wukari house was well built in terms of strength, but not to taste in terms of ventilation. We called it our 'matchbox'. Though

we had a dining room, we mostly ate on the back porch. During the muggy season, when it could be interminably hot inside at night due to lack of ventilation, we might also sleep on that porch. Later, when we had a raised water cistern built behind the house, we would often sleep there on camp cots to catch the cool breezes. At the front of our house there stood a two-room outbuilding that housed a kitchen with a wood stove and a storeroom for supplies.

We had a lot of fruit trees on the compound. In the back was a grapefruit orchard that also contained some orange and guava trees. There were also huge mango trees scattered all over the compound with their magnificent shaded areas. Next to our own house was a special type of mangoes called 'julies', less stringy, much bigger and substantially sweeter than the ordinary ones. All that fresh fruit made us feel like millionaires!

We still had a need for more furniture such as beds, bookshelves, some cupboards and a desk for each of us. We found another local carpenter to do this work for us. The bed he made was 'emperor' size, about seven feet wide! Though high for a bed, it really was just a low table with a wooden surface on which we laid Nigerian made foam mattresses. We used this furniture for most of our years in Nigeria.

Some weeks later, Eugene Rubingh, the missionary who alerted us to the needs of the Nigerian church and inspired us to come to the mission field back in Grand Rapids, dropped by. As we talked about all the travails of getting settled and comfortable, based on his experience, he predicted that we would not really be or feel settled till the end of our first term, two and a half years from then. That seemed an exaggeration to us, but new missionaries often discount the experience of their senior colleagues.

When we arrived in Wukari, we found ourselves in the midst of the upheavals we only heard about in Baissa. The situation demanded our involvement in helping fleeing Igbos escape. They might have travelled hundreds of kilometres from the far North through the bush for weeks, hardly eating, drinking or washing. Many of them were welcomed by the local Christians and often housed in the Chief's compound. Some would go to the post office that was manned by

fellow Igbos and stay with them. Others would go to mission stations like ours, where they would be fed and given water for bathing. Several times we piled our Chevy full of them and drove them to Takum under cover of darkness. From there, other missionaries would take over and drive them to the Cameroonian border, from where they would be on their own. Once, an unsympathetic soldier held a gun to my head, threatening to kill me, however, he let me go. Another time the Mission in Mkar hired a big semi and sent it to Wukari, where it had arranged with local authorities to fill it with fleeing Igbos and drive them under guard to the East. We never heard from or about them again. By mid-October 1966, things had quieted down somewhat as most Igbos had left by then. But the mild rumblings of an approaching civil war were discerned by those who understood Nigeria's political terrain.

Igbos had been in control of much of the life and economy of the Wukari area, so by mid-October of 1966, the Wukari market was largely closed with almost nothing available except local foodstuffs. Most of the town's amenities were also closed, as they were in most towns, especially federal services, while public transport in the form of taxis and trucks was almost non-existent. We were lucky that our local post office did not close during the heat of the crisis. The staff was forced to stay on by police, keeping them in place. Of course, that did not help much when most of the others were closed. Ours closed later in December when the immediate crisis had subsided. The staff was then allowed to leave.

Just like the Baissa Station, our Wukari Station was located a half kilometre outside the town on a hill, but a much lower hill. We were surrounded by farmland, much of which had been allotted by the Chief to the Christian Leadership Training Centre (CLTC) on our compound for the students to farm. The station comprised the CLTC with its two school buildings, a large student residential compound with a mixture of traditional round huts and square buildings with tin roofs. There were three houses for missionaries, a guest house, and a large steel-plated storage shed that appeared to have been imported years earlier by colonialists. The oldest house was dilapidated and

abandoned. Dorothy lived in the newer house further at the back, while our house was older and at the front of the station. In contrast to ours, hers was well ventilated.

When we first arrived in Wukari, our water arrangements were similar to those in Baissa, except that it rains much less in Wukari. The well from which we drew water during the dry season would yield only two buckets of muddy water a day. We had to boil it and hope it would be safe. I could never understand why earlier residents on this compound had not built cisterns to catch and store the rain from the roofs to be used during the dry season. So, after experiencing the extreme dearth of water during our first dry season, we promptly jumped into action and drew up a cistern plan for the entire compound to be approved by the Mission. They accepted, and in time, we had four cisterns to see us through the dry season, one for each missionary house and one for the school. During that season, the yard worker would keep our raised drums full by manually pumping water from our cistern. From there, it would flow into the kitchen and bathroom. What a relief this brought to everyone.

One midnight, someone knocked on our door. It turned out to be Butch Zandstra, a member of the Zandstra clan of II Highland CRC Indiana, our sponsoring church. Butch had been wandering through Africa and decided to check up on us. So, there he was. We were happy about his visit and explained our lives and work in Wukari. But there was one thing that troubled him. He had been to some of our other stations, and they all had electricity from a generator. Why did their missionary not have that facility? We did not complain but simply said that it probably was because we were a smaller station and, secondly, we had not requested one. Well, he intended to go home and raise money for a generator for their missionaries.

He did, and in due time, we received the report that they had sent money to the Mission to supply us with a generator, though it would take some time before it was actually installed.

WUKARI TOWN SETTING

Wukari is very different from Baissa. For example, in contrast to the rain forests of Baissa and its mountains, Wukari is located in the savannah zone that covers most of the North. It has low forests, much less rain and much more heat spread out over mostly level land with slightly undulating hills. No mountains anywhere, except one small one some 30 kilometres out of town called 'Matar Fada,' 'the Fighting Woman,' a name associated with an ancient myth.

The town itself, with a population at the time of around 15,000, is the centre of the Jukun people and *was* the centre of a far-flung government administrative unit called Wukari Native Authority, inherited from the colonial era and that at one time included both Takum and Baissa areas. It was later divided and thus reduced in size to be called Wukari Local Government Area (LGA). The major and original inhabitants are known as Jukun, but there are also people from other ethnic groups, like the Chamba. There are also numerous Tiv people, a neighbouring ethnic group from within which the NKST church emerged.

The Jukuns and their historical Kwararafa Kingdom have a proud history of having defeated Kano armies back in the 18th century. They are not only a proud and cultured people but also very secretive about their ancient traditions and even current politics.

The male dress for the traditional Jukun at the time was a pair of trousers and a locally produced dyed cloth, often blue, that was sometimes wrapped around the body and slung over one shoulder while exposing the other. At other times they would tie the cloth around their waist and expose their chests.

In addition to the Jukuns, there were many Tiv people living in the town and in the villages around. Many of them understood only Tiv and refused to learn either the Jukun language or Hausa, the *lingua franca*. Their refusal to learn these languages was related to their ethnic outlook that rejects the Hausa language because of their Muslim religion and rejects the Jukun language because of friction between them about land issues.

And then there were quite a few Muslims as well, most of them members of the subgroup Bakwariga, Muslims who had married Jukun women, if I'm not mistaken. They were/are considered sons of the soil by the Jukuns. There are also quite a few Muslim state civil servants as well as Christians.

The Jukun King is called the Aku Uka. He lives in his palace in the centre of town, across from the prison and the mosque and next to the LGA premises. He is considered a demi-god who is said not to be subject to ordinary human bodily functions. Like most kings throughout history, he would have a slew of wives. During our years in his kingdom, the kings were mostly Christian in their sympathies but were required to honour traditional Animist rites that would sometimes cause friction in the town. Tradition had it that a king would be replaced every seven years when the old one would disappear, but not die. His corpse would be wrapped and then carried away on a horse, tied to the rider.

One day, during the Nigerian Civil War, which lasted from 1967-1970 when cars were difficult to repair or even find, the Aku Uka needed to go to Ibi, a predominantly Muslim town some 35 kilometres north of Wukari along a rough unpaved road. Our vehicle, a Peugeot station wagon, was one of the few in the town that was operational. So he sent a request for me to bring him. Of course, I consented. He had his own driver, but at the time, the Mission had the rule that only missionaries could drive their cars or Nigerian drivers approved by the Mission. Since we did not have one approved, I ended up driving him. He sat in the back while a protocol officer, David Bako, a friend of ours and a church elder, sat next to me to ensure I would treat this ride in a properly royal manner. When we arrived at the outskirts of Ibi, I had to start blowing the horn intermittently to let the people know of the arrival of the Aku Uka. I brought him to his destination but then was told they would make alternative arrangements for his return. I was free to go. Apparently, I had driven too fast on the rough road, and it had been too rough on his royal behind! I was never invited to the same privilege again!

The occasion of the Ibi trip was to view an unusual hydrocraft that had come from the Atlantic up the Niger River and then along its major tributary, the Benue River, on the shores of which Ibi was located. The vehicle was manned by a Belgian crew, some of whom spoke Flemish, a Dutch dialect. I was dressed in a traditional Hausa gown and cap and wore sunglasses. With all that, along with a strong suntan and a beard, I did not look very Dutch. So, when I spoke to them in Dutch, they were amazed – a Dutch-speaking Arab in the interior of Nigeria? How random was that!

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF NIGERIA (CRCN)

By the time we arrived, the CRCN was already a full-fledged denomination. Organisationally, it was a replica of Reformed churches elsewhere. It had about thirty congregations with perhaps a dozen Nigerian pastors trained in the Hausa language at Lupwe. These congregations were grouped into districts known in many Reformed churches as ‘classis’ (singular) or ‘classes’ (plural). It also had a ‘General Synod’ where representatives from the classes would convene to make decisions for the entire denomination. Then there was the Executive Committee that comprised of the denominational president and general secretary together with two or three other elected representatives. All of them were appointments for a few years tenure, as were the elders in the local churches.

In addition to pastors, elders and deacons, there were evangelists, whose responsibility it was to lead village branches of the central congregation. They were usually trained in the denomination’s three Christian Leadership Training Centres (CLTCs). They would also be responsible for evangelism. Though missionaries participated in evangelism, it was the Nigerian pastors and evangelists who did most of it and who brought the most converts into the Church, as was the case for most of the spread of Christianity across Nigeria and Africa. So-called lay people also did much evangelism through their personal family and friend networks.

During the earlier years, Wukari town was much more resistant to the Gospel than was the Takum-Lupwe area. One reason was that Wukari was more homogeneous with a strong Jukun worldview, while the Takum-Lupwe area was populated by a mixture of ethnic groups that had been Jukunised but were not so strong in their worldview. Another reason is that, due to their comparatively ready acceptance of Christianity, the Mission built institutions like the hospital and secondary school in Takum that provided a lot of comparatively lucrative employment and gave the town much prestige.

However, shortly before our arrival, the denomination, including Wukari, was in the midst of a tremendous growth spurt due to the afore-mentioned NLFA. The Wukari people responded in great numbers. Their church soon became too small, so that they had to build a larger one. It was dedicated during our time in Baissa. Since our supervisor did not encourage us to go, we regretfully failed to attend that highlight. But when we arrived in Wukari, there was that impressive church building filled up, every Sunday, to a capacity of some 800 awaiting us. It even had a sound system run on batteries.

WUKARI BASED MINISTRIES

Why were we posted to Wukari? Officially we were the replacement of Reverend and Mrs Peter Dekker, as requested by CRCN. Dekker had been the area missionary for some thirteen years or more, so long, in fact, that our compound was popularly referred to as the '*Gidan Dekka*', 'Dekker's house.' No matter where I would go, Dekker had been there and was often the first to have brought the Gospel there. Popular mission gossip had it that there was no further need for a Dekker replacement in Wukari, but that Dorothy Sytsma had tearfully persuaded Mission authorities to post us there.

MINISTRY IN/TO WUKARI CRCN

Our ministry in Wukari started abruptly. Early Sunday morning on 11 September, 1966, our first Sunday in Wukari, two elders came to our door while we were enjoying breakfast. Pastor Habila of Wukari

CRCN was sick and unable to do communion, they had come to report. Would I please help out? I did not have to preach, just do communion. I was the only other pastor available. I had never yet done communion, even in English, let alone Hausa! But with Fran's support, I agreed. We hurriedly looked up the liturgical form in Hausa and found it was exactly the same as in English, word for word, but in stately, formal Hausa with big words I had never seen or heard. So, together, we went through the form with the dictionary at hand to determine the pronunciation of each word, especially its tones. I read through it aloud a couple of times without really understanding the Hausa.

At the beginning of the service, Fran and I were introduced to the people. When the time for communion arrived, I nervously stood up and haltingly read the communion form like an automaton, feeling very nervous. When it was wine time, I lifted the chalice with the usual pronouncements, started to pour the wine, but it was empty! With no pastor to supervise, someone had forgotten to prepare the elements properly. It was stored under the pulpit and hurriedly poured into the chalice and from there as fast as possible into communion cups, which were then passed around the congregation. It was not enough. So another dive under the pulpit and a pail was produced with more 'wine', though it was actually a locally brewed red drink. The cups were once again filled and passed around the rest of the congregation.

Since Wukari had its own pastor, unofficially, I was kind of both assistant and substitute pastor when the ageing Pastor Habila could not function. I was put on the preaching roster and would take my assigned turns. One of my more regular functions there was to be in charge of the Sunday afternoon English service in the Wukari church, but that I had to mostly delegate due to my frequent absences because of travel to other churches in the area.

Fran and I also led English-language youth classes. It was the cool language of prestige among young people. Games and Bible quizzes were among the popular activities. Then I organised a weekly English Bible study class that would appeal to the educated. And with

Pastor Habila getting frail and often sick, I came to be called in increasingly for the sacraments and weddings.

The wedding services were time-consuming. I would come at the stated time but without fail found that the couple and their entourage had not yet arrived and would sometimes take several hours more. There were several reasons for this delay. One was the relaxed attitude towards time; things would often be done on so-called 'Nigerian time.' Another reason was sometimes that the bride's family insisted on further negotiations about the bride price. Now there was time pressure, and it had become a matter of 'yes' or 'no', now or never. So I would sit there waiting for hours while all this was going on. After a while, I instructed the church not to call me until they were sure the entire party had arrived. Then I would take my bath in a leisurely fashion and only then come to perform the ceremony. It saved me a lot of time. And it worked. It was kind of humorous, for I, the white man, would come dressed in a Nigerian pastor's robe, while the couple and their entourage would all be dressed up in rented European garb, wedding gowns and suits. I often pleaded unsuccessfully with young couples to use Nigerian fashion for their weddings, for they would look so much more elegant.

Sometimes we would visit village churches under the jurisdiction of Wukari CRCN. In September 1967, Fran described one as follows:

The church was the smallest we had ever seen and still call it a church, just a few logs under a grass roof. About 15-20 people worship here, only five of whom are baptised. Such few people, all young ones, and yet such enthusiasm. They are facing persecution right now. Their leader is also very young and is our student at CLTC. Most of the old people make it very difficult for the youth who want to follow Christ. They try in many ways to force them to join in on the Pagan rites. These young people are really being tested, and many of them stand firm.

WUKARI CLASSIS MINISTRY

Though there was no job description handed to us, from the outset, I was told that my official capacity would be that of counsellor to the

Wukari Classis. It was not spelt out in any way, and I later wondered who appointed me to that position, Church or Mission? But it did not take me long to recognise that there was no need for such a position. In fact, before long, I became embarrassed about this designation in front of the Nigerian pastors and elders, most of whom were men of much more experience than I was. They did not need a foreign counsellor who had just graduated. I would need *their* counsel much more than they would need mine, which I often gratefully received from them.

About three months after our arrival in Wukari, I sprained my ankle and was instructed by a mission doctor at Mkar to keep my foot elevated on a chair. I was provided with a crutch. Shortly afterwards, a Classis meeting was scheduled in Rafin Kada. I hobbled my way into the church and they ceremonially seated me in front of the entire crowd and gave me a chair to rest my foot on. This was my first meeting with them and they welcomed me with respect as the new missionary counsellor, but it must have been a humorous, if not a ridiculous scene. Here was this young white missionary, still totally wet behind his ears and without any experience, making a mountain out of a medical molehill with his foot on a chair in this prominent position of honour! It did not take me long to realise that they were treating me as they imagined this white man *expected* to be treated. When that realisation dawned on me, I did all I could at later meetings to melt into the crowd, be just 'one of the boys' without receiving any special treatment or attention.

TEACHING AT CLTC

CRCN had three Christian Leadership Training Centres (CLTC) located in Wukari, Lupwe and Baissa, each of them owned by the local classis, and run by a board that appointed the teachers, etc. Their purpose was to train adult Christians for local leadership both in church and society. The type of students was not uniform, but in Wukari, they were adults, mostly in their twenties and thirties; some older, some younger. Many of them married with children. All of them were converts from African Traditional Religion (ATR) and

came from different ethnic groups and languages. Hausa was the language of the school. The Mission was supporting these institutions on a gradually reducing scale. The one in Wukari dated back many decades from before the arrival of CRC.

In addition to my other responsibilities with the Wukari Classis, Dorothy assigned Fran and me to teach in the Wukari CLTC. She really had no authority to assign us, but we did not realise that at the time.

As to subjects, this is what I wrote to my parents on 6 October, 1966:

Fran teaches English and arithmetic to the men students and reading and writing to their wives. Some of the women understand neither English nor Hausa, something that slightly complicates the teaching situation! She also teaches the Bible in a weekly class in the local public school to 120+ students. I teach Church History and Preaching in Hausa. Just the preparation for these courses takes up the major share of my time because of the language issue, but that will get better as we go.

Other courses were taught by Dorothy and by Elder Ifraimu Nyajo from Rafin Kada, a town whose name means 'the river of/with the crocodile'. Ifraimu and I became great friends and did a lot of evangelism together. I might preach in Hausa and he would translate into Jukun. We also worked together in the Rafin Kada CRCN, where he was the chairman-evangelist, and I became the non-resident pastor.

Fran did not have a full load of teaching every day, but then she would have all kinds of other chores, including Friday morning Bible class in the public school. 7 December, 1966, a day I was conducting a baptismal class in Rafin Kada, was such a typical chore day for her:

The plane is coming to Wukari in just a little while. I have to teach an arithmetic class, pick up a watch in town, pick up mail from someone else, etc., all within one hour and then go meet the plane and feed the pilot a little lunch at home.

Before she was finished with her letter, Dorothy dropped by for a coffee, something that was almost a daily routine.

Due to cultural obstacles, Fran grew frustrated teaching CLTC women. Here's her story:

I was an avid record keeper and was trying to get the women's names in alphabetical order in my neat little Teachers' Record Book. Alas, the women wouldn't tell me their real names and just giggled when I would ask if they were the wife of 'so and so.' They actually had many 'informal' names, depending on what day they were born, their place in the family, their relationship to others etc. Here I was, a foreign white woman, trying to get their 'official' name. That sounded too scary for them.

Another issue was the men. Yes, they wanted me to teach their wives. However, I insisted that in order for the women to learn anything, they had to be 'children-free' for the hour of class time. That meant the men would actually have to figure out how to care for their children, including those still being nursed. However, the instant the little one let out a peep, the father would run across the compound and thrust the child through the window into the mother's arms. The prevailing wisdom was that the instant a baby cried, the baby must be given the breast. So, all in all, it was a chaotic situation that did not lend itself to effective learning. In the end both 'sides' gave in a bit, and I learned to teach even with some babies in the room, and the men learned to spend time with their little ones away from the mothers. And some of the women did learn to read and eventually taught others.

One of the constantly repeated concerns of the students was the way pastors and church elders lorded it over the church like chiefs. My consistent response was that they should remember this when they themselves became either pastors or elders or even evangelists. I know that some of them remembered the lesson but also that some did not. When some of them became pastors of the larger churches after graduating with degrees from TCNN, they forgot their earlier complaints and fell into the same trap that comes so naturally to human nature. Servant leadership does not come naturally to anyone.

PASTORAL SERVICES

Though I argued above that Wukari Classis did not need a counsellor to guide her in her classical work, that did not mean there was no need for counselling in vacant congregations. A major part of the counsellor position turned out to be to *help out in churches that did not yet have a Nigerian pastor* and that *was* needed. In a letter, I reported the invitations from two congregations to become their pastor. The two churches were Rafin Kada, some 20 kilometres south, and Nyankwala, 50 kilometres along a very bad road. These were both spin-offs from the Wukari congregation and Pastor Habila had served them as a counsellor, but he really had no further time or energy for them anymore. They really meant counsellor, since I would not be a resident pastor and would provide only skeletal services, while local evangelists, including Ifraimu, would carry the brunt of the daily work and evangelism. I was expecting a third invitation and commented that this, together with my other functions, would keep me more than busy. Eventually, I had four churches under my wings, including Suntai and Bakundi, both of them much farther away than the first two.

Five major ministries within these congregations were occasional preaching, administering the sacraments, teaching pre-baptismal classes to new converts, attending the monthly elders' meetings and encouraging evangelism. All of them in Hausa. This meant I would be gone nearly every Sunday, often the entire weekend. Fran would often come along. She would often spend time with some of the local women.

The work I disliked the most was teaching pre-baptismal classes. I felt that the prescribed curriculum was too foreign and did not address many of the challenges new Nigerian Christians would face. I also felt that the evangelists on the ground who had often brought these converts to Christ to begin with, were better placed in terms of language and culture to teach those classes.

One such class I remember the most vividly and negatively was in the Bakundi congregation. The congregation included a number of outlying village churches and had 120 baptised members. It had

neither pastor nor evangelist when I started with them.

One of the first things I did was to encourage them to hire an evangelist. They called Ayuba Gona, a Wukari Jukun and a CLTC graduate. 'Gona' means 'farmer' and Ayuba was indeed a very good one. He was one of the first Christian farmers who owned a pickup. He did not stay long. I suspect he soon became tired of the infighting in the congregation. Then Filibus Aboki, another CLTC graduate of ours, was called to replace him. It was during his tenure that I conducted this baptismal class. Some years later, he graduated from TCNN and was ordained. Aboki was a natural leader with great speaking and teaching ability and above-average command of Hausa. He led quite a few people to Christ.

One Sunday morning, Fran and I noticed a group of young villagers listening to a radio, not an uncommon scene in Nigeria, for it was the way for them to be in touch with the world. They loved the Hausa-language broadcast of BBC especially, for it would give them more accurate and up-to-date news about Nigerian events than the Nigerian spin doctors on government radio. Voice of America's Hausa broadcast was another favourite. This particular time they were listening to a Christian broadcast. We perked up our ears, and, sure enough, they were listening to the CRC's own world broadcast of the Back to God Hour. It was in English, but some of the young people as well as some of the travelling traders understood enough English to understand. We were impressed with the global reach of the CRC with the Gospel via radio.

We spent our second Christmas in Nigeria at Bakin Kogi, a village church under the Maigoge congregation. The first, about which you'll read later, was at Nyankwala. We had decided to encourage them by celebrating Christmas with them. Though part of the Wukari Classis, they were located in another state with less emphasis on education and development. Hence the congregation found itself in the most backward area of the CRCN with nothing going on, not even a single school.

As is often the case with a less developed community, they make things difficult for themselves. In this case, there was much jeal-

ousy between the different villages making up the congregation. In fact, there had for long been hostility and unhealthy rivalry between Maigoge and Bakin Kogi, but that was ignored when the congregation was formed. That was a bad mistake, for it guaranteed disunity. One elder, who happened to be chair of the Council when I arrived, was making any progress impossible for over a year, especially if it was not centred in his town, Bakin Kogi. One council meeting, I lost my temper and pulled a 'coup.' I simply declared that he was no longer chairman and appointed a temporary one to give them time to elect their own. There was nothing in the church order that gave me the authority to pull off such a stunt, but it was the only way to break the deadlock – and it worked! I was happy when I could hand over this congregation to a new pastor called Jonathan Mijinyawa, a graduate of the Hausa pastors' school in Lupwe, one for whom I had gained the highest respect and with whom I had developed a close friendship.

One incident in Bakundi that made a deep impression on me was a young man who came to me for counsel on a subject that Nigerian Christians did not generally share with missionaries. He told me that at night his spirit would separate from his body and travel to various dangerous places, leaving his body on his bed. He was afraid and wanted help to stop this spiritual wandering. How could I, as his pastor, help him? We missionaries were not trained for anything like this, even though it was not an uncommon occurrence according to Nigerians, including Christians. They knew that we missionaries did not take such matters seriously. They correctly classified it as an African thing that white men know nothing about. But this fellow brought his problem to me, a white man; a most unusual circumstance. Here I was confronted by a very concrete deep African issue that I knew nothing about. I felt ignorant, impotent and powerless. I suddenly became angry at our training and at our Western secular worldview that could not comprehend this kind of situation and denied the stark reality that millions of people in Africa daily cope with. Unreal? Who says when you don't know anything about it? Superstitious? Who says, when you have by mere force of an arbitrary secular

definition denied the reality of anything beyond the empirical? With my Western stupidity and blindness, I told him I would be willing to sleep in his room on my own cot and he on his while I would watch what would happen. He looked at me with utter disgust. 'Pastor,' he said, 'there is nothing to be seen. This is invisible!' Almost like, 'How stupid can you get? Are you a pastor?'

ANNUAL LEADERS' REFRESHER COURSE

A major classical event every rainy season, when CLTC closed to allow students to farm, was the annual week-long refresher course for pastors, evangelists and other church leaders. The teachers, besides me, for the most part, were TCNN graduates, usually including Rev David Angye and sometimes guest teachers from other classes within the CRCN. Angye was the first from this classis to graduate from TCNN. Rev Angye became a close family friend and went on to serve as president of the CRCN for many years. These classes were always highlights, for it gave all these leaders a week off from their pressure-filled jobs and enjoy fellowship with their colleagues, share experiences, etc. It was a time for spiritual refreshment for some. I could often sense the tension between the older conservative generation and the younger, more educated group. The younger ones did not always have a full appreciation for the struggles the pioneers among them had to endure in the course of establishing the early church. Usually, I taught a Bible book in some depth.

TARABA EVANGELISM

The national New Life for All campaign had been enthusiastically embraced by the Wukari Classis. It brought thousands of people into the church. All this had happened shortly before our arrival. Remember the large baptism groups we experienced during language training in Baissa? That was part of the same movement. One of the areas the Wukari church had picked for evangelism was a long area along the Taraba River. Actually, by comity agreements, this part of the country was the responsibility of the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB)

branch of SUM, but a shortage of manpower kept them out of the area. Those comity agreements were developed by the missions; the churches did not take them so seriously. So CRCN evangelists tackled the place with the result that soon, a couple of worship centres were established. One of these places was called Tela.

Reports reached us that the chief of Tela had caused the new church there to be burned down in his opposition to the new religion. It was not a matter of great expense since it was a simple grass hut that cost little to build. The Classis assigned Rev. Bulus Inashi from Donga and me to go visit the place. That was no easy matter. Though today it is a mere two-hour drive along a paved road, it was something else in those days. First, we had to drive 180 kilometres into the Bakundi area. The next part of the journey depended on the condition of the next 15 kilometres. In the dry season, I have taken it by car and by bike. In the rainy season, walking is about the only option. When we reached the Taraba River, we hired a canoe and its owner to take us downriver to Tela, stopping at the various villages to visit the new Christians.

When we arrived at Tela, the new Christians there were overjoyed to see such a high-powered delegation from the church. It encouraged them greatly. We called upon the chief to greet him and to negotiate for him to support the Christian community in his village. We explained to him that progress in most villages came from Christians who would usually advocate for a school and a health clinic and work hard to establish them. Pastor Bulus then talked about the burning of the church and explained that I was a high official and that the entire region somehow was in my hands. As far as these isolated villages were concerned, the colonial bature (white man) was still in charge! I squirmed during this part of the discussion but did not interfere. I believe we left the chief suitably impressed with the need to cooperate with us from then on. There is a good-sized congregation there now.

It was by no means the only trip I made to those parts. I would go there about twice a year, sometimes alone, once with Pastor Habila during a dry season when we could get to the river by car. I also

walked that part of the road a couple of times. Sometimes during the dry season, instead of a canoe, I would travel along that river by bicycle together with resident Evangelist Ibrahim. Once when I had walked that road alone, arriving on my return walk at the village near the main road where the car was, I was met by Ezekiel, a TCNN student from Tela, who was doing an internship in the area and was expecting me that day. I was dead tired, hungry and thirsty. He set me down on a pillow in the shadow of a mighty mango tree and served me tea. I have never forgotten that cup of tea after that exhausting trip. It was so delicious; almost out of this world! No cup of tea has ever tasted that good again!

In August 1968, together with a Nigerian pastor, I made another trip to the Taraba River area by car, bike and canoe. This is how I described the spiritual situation there. I quote the description because it is quite typical of many other places.

The people, especially the young, are very eager for the Gospel. They are sick of Paganism because they see that it leaves them backwards. Islam, they do not want because it is identified with the Hausa people they despise. So they turn to Christianity. Their motive for wanting Christ is not necessarily because they are burdened with a sense of guilt or because they feel a need for salvation. They simply see Christianity as the religion that brings progress to the people and the country. Sociological, psychological and economic considerations drive them to The Way. They are thus prepared to listen. It is the hope that, as they are taught, they will slowly also begin to see their spiritual need for Christ. This is an illustration of how Pagans generally become interested in the Gospel. Their motives are not 'pure,' but as they are exposed to preaching and teaching, they slowly develop a sense of the love of Christ.

Somewhere along the line, the leadership of SUM-EUB wrote a letter of complaint to our Mission leader that I was trespassing on their territory. Without their asking me any questions, our general secretary wrote me a letter forbidding, yes, *forbidding* me to cross comity borders. I was more than ticked off. Why did they not discuss the matter with the Church and with me? EUB had not taken respon-

sibility for their area while the people were ready for the Gospel. In such a situation, responsibility for evangelism should count for more than some semi-legal contract that would deprive them of the Gospel at this critical hour. Since they had failed to take responsibility, they had no right to complain. For a while, I quit visiting the place, but my conscience told me to proceed. So I did.

SECONDARY STUDENTS' RETREAT

Youth work crops up in various places in these chapters simply because it took various forms, aimed at different groups and was performed under different authorities.

At the beginning of the 1968 rainy season, when the CLTC closed down to give students a chance to farm, we planned a three-day conference for secondary-level students from the Wukari area. In a way, this could be considered part of our larger youth programme, but it was organised and financed separately. These young people were disappointed with the church, particularly the local Wukari church leadership that was comprised mostly of the pioneer Christian generation, ageing and not responding to the needs of youth. Basically, these students were the 'beneficiaries' of a barrage of reprimands and chidings from the pulpit. Hence, students came to regard the church as irrelevant to the needs of their modern Nigeria and were leaving in droves. The following is Fran's description of the event:

We want to get to know the students a bit better and, of course, try to draw them to or back to the church. They will sleep in the CLTC dorms. The girls will sleep in an old uninhabited mission home on the compound. The meetings will be held in one classroom while the other one will serve as a dining hall. The church's Women's Fellowship will be supervising the catering. They had me drive back and forth to town to pick up yams, rice, oil, sugar, etc., all in preparation for the meeting. The biggest problem is that we don't know how many students will come. We asked them to register ahead of time, but only five did so. Others told others to tell others that they were coming! This is the first time anything like this has ever been tried in Wukari. Hence, no one knows what to expect. We are preparing for 30, but the turnout could be up to 100.

We had invited a few local youths to serve on the organising committee. The most prominent of them was Baba Addi Byewi, the son of Wukari royalty, who also served as MC for the occasion. Fran wrote in a subsequent letter:

The conference went quite well and we are very much satisfied. 38 students attended. These young people are much freer at discussing things than we ever were as high school students. We wonder whether they paid much attention to the lectures because we heard the same kind of questions during each discussion period. We were really impressed with some of the kids and their attitude to life, their position in a new Nigeria, etc. But the sad thing is that so many are idealists now, but when they get out of school and into their work, the pressures put on them for doing favours for others, bribing and all sorts of corruption are more than most can bear.

The Chief's son served as chairman of the meetings, and he certainly is a fine Christian. He wrote us a letter of appreciation after he returned to school. He wrote that he was so impressed that missionaries would actually 'serve' like this. Most of his dealings with whites had been either in a boss-worker or teacher-student line. Now he saw John sitting in the background while others took over. He saw me serving food and cleaning tables along with others. Such a 'servant' attitude struck him as unusual. Anyhow, he quite flattered us with his compliments! We hope to make student conferences an annual affair, perhaps in August next year.

CHURCH MUSIC

There were some minor ad hoc projects that I will not go into except an interesting one about church music. Within a few months of our arrival, Nuhu, a Nigerian songwriter, and I did a class in *church music*, singing that is. Nuhu was the personal steward to Dorothy Sytsma. He had composed many very popular Christian songs in the Jukun language, the lyrics of which mostly consisted of Bible stories. Many of them were translated into other local languages and were sung throughout the CRCN. Nuhu taught them how to sing them better and also encouraged them to try writing their own. My part

was to teach some of the lesser-known hymns from the *Littafin Wakoki* (LW), the official Hausa collection of hymns mostly translated from English. Members of the class were song leaders from each congregation in the Wukari Classis.

In the CRCN and other churches in the Middle Belt, there was that ‘traditional’ LW I just mentioned, containing mostly translated traditional Western hymns, but very hard to sing by the people, for the tunes were foreign, and the Hausa lyrics were forced to fit the tunes. It was ‘traditional’ in that it represented traditional Western hymns and in that those were the first hymns used by the early Nigerian church. However, they were not at all influenced by traditional Nigerian music or songs.

Nuhu introduced Christian songs based on Jukun music with texts consisting mostly of Bible stories. In that sense, Nuhu’s songs were more traditional and spoke more to the people. There was a real difference in how the Wukari congregation sang these different songs. The songs in the LW were sung slowly and often just dragged on. They were sung only by the literate section of the congregation. Nuhu’s were learned by memory, no written texts, and were sung with much greater enthusiasm by most of the congregation, though some elders thought them below their dignity. After all, the LW hymns came from revered missionaries of previous decades, while Nuhu’s came from the mouths of youth.

EDUCATION SECRETARY

Missionaries sometimes get forced into situations for which they are not qualified. During the course of our time with CRCN, the Synod appointed me their Education Secretary (ES). This put me in charge of their primary school system that I knew very little about. These were schools started by the CRCN-Mission community but were operated by the local government’s education department, who provided the salaries and supplies. However, the CRCN still had quite a bit of control over them, including the location of any new schools and the placement of teachers. I was not altogether happy with the appointment, for I felt it over my head but decided to give it a shot.

I soon became embroiled in village rivalry and politics, with two neighbouring villages vying for one new school. Of course, the loser would immediately begin to accuse the ES of favouring one over the other, if not worse.

In December 1971, I was vilified in letters to both church and the Local Education Authority as well as in a letter directed to me personally. I reproduce the opening paragraph in a letter to the denomination's chairman, dated December 11, 1971, that says it all in a document called '*Petition against Transfer of 1972*':

Rev John Boer's Attitudes.

To be candid and sincere, John Boer is solely responsible for present misunderstandings among the EKAS teachers. He made Haruna Abutu the EKAS representative without the consultation of the entire body of EKAS. We want Rev John to tell us the good qualities in Haruna that made him to choose him. Further on, he boldly declared that there is not any right person in the whole of EKAS who is as fair, just and without tribal feeling as Haruna. Still, we want Rev John to enumerate the people he feels or thinks are tribally-minded. How does he know this? We want Rev John to bear in mind that he is not in America to exercise his dictatorship. If he is here as a missionary, let him carry on with his mission work and not tamper with the indigenous affairs. We know quite well that some missionaries play or participate in politics under the cover of religion. All the missionaries, no exception, should stand aloof and stop poking noses into the African affairs. Correct only what is wrong in the church and no more. To be frank, Rev John has turned the EKAS teachers upside down.

Rev John Boer believes strongly that Haruna has no tribal feelings; for this reason, we will like him to visit the two EKAS Schools – EKAS Schools Wukari and Takum respectively, to check how many Kutep EKAS teachers are there. Find out the truth yourself. In short, if there is any clash among the EKAS teachers, he is the cause. So we want him to do all he can do in his power as Haruna's boss to amend the transfers with immediate effect.

It is hard to counter such accusations, and I felt I had no stomach for that nonsense. But was it really nonsense? Tribalism does create a lot of negative nonsense, but it *is* real and *must* be taken into consideration in such contexts, for it always affects the dynamics. I did find it interesting to attend the meetings of the Department of Education but was not always sure I understood the intricacies of local politics, let alone the intrigue that was never far from the surface. Actually, the time for a foreign missionary to be involved in such local government affairs was rapidly phasing out and I could sense that. Within a year, I was replaced, whether due to my resignation or to Synod's own initiative, I do not recall. I was happy to bow out.

This development was at least partially due to inexperience on my part as well as ignorance of ethnic dynamics and local politics. I include this part of the story to indicate that I was not always regarded as the darling missionary to the local church. The suspicion many educated Nigerians had of missionary motivations could also be directed to me.

FINANCIAL AUDITOR

Another position I was given was that of a denominational financial auditor. This had been the responsibility of Edgar Smith, but he was preparing to slow down and retire. I could hardly believe their choice of me of all people as I had absolutely no experience or qualifications in the field. But Synod does not take "no" for an answer easily. So, like the other appointment, I decided to give this one a shot as well. Most of the accounts of the church were not that difficult to monitor. I did run into a problem of shortage of cash in the case of one administrator. I reported it to Synod and let them deal with it in their own way. Actually, Fran did most of the detailed analysis of accounts, something at which she naturally excels. She should have been appointed instead of me.

My biggest problem was checking the books of Wukari District Combined Secondary School (WDCSS), where missionary Corny Korhorn was the principal. At that time, I did not know Korhorn very well and did not realise he was very bright, systematic and meticu-

lous. When he showed me his books, I immediately realised once again that I was way over my head. He explained his intricate system and then was going to let me loose on his books, but I realised that it would not work. I believe he realised it as well and thought it kind of humorous. I, on the other hand, felt embarrassed and inadequate. I then decided to come clean, confess my ignorance and strike a deal with him, since I had by now perfect confidence in his honesty. In my report, I gave him a clean slate. I was eager to bow out of this position as well and was not too disappointed when Synod appointed a replacement.

THE LITERATURE MINISTRY

Though we were not assigned a literature ministry by anyone, the Mission had a literature department that published and distributed small locally-produced booklets in English, Hausa and Tiv. It also distributed small imported books. These were distributed mostly through local bookshops owned by the Mission. Early on, Fran and I decided to develop that ministry in the Wukari Classis area. Though literature eventually became a major feature of our ministry, it started out small. Fran described its beginning in these words:

Whenever we travelled to villages by car, we always had boxes of books with us. At first, these were mainly English, Hausa and Tiv Bibles along with Hausa songbooks, but eventually, we also carried many popular small books about health and family issues. Often people didn't have enough money, so we would let them have the books at a "discount."

After a few months, I got more active in some actual bookshops in Wukari, Ibi & Donga. I would go once a month to check their inventory; collect the money owed, and leave new books. The Wukari shop was right in the town where we lived; the Ibi shop was about 30 kilometres down a fairly good road; the Donga shop, however, meant I had to cross the river in a scary canoe ride while holding on to the book box as well as I could.

The money at that time was still in pounds, shillings and pence, i.e. not a decimal system. Also, remember this was pre-calculator

days. It was a time consuming and often frustrating process because there were always reasons given as to why they weren't able to pay the total amount owed. Especially when the bookshop was run by a pastor or his family, this often became a "sensitive" issue!

The bookshops needed constant attention because of bookkeeping problems. The people running these shops did not understand the reason for bookkeeping nor how to do it. As a result, they would often mess it up. Harold de Groot, the one in charge of all the shops, wanted to fire the man running the Wukari shop because of this reason. However, Fran worked with him hard and long and thought he would do all right under close supervision.

STUDY LEAVE IN ISLAMICS

Rev Harvey Kiekover and I had requested from the Mission that we be allowed to take an introductory course in Islam to help with Christian-Muslim work in the church. Our Mission had its own specialist, Peter Ipema, but he belittled his own qualifications and did not think he had anything to offer to seminary graduates. Instead, he suggested we take a three-months course offered by the Islam in Africa Project (IAP) in Ibadan, at the time the largest indigenous African city located in Nigeria's south. It was agreed. Kiekover did not make it, for he could find no replacement for his work. However, the Mission offered to pay for Rev David Angye to take the course as well. So, one day in May 1967, we drove off with the three of us to Ibadan. It was an international course for both students and teachers. Apart from other Nigerians, students came from Cameroon and Ghana. We had a Nigerian teacher, one from The Gambia, one from the Netherlands and two from the UK. The person who was supposed to be our main teacher unexpectedly withdrew. He was Dr Bijleveld, another Dutchman, a teacher of Islam of international repute. So, his course became one of listening to his recorded lectures, which were very good indeed. The other Dutchman was Dr Hans Haafkens, who had written a dissertation in French about Fulani poetry! He taught Arabic. Fran and I started this course but soon decided to drop out, for we

wanted to continue concentrating on the Hausa language. Our Nigerian instructor, Dr Oyelade, became a life-long scholar of Islamics.

Our teacher from The Gambia became the world-renowned Professor Lamin Sanneh at Yale University as well as a famous writer and popular lecturer. He started out life as a Gambian Muslim and went through the Muslim Qur'anic school system. He ended up an American Catholic. Not only did he teach us during his and our early careers, but he also taught Wiebe, our youngest son, 30 years later at Yale University and was one of his doctoral advisors. Professor Sanneh sadly passed away unexpectedly in early 2019. The University of Ghana recently launched the Lamin Sanneh Institute as a centre for inter-religious study and dialogue. Both the Emir of Kano and the Archbishop Emeritus of Canterbury featured in the launch, exhibiting how even in death, Sanneh continued to bring Muslims and Christians together.

The Ibadan course was of great interest to all of us. For me, it planted the seed of interest in Islam that continued to grow over the years. When we got back to Wukari, I started reading all articles about Islam in newspapers, magazines and other formats and started archiving them. That meant I gradually developed a valuable archive about Nigerian Islam as well as Nigerian Christian-Muslim relations that became an important information base for the series I wrote later. Decades later, upon completion, the archives ended up at the Yale Divinity School.

A more serious issue was the sense of insecurity that enveloped us all. The political unrest and the anti-Igbo violence had somewhat abated but not ceased everywhere altogether. I remember being in an upstairs restaurant in downtown Ibadan when we heard the type of yelling we would hear in Baissa when people detected a dangerous snake. We went to the window and saw a crowd of Yorubas pursuing a fleeing Igbo. We did not see the end of the story, for they turned the corner, but I suspect the man was beaten to death.

In spite of this insecurity, during the mid-course break, Fran and I took a trip to Lagos by bus for tourist purposes. The outstanding

experience there was the blow-up of a gas station a block from our guest house. It was a terrorist attack, part of the unrest in the country. It was a tremendous explosion that shook our building and woke up everybody. When we came outside, someone with a surprised look on his face asked us, 'Oh, did you hear it too?'

Another trip took the entire class some 580 km north to a place where one of our students lived. It was a Muslim dominated area where Christians were being persecuted. The problem was that the Christians were from two different ethnic groups and therefore did not support each other. This weakened them in the face of Muslim persecution. We went there to encourage them to stand together. The purpose of the trip was also to encourage our classmate and to build up his prestige in his home community that would definitely accrue to him from a visit that included 'foreign dignitaries.'

Insecurity was in the air at all times and talk of civil war became so common that every day we all asked whether the course should be terminated. Well, we *almost* did not quite complete the course. The pressure of war and insecurity became too much. I am glad to report that everyone arrived home safely. Our fears clearly were not unfounded. In fact, these two trips I refer to above were made *during* the War, which started 6 July, 1967. But since the war front was in the East, it had not affected us that much in the West, at least not yet.

In addition to the course, the Mission had assigned me to check out the state of Christian youth work in Ibadan. The idea of youth centres was floating around in the Mission. Since the Christians in the South had a long history and more experience, it was considered wise to have me investigate the lay of the land in Ibadan. I took many trips into town to explore the youth world. This took me to various churches, but most often to the YMCA downtown, which had been re-energised by partnering with the German YMCA, which provided both personnel and funds. They had various programmes going that I observed and reported on.

While in Ibadan, we attended the ceremony of the laying of the first stone for the Institute of Church & Society. We attended because our principal encouraged us to do so, not because we had any inkling

that a decade later, I would join the staff of this Institute and be part of its ministry for some seventeen years.

RELATIONS WITH VARIOUS NIGERIANS

Over our years in Wukari, we built very strong relationships with Nigerian friends and colleagues. I wish to emphasise here that the relationships described below were intense. As all of us age, I deeply long for an opportunity to meet all these fellow servants of Christ once more, for our affection for them runs deep. Unfortunately, many have already passed on, so we await heaven to meet them again.

Elder-Evangelist Ifraimu Nyajo

Ifraimu was the first church leader with whom I worked closely from day one. He had a ready laugh that would diffuse difficult situations. When we arrived in Wukari, he was the sole Nigerian teacher at CLTC. Since he was friendly from the start, even though he knew little or no English, I soon started asking him for advice on ‘Nigerian matters’ and could usually count on his sympathetic and wise advice. We developed a solid friendship, and, for the short time we worked together, we had a wonderfully cooperative and appreciative attitude towards each other.

In addition to teaching at CLTC, Ifraimu was the evangelist-leader of the Rafin Kada congregation, one of ‘my’ churches. I performed all the pastoral functions for that congregation, including attending the monthly elders’ meetings. They had always conducted them in the Jukun language but now had to switch to their *lingua franca* because of me. That was not always easy or convenient for them. I would remind them sometimes when they would lapse into Jukun for a long time. After all, they did not *have* to call me; they could have tried to call other nearby Nigerian pastors.

Ifraimu and I would also go out trekking together to outlying villages for witnessing and preaching. I would always be expected to preach, but he soon got used to my way of speaking Hausa and would translate with the same passion with which I preached. I always felt

very comfortable with him as my translator. Eventually, his position as leader of the Rafin Kada congregation was taken over by a more educated pastor who had graduated from TCNN. Ifraimu slowly faded into the background, though he remained an honoured senior elder in the church. Similarly, his place at CLTC was taken over by another TCNN graduate.

As happy as he always seemed, there was an underlying sadness in Ifraimu's life. He and his wife had only daughters, no son, something that traditional Nigerian families at that time needed to feel complete. After many years, they finally had a son, but this only became an occasion for tragedy. For one thing, the son had sickle cell, usually leading to early death, possibly in the 20s. On top of that, at age four, the boy was killed by a truck in a freak accident! You can hardly think of a greater tragedy than that for a Nigerian family or father. Ifraimu told me that every father needs a son to perform very intimate services for him if and when he reaches old age. We did visit him during our trip to Nigeria in 2001, and after a long period of not hearing from him, our son Wiebe and his children visited him in Rafin Kada in 2017, and I was able to speak to my old friend via phone. Because of his poor eyesight, he at first thought I was the one visiting him, and he exclaimed in Hausa, "My John Boer is here!" I have not forgotten Ifraimu as a faithful servant of Christ and a friend to Fran and me in our early days as missionaries.

From Pastor Ezekiel to Alhaji Muhammadu

By the time we arrived, there was a second generation of pastors that had recently been ordained. One with whom I had close relations was Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo. As a young person, he had suffered leprosy but was healed at the Tamiya Leprosy Settlement near Lupwe, the name being a Hausafied version of an early missionary's name "Termeer." He was also healed in his heart: He became a Christian. In time, he took the pastor's course in Lupwe and became a pastor a couple of years before we arrived.

Ezekiel was very different from the average CRCN member and

even from the average Jukun. Part of his ancestry, I believe, was from the local Bakwariga people, who were mostly Muslim by religion and spoke a better grade Hausa. It also happened that he was an extremely bright and original thinker and, it cannot be denied, kind of haughty at times. This did not make him very popular with his pastoral colleagues, whom he sometimes intimidated. But I admired the man and loved him deeply for his straightforward attitude. I regarded him as another one of my mentors, for he did not hesitate to set me straight, to explain cultural situations and to express his frustration with respect to Mission policies towards the church. Sometimes, upon returning from Takum for discussions with Mission leaders there, he would return with his heart and mind full of anger and indignation and would unload his frustration on me.

He had visions of a widespread community health care system that would cover all the villages that were under his church. In order to accomplish this, he wanted Ruth Vander Meulen to move to Ibi and operate it for him. When he first broached the subject with Mission leaders, they rejected the idea outright as ridiculous, but Ezekiel kept up the pressure, applying his powerful logic that eventually brought them around, and Ruth moved to Ibi, where Ezekiel made sure she was well taken care of.

In all of these discussions between us, Ezekiel often referred to the damage caused by too many missionaries living together as in the Takum-Lupwe area. They were so many that they constituted a self-sufficient society of their own and had little need for social life with the surrounding communities and Nigerian individuals. Their relationships with Nigerians were for the most part restricted to official capacities. That is not where Nigerians will open up, he said. The real stuff is discussed and decided in unofficial personal face-to-face situations. Missionaries have excluded themselves from such situations and, therefore, often misunderstood the church.

He was also a tremendous preacher and effective evangelist. He built up the Ibi congregation in the midst of a Muslim town. People loved to hear him preach – and so did I. I learnt various preaching

techniques from him that have stood me in good stead. One of his tactics to revive a flagging audience would be to stop preaching, have a moment of silence and then ask them, 'Do you want me to quit or to continue?' The answer was always a loud and unanimous, 'Continue!'

Ezekiel occasionally relished to playfully humiliate us with our Hausa. We were doing fairly well with the language, but once in a while, he confounded us by speaking in a much more idiomatic Hausa that the people around us never spoke. Then he would gleefully laugh when we did not get it. We would always laugh with him.

Normally he had great confidence in us and considered us his friends. His wife, Saratu, once brought their five-year-old Suzie to our house for a visit. She had packed a little case with her belongings. Suzie had frequently seen us at her house in Ibi and told her parents she would love to stay at our house for a few days. Before Saratu had walked the half kilometre to the taxi park, Suzie panicked and decided she didn't want to stay with us after all. So Fran drove to the taxi park, found Saratu still waiting for transport, and delivered a crying Suzie back to her mother. That was the end of that story.

During the oil boom, when the government made loans available for small businesses, Pastor Ezekiel availed himself and built a fairly large chicken farm. His pastor salary restrained him too much; he had broader visions. Then the oil doom set in, and the government called in his loan. He unsuccessfully sought alternative loans from other quarters. The Muslim community offered to pay off his loan on the condition that he became a Muslim. He did!

The entire church and mission, including us, were terribly upset. How could such an effective preacher and evangelist become Muslim? The church leadership tried hard to dissuade him to no avail. How could he? He had no money to repay that Muslim loan. Then the resentment that many had felt towards him came out into the open, and people began to berate him publicly and personally. They accused him of mishandling church or community health money, which he countered by rejecting the charge and accusing church leaders of covering up for their colleagues doing just that. He also

sneered that his former colleagues were jealous of him. All in all, it was a sorry affair and made us very sad. He assured us that though he had left the church, he had not left Christ, a statement he would repeat over the years.

He visited us quite often when we lived in Jos and repeated his line that he had not left Christ. In the meantime, he had become a polygamist. Some of his children had remained Christian. As to our prayers for him to return to the faith, he smilingly said they would not go beyond the ceiling. During one of his visits, he was about to leave in order to perform the Muslim prayer, but we told him he should stay and could do his prayer right there in our living room. He was surprised at this gesture but took us up on it. We still think of him frequently with a special affection and respect. Even if he would wish to revert, it might be difficult in view of the sorry ways in which Christians treated him. He would have to seriously humble himself.

Years later, in 2001, when we came to Nigeria for a visit, we met Ezekiel again. By now, he went by another name, Alhaji Muhammadu, "Alhaji" being a Hausa variation of an Arabic title indicating he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. At the time, he was in Jos for business, but when he heard that we were visiting in Wukari, without completing his business, he immediately travelled back to Wukari to visit us in the guest house Caleb Ahima, a Wukari friend of ours who is now the President of the CRCN, had arranged. During the course of his visit, a large group of women from the church's Women's Fellowship (*Zumuntar Mata*) also came, including some of Muhammadu's own relatives. When they saw him, they immediately attacked him for converting to Islam. We let the scene run its course without interfering since he was quite capable of defending himself. However, later I regretted that I did not stop these attacks. After all, I was obligated to protect him as my guest.

This Ezekiel story reaches far beyond the design of this chapter. However, if I chop it up into short sections in the coming chapters, you will not get the full flow of it or appreciate it. So, when you meet him again in succeeding chapters, remember this story in this chapter.

Rev Dr David G. Angye

The other Nigerian pastor with whom we had a close, though sometimes turbulent, relationship of respect, admiration and fondness, was Pastor David Gani Angye. He and I graduated at the same time, he from TCNN. He then was recruited as a preacher by NLFA for a year, in recognition of his great preaching skills, like Ezekiel. Within a year of our arrival, he was ordained by the *Bege* (Hope) CRCN congregation headquartered in Sondi, some 40 km east of Wukari. Due to the fact that I was ordered to remain in bed for a week because of prolonged painful back spasms due to disk problems, I regretfully did not attend the celebration.

David's ordination was as the first of a TCNN graduate in CRCN. Hence, the event attracted some senior CRWM visitors, all of whom related to TCNN. Pioneer Edgar Smith, the first chairman of the TCNN Board of Governors, was among them. Dr Harry Boer, the first principal, came along with Professor Harold Dekker, my mission professor at Calvin Seminary, who had come to teach for a year at TCNN. They stayed for two nights in our guest house and were entertained by Dorothy and us. It was an exciting weekend for us in spite of my inability to participate in the celebrations. It was also of great interest to Dekker to visit one of his students 'on the field.'

This ordination celebration in David's birth village led to a profound change of attitude towards Christianity on the part of the village elders, including David's father, the Chief. They were impressed that all these white people attended the ceremony. That was an indication that Christianity was more than the children's religion as they had thought. It was obviously an important force. How else to explain the participation of people from other countries?

David's congregation stretched far and wide along difficult sandy roads that he travelled by bike. His dedication to his pastorate and his people was utterly amazing. He worked feverishly to build up this congregation and its satellite churches and bring people to Christ. Since on his salary – I seem to remember something like five pounds a month – he could hardly feed his family, some of us missionaries together and privately supplemented his income. We also got together

to get him a motorcycle to make his work a little easier.

Such help as we rendered was as much an expression of our guilty consciences as of generosity. We earned so much more money, while people like Pastor David were so much better at bringing their own people to Christ. However, the policy of the SUM, including that of CRWM in Nigeria, was to develop churches that would raise their own funds and not depend on foreign income. In the long run, that was good policy, but in the short run and, especially in personal relationships with very poorly paid pastors, it was too hardnosed for us not to personally intervene.

This money difference between the mission and missionaries on the one hand and the local church and its pastors on the other has always been a vexing problem in mission-church relationships. Entire books have been written about it, and churches have sometimes boycotted missions and missionaries because of it. Pastor David at one time boycotted us personally on issues related to this, a reaction I understood fully but which nevertheless hurt deeply. The churches and pastors could never fathom these mission policies. When there was so much money, why not pour it in and get things moving? That's what the international Muslim community was doing in Nigeria. There were areas within CRCN that were ripe for the Gospel, but there were no resources to send in personnel. Muslims would take advantage of our slow response and reap the harvest.

Over the years, David and I worked together. Fran and I, sometimes I alone, might accompany him on trips through his wide-spread congregation. Sometimes bringing in a white man would arouse the interest of the village and attract them to evangelism events, where David would inevitably be the more effective speaker. In 1967, Fran, David and I went together to that three-month course on Islamic Studies in Ibadan. During our Wukari years, David and I would often both be teaching refresher courses classes organised for church leaders. Years later, we ran a weekend conference for Christians in the Taraba State civil service in order to conscientise them to Christian responsibility. David had great insight he had learned during his years as principal of a government teachers college. His main theme

was that all these Christian teachings are already embedded in the civil service regulation; they are nothing new; they just need to be adhered to, which he, as principal, did and got into trouble for it. He did acknowledge the tremendous pressure on civil servants to ‘play the games.’

Over the years, David went to the US twice for further training and eventually earned a Masters in “Christian Education,” a subject a Kuyperian would call “Church Education.” One of the schools he attended was one now called ‘Kuyper College’ in Grand Rapids. Once, a furlough of ours overlapped with his study there. Since we were given furlough assignments by CRWM that would take us to various congregations, including our sponsoring church, II Highland CRC, sometimes David would come along and do one of the services. The churches tended to really appreciate meeting and hearing him.

David’s leadership was recognised by CRCN and eventually, he became the denomination’s president. This took him all over the denomination not only, but also to various countries. He would represent CRCN at international gatherings of the REC (Reformed Ecumenical Council), an international ecumenical organisation of Reformed churches now merged into the World Council of Reformed Churches (WCRC). He travelled far and wide.

Years later, during the protracted Jukun-Tiv wars in the 1980s and 90s, much of David’s area was ravaged with many villages and farms completely destroyed. We visited him from Jos, and he showed us around. I remember shedding tears over all this destruction caused by violence between two groups of Christians for whom traditional ethnic feelings still trumped their Christian hearts across two sister denominations. Somewhere along the line, we had helped him develop a farm, but this too was destroyed.

Pastor David was like an uncle to our children, who also revered him deeply. It was such a blessing that he was in Grand Rapids at the time of our daughter Cynthia’s wedding in 1995 and was able to attend. He passed away in 2018 after a protracted illness and both our daughter Lydia and son Wiebe were able to attend the funeral, where Wiebe delivered a tribute to this great man and brother who gave his

life to build the CRCN.

Elder-Evangelist-Pastor Iliya Danjuma Lena

When it comes to family-to-family relations, probably our relationship to the Lena family trumps them all. In 1966, Iliya was the leading elder-evangelist of Nyankwala CRCN, another spin-off from Wukari. Naomi, his wife, was/is a fantastic cook and leader of the women. She had taught them all literacy. They had nine children, two of whom passed away early in life. Nyankwala was one of the first two churches to invite me to serve them as counsellor-pastor. On my very first Sunday visit, I went alone. I preached in my budding Hausa. After the service, I was treated to a dinner of fish heads, opened eyes and all.

The council sent a special delegation, including Iliya and his evangelist colleague Istifanus of the branch church at Gindin Dorowa, to invite us to spend our first Nigeria Christmas with them. We accepted without hesitation, thinking that it was normal for missionaries to spend Christmas with the church(es). We learned afterwards that in fact, many missionaries would go to Miango, a mission guest house not far from Jos, where missionaries, including us at times, would often spend holiday or retreat time with other missionaries. It being the dry season, the road to Nyankwala was quite passable by Christmas. We arrived on the 24th and were put up in a brand new two-room square building with a pan roof. We set up our trek beds and with that, we were settled in. Before long, people came to greet with Christmas gifts of all kinds – eggs, yams, rice, chicken, etc. All of these were used to feed us during our stay. We were never tired of Naomi's cooking. The main dish would either be rice or some dish of pounded yam or guinea corn with chicken or beef stew. At the end of such visits, we would usually leave some money behind to cover expenses.

We had the usual kinds of Christmassy services in most of which I preached, with the rest of the liturgy conducted by various elders. The choir had prepared some special presentations in both Jukun and Hausa. Christmas celebrations in those days extended all the way to New Year. During this period, Christians would share food and

meals with their non-Christian neighbours. They would also invite the entire village to a special open-air festivity that included a potluck dinner, various games and a locally composed drama that included dramatisations of the Christian Military Head of State, General Yaku-bu Gowon. It really was a most uplifting and joyful Christmas celebration we have never forgotten. A wonderful introduction to that aspect of Nigerian Christian culture.

However, not every visit to Nyankwala was all feasting. Some of it was hard work. Iliya and I would frequently visit villages for evangelistic purposes, mostly by bike, sometimes by foot, canoe or car. The following quote from a letter describes a typical trip from Nyankwala to surrounding places:

That Sunday morning, I preached in Nyankwala. In the afternoon, we trekked to Bantaji, three miles away across the Donga River by canoe and preached there in the church in the afternoon and in the town square in the evening. The following day we went by canoe to another town, rowed by a couple of Christian men. There I preached in the marketplace to a mixed crowd of Christians, Pagans and Muslims. That same evening we returned to Bantaji and again preached in the town square. The next day we returned to Nyankwala to attend the CRCN Synod held there for the next few days. In the meantime, Fran went home by car in order to drive almost 140 km to Mkar the next day to pick up supplies for the bookshop. I eventually returned home in the car of another missionary who also attended the synod.

We were home for about two days when we had to start our journey of a good 900 km to Ibadan to take that course on Islam.

We would visit Nyankwala one weekend a month and always stayed in the Lena compound. Thus we had a good opportunity to closely observe a Nigerian Christian family. It was impressive. People came and went. Children from all over the village came to play. Mealtimes were disciplined in Nigeria's own way. The adult men would eat together; Naomi and other females in the compound would eat together and children would get their share as well. In the darkness of the evening after supper, the entire compound would gather outside in the centre of the compound and have a family prayer – a Bible

reading either by flashlight or candle, a few songs in Hausa or Jukun and prayers. We observed that children were free to go to bed at whatever time they liked. There was no particular 'bedtime' at which they might be tucked in.

While Iliya and I would be going about our business, Fran might spend time just sitting on the front porch, either reading or socialising with whoever happened to drop by or she might spend time with Naomi in her kitchen. Somewhere along the line, we had opened a small bookshop in Gindin Dorowa, less than a kilometre away. She would sometimes go there to check the inventory and collect any money owed.

I have already mentioned that Naomi was a terrific cook. Like most women in the area, she would also make *kunu*. I tasted hers and liked it. Whenever we were scheduled to come, she would make sure to have a good supply of it at hand. Whenever she would come to Wukari, she carried a few bottles and delivered them to our house.

Unfortunately, when the oil boom's ripple effects temporarily improved the standard of living for the people, they began to reject some of their traditional foods and drinks. *Kunu* was now seen as primitive and not fit for giving to guests; soft drinks, especially Coke and Orange Fanta, now became the drinks of choice or, at least, of prestige. This was an unfortunate development, for, in contrast to these unhealthy sugary soft drinks, *kunu* was very nutritious as well as a better quencher of thirst. Sometimes 'development' is really 'undevelopment.' Throughout it all, Naomi faithfully kept boiling *kunu* for me without fail.

Lydia was their oldest daughter, born on September 24, 1960, just a week before Nigeria's independence. When we first started coming, she was six years old. She had a chance to observe us from nearby, especially Fran, during her socialising time. She was a sickly child and looked like she needed some special attention. She somehow took a liking to us and asked Naomi if she could go with us next time. When Naomi brought it up, Fran told her about our experience with Suzie and said it probably would not work. Fran reminded Naomi that Lydia would have to stay for a whole month because the

road to Nyankwala was quite bad and we only travelled there once a month. Naomi assured us that was no problem. She proved to be right, and Lydia stayed not just a month, but for many years. This was the beginning of a long story that is still not finished even today. The rest of her story is told in the subsequent chapter.

Eventually, Yakubu Masoyi, our best student at CLTC and now a new graduate from TCNN became the Nyankwala pastor, and I could withdraw. Iliya then enrolled in the Hausa pastor's school at Lupwe and, in due course, became pastor at *Bege*, Rev. Angye's first congregation. After some years, Nyankwala called him home to be their pastor until he retired.

Throughout the years, we kept in regular contact with the family. After we moved to Jos, Iliya and Naomi visited us several times, while their son with a cleft palate received treatment at a mission hospital there. After we moved back to North America, we kept up fairly regular contact with the Lena's through Lydia. We also visited them in 2001.

A month later, Iliya died just a few days before 9/11. Naomi became a widow, eking out a living teaching Christian Religious Knowledge in the local school and living in a house built by her children, which by now included a lawyer and, still later, a political scientist! Early into the new millennium, Naomi surprised us with a cell phone call from Nyankwala! How the world had changed! Cell phone service in a rural agricultural village in Nigeria with round thatch huts for houses and dirt roads. Unbelievable! The entire phase of landline telephones skipped over. Since then, we have talked with her a number of times. Naomi sadly passed away in 2020.

Throughout, Iliya and Naomi remained faithful and humble servants of Jesus without ever showing any pride or spirit of entitlement that came to characterise so many pastors.

Filemon Tsojo

Filemon Tsojo was the son-in-law of Adisa, the wife of Pastor Habila, and was married to their daughter Matta. He was a builder and general contractor and was an amiable sort of guy who took a liking to

missionaries. That original small repair jobs he did for us developed into an active friendship that became more informal, spontaneous and open than our relationship with almost anyone else. But the couple had one serious problem: They had no children. He talked of that often.

One day, he announced that he was going to marry a second wife and that he would bring her to us. In view of their problem, that did not surprise us, though we could not approve of such a step. The next day he came with his 'second wife' – a motorcycle!

However, something like that did eventually take place. Whether this was by agreement between the two or not, one day, Matta just up and left him for Kano, never to return. After a while, he married another woman with whom he had a number of children. The church put him under discipline, though not sure why. Was it because of divorce or polygamy, both of which could lead to discipline? Matta's mother bitterly denounced him publicly. Though Filemon had been a leading figure in the church, he now withdrew into the background but continued to be a faithful member. He, too, was kind of bitter. We remained friends and continued our social life, even though that sometimes made it awkward for us in our relationship with Pastor Habila and Adisa.

Filemon did not forget us when we left Wukari. Years later, he visited us in both Baissa and Jos. He even wrote us letters when we were in Amsterdam. We remember Filemon with fondness and thank him for his friendship.

FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE

Both Fran and I were very conscious of Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo's warning about concentrating too many missionaries in one place. With Dorothy as our initial role model, we worked hard at developing strong local social ties. Not only did the various pastors frequently visit and join us for meals, but we also made other friends in the church with whom we would visit back and forth. Sometimes we would eat at each other's homes or participate in private celebrations. Fran wrote,

‘We’ve had a lot of company this last week. I just counted and found we served 24 extra plates in six days!’

You may remember we lived at opposite ends of the compound with Dorothy, we at the entrance and she at the very back. Fulani women carrying gourds with milk on their heads would stop at our house a few times a week to deliver milk from their cows. One day they asked why I had put my first wife, referring to Dorothy, far away in the back of the compound and stayed only with my new wife. That, they chided, was not fair on my part; I had to treat them equally. Well, that *is* a standard rule in Muslim polygamy: no two or more wives unless you can treat them all equally.

WUKARI TENNIS CLUB

During our Seminary years, we started to play tennis and loved it a great deal. So, when we packed for Nigeria, we included our tennis rackets, cheap wooden versions as they were, with at best a very faint hope that we would be able to use them in Nigeria. As it turns out, tennis is very popular among Nigerians, i.e. those who can afford the equipment, as well as among missionaries. There was no court in Baissa, but there was a double court in Wukari operated by the Wukari Tennis Club. Its patron was Ibrahim Usman Sangari, a prominent Christian, businessman and avid tennis player of high quality. All members were men, except after Fran joined and, later, Nelle Evenhouse who later became a neighbour in Wukari.

The members welcomed us with open arms and let us play on the same terms as everyone else. We came regularly, at least, when I was home. We did not do very well with our poor quality rackets, though Fran did considerably better than I did. When we changed to better rackets, we both improved, but I remained at the bottom of the ladder. I enjoyed it much but could never get a good grip on the game. Fran would occasionally win a game, something that would deeply embarrass her Nigerian male opponent!

Once, Sangari organised a tennis meet with a team from Lagos, the capital city far to the west. The Lagos players had apparently never been far beyond their city and were utterly amazed at the cul-

ture of their own country. They acted more foreign than we ever did and felt more at home with us than with their own countrymen. They were astounded that we spoke Hausa, a language they associated with what they considered backward Northern Hausa Muslims.

Like other community involvements, membership in this club paid us many dividends. Some members were Muslims who would never have come close to us if not for this club. When we needed to visit a government office and there was a member there, we would always get proper attention and service that every citizen should be getting but seldom does. It created personal relationships that, at times, allowed us to have more personal discussions as well.

FAMILY LIFE

Though our decision to join the Mission in Nigeria surprised us more than anyone else, it was not a particularly difficult decision. We had nothing to keep us back – cheap furniture, an old car, no house and no children. No complications; no obstacles. Why not make use of the opportunity? We were young and expected it to be for a few years only.

Once there, things were not quite that easy, what with kerosene cooking, strange foods, increasing political violence – and no child! That started to become increasingly problematic for us. We had started doctoring before we left the States without any result, including an analysis of what was blocking things. During the first two years of marriage, we successfully avoided pregnancy and thought we had things under control. But when a couple of years later we still had ‘nothing to show for,’ we began to realise that we were not in control. Muslims in Wukari town were aware of our childless state and offered me their daughters for a second wife, assuring me of ‘success.’

We began to seriously doctor with our medical officers at Takum. Being missionaries, terms of service for Nigeria missionaries were for three year periods – two and a half years on the ‘field’ and then six months in North America. During our Wukari ministry, we had two such breaks, with the second an extended study leave. In preparation for our first break, we began working on a possible adoption.

Fran wrote,

The doctors always say there isn't anything wrong and all possibilities have been investigated, but still, nothing. So now we hope very much to adopt a baby during our furlough next year. Then maybe each furlough we can adopt another one! However, in the meantime, we have 'adopted' a little Nigerian girl.

The adoption idea was not just a fly-by-night kind of thing. We corresponded with agencies in Chicago, Seattle and Vancouver. Especially Fran's letters referred to it often and got more serious and detailed as the time for furlough drew closer. 'If we're lucky,' she wrote in June 1968, 'we hope to get two children while we're home, but we won't count on it. An older child or two through an agency and a newborn through a private doctor. It's all in the planning stage, of course, but we would surely be happy if it worked out that way.' I guess we knew little about the world of adoption!

THE LYDIA STORY

You've already heard of Lydia, daughter of Iliya and Naomi. After some discussion with Naomi in October 1967, we told her to pack Lydia's suitcase and get ready to come with us. There was no suitcase, only the clothes she was wearing. She just climbed into the back seat of the car and was ready to go! We consented, thinking that she would return home the next month. Within a few days of her arrival Fran wrote:

She's seven years old but has always been a sickly child. So her parents were very eager to have her live with us in Wukari, not an unusual arrangement in this culture. She is so brave and happy and loveable. We agreed to have her live with us for one month and then we would see again. At that time, we all voted in favour of her staying with us – she herself, her parents and both of us.

Shortly afterwards, Fran wrote:

We think she's so cute. She speaks no English, a little Hausa, but mostly Jukun, which we don't understand. However, we get along

fine and 'understand' each other well. In January, we will put her in primary school. In the meantime, I hope to teach her a little English in readiness for school. What I have taught her already, she has caught onto very quickly.

One of the first Hausa phrases she would frequently use with reference to the two of us was 'Wannan' and 'Matar wannan,' meaning 'This one' and 'Wife of this one!' In her limited Hausa, this was the best she could do at first. Soon she started calling us 'Mama' and 'Baba,' almost universal terms.

One of the very first things we did when she joined us was to buy cloth at the market and have a tailor make new clothes for her. That tailor was Dan Azumi, who with his wife became our friends with whom we had an active social life of visiting back and forth. Lydia expressed her fears of the sounds of certain birds around our compound, especially owls. The sounds of the wind in our trees around the house also caused her apprehension. These were fears that originated from ancient Nigerian traditions.

Lydia became like a dear daughter to us. In a letter of April 1968, Fran wrote to my parents,

Yes, she is still with us. We took her with us originally because she wanted to visit the white man so badly, though when we asked her the reason, she could not really explain. Then we got attached to her very soon and hated to part with her. Her parents preferred her being with us and so did Lydia. It was all sort of by informal mutual agreement. They had not intended to put her in school, but, seeing we insisted that they should, she would have to stay in Wukari anyway for that purpose.

Then Fran added,

Last week her little three-year-old sister, Phoebe, suddenly died of dysentery and whooping cough. They had brought her to the Wukari General Hospital and hence buried her in the local Christian cemetery.

We remember the funeral. By Jukun tradition, only the men were

allowed to enter the cemetery; the women, including Naomi, the mother, had to watch from outside the gate! Though a woman, Fran did attend the grave-side service. As a white woman, she was allowed to play it on both sides of the cultural divide.

But such a relationship inevitably creates some humorous situations as well as more uplifting ones. Our toilet habits puzzled Lydia. She reportedly told someone that we save almost everything, even our stools! It might have looked like that, for, because of water shortage, we flushed only when ‘necessary.’

Nigerians born at home often do not know their exact birthday simply because of a lack of records. However, Lydia was baptised as an infant and that record included her birth date, 24 September, 1960. So, about two weeks before her birthday, we explained our birthday customs to her and reminded her every day. When the day arrived, we sang ‘Happy Birthday’ and gave her some small gifts. Her response? ‘But I’m born already!’

Lydia had beautiful large, shining eyes along with a wonderful singing voice. Sometimes I would sing along with her. We first introduced her as a singer in the English service at Wukari. She stood on the bench while I stood next to her and we sang ‘*Ga tsuntsu can a dutse; Ya yi ta wakarsa...*’ The song is about a bird that praises God. Bill Evenhouse the musician and our neighbour in Wukari, saw Lydia’s talent and would play guitar and sing with her. When she was an adult, she recorded several Gospel albums in the Mission recording studio in Jos that Evenhouse had started. This music ministry would have a long term impact on Nigeria’s entertainment sector, turning Jos into a hotbed of Nigerian musical talent.

We enrolled Lydia in the Wukari Ebenezer Christian Primary School, but since that was quite a distance, we had our Ibrahim – remember him from Baissa? – bring her there on the bicycle. The other pupils began calling her ‘*Matar Ibrahim,*’ ‘the wife of Ibrahim.’ They also tried to scare her by telling her that once she was fattened up, these white people would cook and mash her and put her in a can. That’s what they have in the cans of food at their houses!

One of our goals for Lydia was to prevent estrangement from her own family and community, including language and culture. So, during school breaks, we would send her home. Her parents, especially Iliya, her father, would tell us to keep her with us and learn our ways, including English. We tried to argue that this was not a good idea, but he did not buy our argument till we reminded him that, once she was married, her husband would not demand that she write a letter or speak English to him, but to bring him a bowl of well-cooked pounded guinea corn, the main traditional food in Wukari. *That* he understood! As it turned out, this was not an either-or issue. Her eventual husband did expect her to cook but also expected her to speak fluent English. She met both expectations with flying colours!

We had to make provisions for Lydia during our furlough. At the time of the first furlough, she was still in primary school. She was given into the custody of a relative in Wukari for that time. We left them with all the necessary clothing, money for school fees, food, etc.

Here's a sneak peek into our future relationship with her. After primary school, Lydia enrolled in the Wukari District Combined Secondary School (WDCSS), a CRCN boarding school in Takum. So, we did not see as much of her from then on. However, she remained our 'daughter' and we continued taking responsibility for her. We would always try to visit her when we'd come to the Takum area. By the time Lydia graduated from WDCSS, we were living in Jos. She came to live with us once again, while she worked at *Muryar Bishara*, a Lutheran radio station that in English translated as The Voice of the Gospel. She also spent some months in Nairobi training in media.

In 1980, Lydia married Chris Garba Abaga, an evangelist from Pyeri, near Takum. After both urging the other to play the role, her father insisted that I walk her down the aisle. Chris Abaga was an evangelist for the Great Commission Movement, Nigeria's branch of Campus Crusade. He then attended the Jos Evangelical Theological Seminary and subsequently served for many years as pastor of Plateau Church, the largest English speaking congregation of the Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA), a large Nigerian Evangelical

denomination founded by the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM). Some years later, Chris left ECWA to become a freelance crusade evangelist. Lydia went on to achieve an MA in special education and is now the principal of a leading international boarding school in Abuja, while she is also developing a private school of her own. They have three sons: Jude, Jesse, and Jason.

CULTURAL AND BELIEF DIFFERENCES

Dressing Nigerian

In November 1966, just after our arrival in Wukari, I decided I should try wearing Nigerian clothes and placed an order with a tailor. One item was a *baban riga*, a big flowing robe that you see Nigerians wearing, Christians and Muslims both. I bought a cap to go with it. The other garb was a white pastor's robe with a black pastor's stole to go with it. It would be worn with a plastic clerical collar. All of this was an attempt to reduce the cultural distance between us and Nigerians, to enter into their lives and show respect for their culture. Besides, I just liked the looks of those robes. They are so stately. Fran was also planning to purchase some African cloth for herself.

I believe I was the first CRC male missionary to wear such clothes regularly. I soon noticed that some missionary colleagues disapproved. I was just trying to draw attention to myself, according to them. That annoyed me. With considerable indignation, I explained to them that I was merely practising what their own countrymen had taught me. When we immigrated to Canada, we were told to leave our wooden shoes at home. At Calvin, our Dutch-Canadian 'fashion' – if it deserved that name! – was resented with pressure being put on us to become American, even in spelling! They clearly preferred people to act and dress like them. Would the same thing not be true for Nigerians? I was now applying their own lessons, but when they saw it applied in another culture, they disapproved! For some reason, their preference applied only to their own culture.

Subsequent experiences have shown me that dressing in local style has its practical value. During much of the Nigerian Civil War, there was often a roadblock manned by soldiers between our com-

pound and the town. Once I was doing some maintenance work and needed some supplies from the market that had revived by then. So, in my dirty maintenance clothes, I jumped on the small motorcycle we had to get these supplies. The soldiers stopped me and asked for my driver's license, something they had never done before. I did not have it on me but explained to them I lived right up the hill close by. One of them got angry and shouted, 'You white people always think you are above our laws.' I 'gave him patience,' as we say it in Hausa, and offered to go back and get it. He agreed. I promptly changed into my robe and cap and returned in the car instead of the motorcycle. When I arrived at the roadblock, the soldiers all jumped to attention and waved me through!

We spent our second Christmas in Bakundi Bakin Kogi. I wore gowns the whole time. A month or so later, I passed through that village and decided to stop to greet the chief with whom I had become quite friendly. I wore simple Western garb, a plain short-sleeved shirt and trousers. The man did not recognise me until I explained myself. He exclaimed, 'You were a big man then, but today you look like a boy!' In this culture, the clothes make the man – or unmake them, depending on what you wear. The robe got me through many places that might have been difficult otherwise. And, if nothing else, it often led to conversations with Nigerians.

An Aborted Kingdom Opportunity

Joseph Gomwalk, the Military Governor of Benue-Plateau State, the state covering our area at the time, appointed David Ashu as State Commissioner, i.e. as Head of a State Government Ministry. Ashu had been principal of WDCSS, but here he was, a serious Christian, suddenly thrown into a highly strategic government position. He wanted to do his best as a Christian in this position and had found a few other Christians in similar positions. They discussed how to perform their duties as responsible Christians but discovered they had not been prepared for these positions as Christians. The Lord led them to send me a letter from Jos, the state capital, asking me for advice.

I was amazed by this letter. To be sure, the role of Christians in government was and remained a major interest of mine, but they had no way of knowing that. David and I had seldom met and rarely chatted, let alone have serious discussions of this nature. I had consciously been quiet in the Mission and not revealed much of my concerns and critique, but suddenly here was this letter potentially thrusting me into the very centre of modern Nigeria, *the very place I wanted to be all along*. I had been patiently biding my time. Since no one knew about this secret hope in me, I could only explain this turn of events as the Lord's. Why invite me, still a rookie missionary, when there were colleagues with decades of experience? Someone somewhere must have had an inkling about me.

I replied I was very interested and would like to come up to Jos to meet with their group and explore things together with them. I was thinking about perhaps a monthly Bible study with my coming to Jos for the occasion. Monthly would not be enough, but I was not a free man and did not have a budget for such a project. I would have to consult the Mission authorities for permission. I did and was bitterly disappointed. I received a letter from them forbidding me, yes, *again strongly forbidding* me to have anything to do with Nigerian politics. I was not allowed to proceed. The minute the Executive Committee passed was classified as 'confidential' and thus would not appear in the record circulated among the staff.

I cannot imagine a missionary organisation disappointing its host community more, not to say 'betraying.' Was the CRC not the church of the Kingdom? The church of the 'every square inch?' Of Christianity for all of life? Is that not what the constituency would expect us to develop as missionaries? I was not proposing to get involved in politics; I was invited to conduct Bible studies for and with Christians who were drawn into politics and wanted to know the Lord's guidance. Forbidding the Taraba venture was enough of a betrayal of missionary responsibility, but *this*? I have never gotten over this episode and knew then that I would have an uphill battle ahead of me. Did I even fit in this mission? But if not this one, which mission in Nigeria would suit me better? I enjoyed the mission work we were doing. It

was something that had to be done, but all along I had considered it preparation for ministry in *modern* Nigeria, at the leading edge of the country, not in traditional Nigeria. With our Reformed Kingdom perspective, we had more to offer than that. From that point on, I kept my eyes open, looking more actively for opportunities.

Church-Mission Relationships

The first thing that needs to be clearly said is that the CRCN and the Mission co-operated at many fronts for the benefit of the Church itself as well as the local people. Probably nothing was appreciated more than Takum Christian Hospital, which was also the supply and medical supervisory centre for an extensive network of local health clinics owned by the local churches. For years, the Mission provided nurses to work in rural health projects as Ruth Vander Meulen did in Baissa and, later, in Ibi. The Mission was a major partner in the context of WDCSS, where it provided early funds and staff. The Mission provided funds and staff for the Leadership Training Centres as well as for the pastors' school in Lupwe that later morphed into the Johanna Veenstra Pre-Seminary School. Then the two co-operated in the Wukari Youth Centre, the Edgar Smith Memorial School in Baissa, the Veenstra Seminary in Donga and TCNN. Missionaries were often appointed to committees simply because they would usually supply the transportation without expense to the Church. And I am very aware that, apart from the scarcity of Nigerian pastors, one of the reasons 'my' congregations invited me to be their counsellor is because I would not charge them for travel expenses.

The above is about official cooperation between the two organisations, but there was also a lot of cooperation between the denomination, classes and local congregations on the one hand and individual missionaries on the other. The latter might be under the dual authority of the two. Missionaries often served as elders in local congregations and, in that capacity, would sometimes contribute heavily to its treasury, especially if there was an ongoing building project. When Wukari CRCN needed good money for some project in the late 60s, it assessed each member a specific amount and displayed the list on

the church door. Ibrahim Sangari, a well-to-do businessman, was first on the list; the Boers, second. Our assessment was a full ten pounds, a hefty sum in those days. Missionaries often pledged to contribute towards the salaries of pastors or evangelists. The number of students missionaries sponsored at various educational levels will never be known, nor the money spent. Such cooperation also extended to the denomination as a whole. We know of one missionary couple who paid for the roof of the new denominational secretariat. There simply is no end to the ways in which missionaries supported the church community.

So, though in the paragraphs later, I share difficulties in Church-Mission relationships, the above must not be forgotten. The Mission and its staff played a huge role in the development of the church and its constituency. Money played a hugely positive role but also was at the basis of many problems.

In Mission situations where a Church has already emerged, relations between the two can sometimes be difficult to manage. Our Mission, in keeping with the general SUM policies, helped the Church to emerge and develop, but instead of becoming *part* of the Church, it became its *partner*. The two remained separate organisations, each with its own goals. This arrangement allowed the Church to make its own decisions in its own ways without foreign interference, however well-meant. Individual missionaries might serve as pastors or as elders, but that would be by invitation of the Church; they would never be imposed by the Mission. In those capacities, missionaries were under the authority of the Church, even though they also were responsible to the Mission. This could bring tension, as, for example, Wukari Class assigning me to visit Taraba, while the Mission forbade it.

If the Church needed a missionary, it would have to request one from the Mission. The Mission would then weigh the issue and approve or disapprove on the basis of its own goals. If they disapproved, and this was usually on the basis of the availability or otherwise of money, the Church had a hard time appreciating the decision. Were

we not all working towards the same Gospel goals? This could lead to tension.

The two organisations also had separate finances, though the Mission had much more of it. The Mission did over the years support a lot of the Church's ministries and institutions, but it never as a Mission gave financial support for the central work of congregations. It did not pay pastor or evangelist salaries; it did not contribute to the construction of church buildings, etc. It wanted the Church to be independent in its finances as well as in its organisation, even if that meant slowing down. So, salaries were very low for church workers, while missionaries were paid low by North American standards but very high by Nigerian standards. That difference sometimes led to explosions between the two. The Church was struggling so hard to carry out its mission and here was all this Mission money given for missionary purposes but withheld from them.

The two had a Church-Mission committee called the Liaison Committee in which church leaders sat alongside missionaries. Each was appointed by their respective organisation. Both organisations had an equal number of members. I was a member of it for some time as a mission representative. On Sunday, I might be working with a Nigerian pastor under the church as his colleague; on Monday, I would meet that same pastor on the committee but represent a body that irritated him so much at times. I was expected to vote in the interest of the Mission, not of the Church.

One problem was that the other missionaries generally lived in the Takum-Lupwe area, where they conducted their own social life, as explained earlier. They would discuss the issues of the coming meeting and come to a consensus. I lived in another location where I could only discuss the issues with the Nigerians and thus often had a very different slant from that of my missionary colleagues. Sometimes I found myself in a quandary. I was, after all, a Mission rep and should vote accordingly, even if the Church was opposed to a certain decision. Most times, the discussions would drag on till a consensus was reached to everyone's (partial) satisfaction.

But one day, there was a sharp clash of opinion, and I truly favoured that of the Church. What was I to do? I could not get myself to vote against the Mission. So I withheld my vote. But that really constituted a vote for the church's side since both parties had equal representation. The missionary chair of the meeting asked me to vote and I responded that withholding the vote *was* my vote. I have never forgotten my uncomfortable feeling of that moment; I felt I betrayed my Mission, but my conscience did not allow me to do otherwise. In the eyes of the church delegates, of course, I was a hero, but that was not my aim.

Relations were so poisoned at one point that the Church boycotted all Mission meetings to which they were invited to send delegates. They just let the Mission do its own thing without any input from them. That, of course, badly crippled the Mission. Eventually, the two reconciled and continued their former cooperative relationship. Nevertheless, there often remained bitter feelings on both sides of the fence that should probably never have been erected to begin with. For many years it just was not a pleasant atmosphere to work in.

The Church never really accepted this sharp separation, though it was forced to live with it, even decades later. After Fran and I had served 25 years in Nigeria, the Grand Rapids office presented us each an expensive copy of the NIV Study Bible with our names inscribed. When we showed this to a pastor, his spontaneous response was that he had served longer than that. So why did they not give one to him? I found it hard to explain and so, to his partial satisfaction, we gave him one of the copies. Though official reconciliation had taken place long before, the sharp separation was not really accepted even then.

CHAPTER THREE

CRCN MINISTRY II

WUKARI AND FURLOUGH (1968–1972)

THE FIRST FURLOUGH

In late 1968, we left Nigeria after two and a half years of mission work to return to North America, where we would spend time catching up with family, preparing for the next term of service in Nigeria, a brief study leave and preaching and talking about our mission work in CRC churches around the United States and Canada. But this furlough came with a very happy and totally unexpected surprise which turned all our plans upside down.

PREGNANCY STORY AND KEVIN'S ARRIVAL

Towards the end of the term in Wukari in 1968, Fran began to experience unusual 'stuff' inside her and the absence of something else. Tests at Takum Hospital were inconclusive; remember, this was years before at – home pregnancy tests became available. In fact, the doctor said she was definitely not pregnant and reminded her that stress could cause a temporary cessation of the menses. Since this

was close to our first furlough, we were told we should check it all out in Grand Rapids.

Apart from time with Fran's family in Grand Rapids, every furlough began with a debriefing in the 'Pentagon,' the popular missionary designation for CRWM headquarters. However, the uppermost thing in our minds was Fran's condition and the need to see a medical doctor prepared to give us an immediate appointment. So on 11 November 1968, Fran went to Dr Ed Postma, our former family doctor. She described it this way:

After spending some time discussing our adoption plans, he proceeded with a physical exam. Then he casually said, "And what do you plan to do with the child you are carrying?" I thought it was a cruel "joke" and started crying. He said, "Fran, I'm totally serious. It looks to me as if you are about 3 months pregnant!"

I remembered driving Fran to the doctor's office and waiting in the parking lot. It seemed to take forever, but finally, she came running out of the building. There she was, in the cold Grand Rapids winter, shoes untied, coat and pantyhose in her hands, swinging her arms wildly and yelling, '*I'm pregnant! I'm pregnant!*' So that was the "start" of the 'six-month pregnancy.' Yes, Kevin was born exactly 6 months later.

Wow! I cannot tell you how happy, relieved and grateful we were. After all, we had been told she was *not* pregnant. Our many prayers had been answered.

Everything proceeded normally in the pregnancy, and the doctor visits became quite regular. Having experienced difficulties and delays in reaching this stage, everyone, including CRWM, agreed we should wait out the birth and recovery period in Grand Rapids, even though Kevin's birth delayed our return to Nigeria by some six weeks.

Six months to the day of that doctor's visit, on Mother's Day, May 11, 1969, Kevin made his appearance. Fran was brought to the labour and delivery room at Butterworth Hospital while I was unceremoniously ushered into the Fathers' Waiting Room to bite my nails. Kevin was already an hour old before I was even informed and allowed to see him and Fran.

As to Kevin's name, Fran's mother was not impressed with her new grandson's name. In Dutch a "v" is pronounced as an "f". To her, the name Kevin sounded like "*Keffen*", and that means the "bark of a dog!" It took us some explanation before she agreed that it really was a beautiful name.

BEGINNING OUR SECOND TERM

As we were welcomed home by a delegation of Fran's family in Grand Rapids and CRWM staff, so we were also sent off at the end of the Home Service period. The CRWM rep would gather us all into some quiet place at the airport and send us off with a word of prayer. I always found it an emotional and moving experience.

This particular time, in late June 1969, we flew via Amsterdam to Kano, Nigeria, without any side trips. From there, we flew Nigeria Airways to Jos, from where Browneye flew us to Mkar, where we picked up a vehicle to drive to Wukari. This was all part of the arrangements made during Home Service. We soon ran headlong into the challenges of travel in Nigeria. After a mere 17 kilometres, our car began to boil over. After a cooling period, we slowly drove it back to Mkar, where they provided us with another vehicle. There was the Katsina-Ala River to cross by barge, a crossing we had often made. I wrote,

When we got there, there were several trucks ahead of us. It looked as if we had to return to Mkar for a second time, this time to spend the night there. It so happened that the barge captain knew us from our many previous crossings and gave us preferential treatment. We got on first. That may not sound good, but that's how things are done in Nigeria. We might not have accepted the favour, but we now had a baby with us. That kind of overrides almost all other concerns, sometimes even ethical ones.

But we were not out of the woods yet. Before we got on the barge, I managed to get the front wheels on, but the back of the vehicle was in the water. It took some 20 men to pull and push us onto the barge. We were thankful to get off it safely on the other side.

Back in Wukari

We arrived back in Wukari on June 28, 1969, to begin our second term. We settled in quickly again and continued as if we had never been away, except that now we had baby Kevin with us.

Here's a two-paragraph report from a Fran letter about the mixture of work and a social life that characterised our situation. It gives you an idea of the whirlwind we lived in:

John has gone to Taraba for a week. He came back quite tired and worn out. We had a nice weekend. We celebrated our ninth anniversary. But yesterday John had to go away again, this time to Mkar for a meeting and to have the car serviced there. (John: all Mkar trips include a barge that so often created delays and near-accidents when getting on/off the barge. It was eventually replaced by a bridge.) He hopes to come home this afternoon. Tomorrow morning early, Kevin and I are going to Ibi, some 40 km away, until Friday. This will be the first time this term that we have gone away and left John at home. There is a Women's Annual Meeting where John is not really welcome! I'm taking Bulus, our part-time housekeeper, along to take care of Kevin so that I can attend the meetings.

Sunday morning John and I went to the English service at 7 a.m while Lydia watched Kevin. We had a quick breakfast together and then all went to a Tiv-language service at nine o'clock. We didn't understand a word of it, but we had promised we would visit them sometime. Afterwards, we decided to call on the Sikh Indian District Engineer, who asked us to stay for dinner. Even Lydia and Kevin enjoyed the Indian cuisine. The men all wear their turbans, don't cut their hair and are extremely friendly, interesting and very talkative. Even John doesn't get much of a chance there! We left at around 2:30 pm. But the day was not done. We had previously been invited out for supper at one of the 'big men' in town. So we went out to eat twice that day. Seeing we didn't go there till 8 pm, we had a baby sitter for Kevin. We had a very nice meal there as well, even though we were not very hungry after that Indian meal. So, we had a busy, enjoyable and opulent Sunday.

A few weeks later, that engineer and his wife came to our house for dinner. This presented a bit of a challenge. They will not eat beef.

Our Muslim butcher will not supply pork. We did not have any rabbits ready at the time. So, we located a couple of goat legs for the meal.

New Neighbours

There was a third house on the station that for some fifteen years had been inhabited by the Dekkers while still in Wukari but was now badly dilapidated. It was rehabbed in the previous term in order to house Bill and Nelle Evenhouse for their linguistic work in the Jukun language. They had moved in shortly before we left for Home Service. They had previously been at the Teachers Training College at Mkar. Bill was the son of Henry Evenhouse, the general secretary of CRWM. Bill and Nelle were both graduates in English Literature, while primarily Bill was a musician and songwriter, playing various instruments and singing. Bill and Nelle eventually moved to Jos and still later ended up as teachers in Cairo, Egypt, where they stayed well into their retirement.

The Lee and Carolyn Baas family also joined us during this term to do youth work. So, there we were, three missionary couples, all highly educated, each speaking a different Nigerian language – the Baas family spoke Tiv, the Evenhouses Jukun, and we Hausa. If any Nigerian wanted to address all of us, he had two alternatives. One was to speak English – if he could; the other was to speak all three languages to us and we all address him in ‘ours’. One day, that actually happened. The Nigerian was an elderly speaker of all three but not of English. By our traditional standards, the man was illiterate; he could not read and would not know how to handle a book, but he easily switched from one language to another. Now, who was educated, and who was illiterate?

CONTINUED CRCN MINISTRIES

This term of service to CRCN looked very much like the first, so that I can be shorter. In a May 1970 letter, I summarised a *typical span of around two weeks’ work* as follows:

This week we had our two-day meeting of CRCN Synod. Tuesday and Wednesday, I did nothing but write all sorts of business letters. Tomorrow, Saturday, I will be going to Nyankwala, Lydia's home town. There I will attend the monthly council meeting, preach, give communion, baptise and perform a wedding. Monday at home, hopefully, do some writing. Tuesday morning a committee meeting at home, but in the p.m. I will fly to Takum for a meeting there the next day. Wednesday p.m. fly back to Wukari. Then I hope to be home till Sunday and spend a few more days writing Bible studies. This gives you some idea of a typical two-week routine when CLTC is on break.

That could have been written during the previous term just as well.

CLTC

Times were changing in general, also with respect to the CLTC. It was becoming more difficult to recruit students. We could see the handwriting on the wall for the long haul but decided we could still wring out some useful life. So we decided on a programme of recruitment. For several months towards the end of 1970, I, sometimes Fran and I, along with Ifraimu, took groups of five students around to villages on weekends to entice potential students. The group would preach, sing, present Bible dramas, etc., to attract students. It paid off: in January, twenty-one new students enrolled, according to one report, but another put it at a mere ten. No explanation for the confusion. Some of the fellows had a hard time of it, for their families and villages often objected to their going to such a Christian institution. One student had his wife and child taken from him because her parents rejected his decision. He was a new Christian, not yet baptised, and was finding the going difficult.

We did not receive just any warm body. Mostly we were looking for mature, baptised men who had already demonstrated leadership already and carry them onto the next level of leadership in positions like elders, deacons and evangelists. If a non-baptised person wanted to come from a village without any real Christian presence as yet, we would make an exception. Teaching such a group of mature and ex-

perienced students, though officially almost illiterate, was a rewarding learning experience for us too. We learned so much about the traditional culture and its resistance to the Christian faith. We learned about the worldview of Animism and would often compare/contrast that to both the Christian and secular worldviews in class.

I found that the Christian worldview shares certain characteristics with both, while at the bottom it is antithetical to both. All three are holistic or comprehensive; that is, they interpret all of reality in their own way. Animism shares with the Bible, if not with empirical Christianity, the view that all of life is lived in the presence of God and His laws apply to everything. Everything about human life is based on religion. In contrast, secularism divides reality into a secular, non-religious sector and a religious or spiritual one; it is dualistic. Its comprehensive view incorporates this dualism. Animism and the Bible both view property as belonging first of all to God and relativize the notion of private property. While empirical Christianity is ambiguous about almost everything, secularism emphasises private property, at least, Western secularism. Animism tends to be collective or communal, while secularism is much more individualistic and the Bible supports an individual in a community, an amalgamation of the two. In some ways, the Bible and empirical Christianity are at odds with each other because the latter has too often given in to secularism. That's why some Christians separate politics and business from religion, something neither Animism nor the Bible accept. Our interaction with people from Animistic backgrounds challenged our worldview. *Animism reminds us of certain Biblical teachings that Western Christians have lost under the pressure of secularism.* Other religions can serve that same function; Islam certainly does. Learning was a two-way street for us. When it came to issues of worldview, I learned as much from these 'semi-literate' converted Animists as I did from many of my college and seminary courses. This was an unprecedented learning curve – and unexpected.

In my semi-annual report of November 1970 to the Mission, I had an extensive write up about the CLTC. Here follows part of it:

Presently, the population at the school amounts to 30 students. These are all male students. Though we do try to teach the wives of these students in the afternoon, I myself am simply too busy to oversee that work properly and the one other teacher, M. Ifraimu Nyajo, for all his great qualities as a teacher, seems to have given up on this project. It is still running, but not as well as it should. Hopefully, when we get an additional teacher in 1971, we can pay more attention to this necessary but difficult aspect of this school. These women have to be almost pulled by their ears if one wants them to attend.

In addition to the regular evangelist training curriculum, we are placing increased emphasis on agriculture in the hope that the graduates will be able to increase their own low standard of living as well as that of those to whom they will minister. We are using a government teacher in this work, but it remains to be seen whether this arrangement will actually work out.

In 1971, we hoped to increase our staff by the addition of a TCNN grad. The church has promised to build him a proper house in 1971, while in 1972, it has pledged to contribute some L60 towards his salary, in addition to the fees. Though this is not too much, it is a move in the right direction.

Things did not always turn out as planned. In my April 1971 report, I discussed the difficulty of getting and retaining students at CLTC. The signs were on the wall that its time was running out and new ways of training local leaders would have to be developed. The agricultural plans did not turn out due to the usual reasons when it involved government personnel – ‘lack of faithfulness’ is the correct term. Neither did we get the TCNN graduate to join us, for all graduates went to pastor churches.

Though cooperating with government workers often led to frustration, we did not give up on them. During March-April 1971, we organised a course for our graduates to be certified as teachers in government adult literacy programmes. This was taught by a staff of the government adult literacy department. Since it was headed by a very conscientious Christian and was of limited duration, the

government staff delivered well. By the end of the course, we had a special graduation from this course in front of the palace of the Aku Uka, who himself showed up and delivered a short speech in his traditional way. Experience had shown that church leaders teaching in this programme were often effective as evangelists.

You may be wondering what happened to these CLTC graduates. Good question, even if I posed it myself! Here's what I wrote in my report of April 1972:

Of the five that graduated in 1971, two have gone on to primary school and hope to equip themselves for Veenstra Junior Seminary (VJS) at Lupwe in preparation for eventually going to TCNN. They were placed in grade 5! One entered primary also, but yesterday I learned that he has quit and is now farming. There is no doubt that he will soon be called for some evangelistic work, for he is extremely well equipped for that sort of work. The 4th graduate remains in our personal service as a steward while we continue to teach him English for going on to VJS. The 5th has taken up an appointment as an evangelist at Taraba. The elders of the village to which he was posted have refused him quarters and thus, he will have to be reposted to another village. Even though these graduates are interested in ecclesiastical work, they tend to avoid the work of the evangelist. Even the one that has agreed did so only after it became clear that his family responsibilities made it impossible for him to go for further training.

Recently I had a private interview with each of the 24 students we presently have in order to determine their purpose in enrolling in Wukari CLTC. All of the 4 COCIN students insisted that they had come to learn how to be an evangelist and nothing else. Of the 5 NKST students, one is greatly determined to go for pastors training and the remaining four are heading for evangelistic work. However, of the 15 CRCN students, almost all are aiming for the office of pastor, not evangelist. Very few of them, I feel, will be able to make it. The point is, very few begin with an active interest in working towards becoming an evangelist.

With declining student numbers in all three CLTCs, the discussion became whether they should not be combined into one central insti-

tution. That step was never taken, for all three eventually morphed into something else. However, it was all cause for concern, for, as I wrote in the above report,

The ignorance in the churches is frightening. The Scripture is largely a closed book for most Christians. The type of training offered by the CLTCs is a potential answer to a great need. However, the hardships endured by students who have to support their families while in attendance is enough to frighten many away. Furthermore, the lack of financial incentive upon graduation also plays a definite role, according to the testimony of many Christians.

Though I wrote earlier that government agricultural staff disappointed us in the way they operated our agricultural programme, we did not give up on it. Again in that same 1972, report I wrote:

One of the ways in which we attempt to lessen the hardships of family living at the Centre is by providing the students with an agricultural loan through Christian Rural Development (CRD), a loan enabling them to have two acres mechanically ploughed and thus to have sizable rice farms. In addition, it is hoped that the improved farming methods taught will increase their income upon graduation. However, though these efforts are important factors for the students themselves, I do not expect these attempts to bring about drastic improvements in enrolment patterns. It may well be that I should pray more.

It should be noted that CRD above was organised and operated by the CRC's World Relief Committee (CRWRC) of which Lou Haveman was the senior person in Nigeria.

By April 1972, I had given notice to the CLTC Committee that I did not intend to continue heading this institution after our pending Home Service period. This was partially to encourage them to find a Nigerian principal and partially because I no longer felt it was the best way to use my time and talents. During the first part of this Home Service, Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo from CRCN Ibi would run the school, while the Committee would invite a TCNN graduate to take over in January 1973. His name was Ezekiel Adamu. He was from

Tela, Taraba, and a graduate of our CLTC and even taught there under Dorothy Sytsma. Adamu was so very familiar with the institution and eminently qualified to take it over.

PASTORAL-EVANGELISTIC WORK

On this subject, I wrote the following in the report of November 1970:

I continue to have the official function of counsellor to three congregations, but the Bible School all but prevents me from doing justice to this work. With the Nyankwala congregation, I have made the arrangement that I will come only once in three months. If any emergencies arise, they can call upon me at any time. But this congregation needs much more than this skimpy sort of service. I have suggested that they call Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo from Ibi to be their counsellor since he now has a motorcycle that enables him to cover these 80 kilometres quite easily. The elders are hesitating and I may simply have to force the issue for their own good. Sometimes such congregations prefer a missionary counsellor, for his services are free.

The second congregation, Rafin Kada, gets equally scarce treatment, but they soon hope to call their own pastor.

It is only the third congregation, Bakundi, where I do more than this. I try to spend a weekend there each month, but that too has not always been realised. The place is as low spiritually as it has been – for those who actually read and remember previous reports, but there are signs of some improvement, thanks to the efforts of two sturdy evangelists. There are indications that with the right pastor in the area and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this congregation could be built up to the point where it would easily be able to support its own pastor, but the vicious cycle of lack of money because of lack of pastor and lack of pastor because of lack of money will first have to be broken through. Two experiments in the Wukari classis have demonstrated that congregations in such a state can be built up to become completely able to support a pastor with some evangelists if only they can receive external aid for an initial period of five years. With the blessings of the Mission Executive Committee I have instigated action designed to have RCC request the Mission

for help for the Bakundi congregation. RCC has agreed to make this request, except that it first wishes to normalise relationships between her and the Mission.

Things were changing rapidly. A half-year later, my relationship with the Rafin Kada CRCN was about to change since they were calling Bitrus Angyunwe, a new graduate of TCNN, to be their pastor. I was paying less attention to Nyankwala due to lack of time. Besides, it was led by Lydia's father Iliya Danjuma Lena, a very capable and wise leader who was much more effective than this itinerant missionary.

In April 1971, I wrote the following about Bakundi CRCN:

I continue to visit this congregation regularly. They now have three evangelists, one of which they support fully, one partly, and one, the most recent addition, is supported on a diminishing scale by one of our colleagues. They are presently calling a fourth evangelist, which they have pledged to support themselves. That is indeed a far cry from a few years ago when they could not even support one evangelist. Finances are in no way the final measuring stick, but they do indicate something of the readiness of the people to donate and the extent of giving is often indicative of their heart commitment.

There are many needs in the Bakundi area, but the greatest at this point is a resident Nigerian pastor rather than a circuiting missionary. Since it does not appear that this need will be filled in the immediate future, they will have to continue to put up with me. Many problems remain, but I no longer leave the elders' meetings with tears in my eyes as I could not help but do in past years. The greatest share of the credit for this should go to one of the evangelists, a man who has not had one single day of formal training but who has more insight and understanding than any other evangelist I know and more than most pastors.

Exactly a year later, this was the Bakundi situation:

At present, there are three evangelists in the congregation, one who is supported by the congregation, one by another missionary, and one by the Takum congregation. The church badly needs another evangelist and is calling one. If he accepts, he will be partly sup-

ported by us. Only one evangelist is locally supported; that is the best they can do at the moment, partly because of spiritual undernourishment and partly because of heavy denominational and classical assessments.

Obviously, they are far from being able to support their own pastor. We are, therefore, presently going through the necessary steps to have a request presented to the Mission to help out in this emergency situation. If no help is obtainable from there, no pastor will be able to take up the work and Bakundi may be in for another indefinite period of spiritual starvation and stagnation.

I wrote about the dispute over the church-mission jurisdiction in the Taraba area. In my April 1971 report, I wrote:

For a long time now, the local folk have been living in uncertainty. They themselves wish to throw in their lot with CRCN and refuse to have anything to do with Muri. As a matter of fact, they have sent away a Muri evangelist and a Muri pastor. In the meantime, though CRCN has an evangelist in the area for some time, this man was not provided with basic equipment. Additional evangelists, so sorely needed, were not appointed. The local newly-baptised Christians are sorely disappointed at the obvious politicking that goes on between the two churches. One of the earliest Christians has gone over to Islam and there are signs that another may soon do so. They have lost heart. Comity indeed! To this day, it is utterly beyond my comprehension how I could have been forbidden to go to the area in the name of comity when Muri, for her own reasons, did not live up to her obligations. What is the purpose of comity if not to accept responsibility for a given area? Or is it a matter of legality and power? Anything that prevents progress in evangelism must be overthrown, and comity agreements are no exception.

Moving our attention back to Wukari, please remember what I wrote about English services in Wukari CRCN. They were still held at 5 p.m. every Sunday. However,

.... attendance was seldom up to 40 and the very people for whom we aimed did not attend, namely the government people posted to Wukari and other private individuals who either don't know Hau-

sa or think themselves too sophisticated to attend Hausa services. Many of these simply could not be bothered by the Hausa service, but neither did they attend the English.

Beginning New Year, 1971, we began to meet at 7 a.m. instead, as per suggestion from Nelle Evenhouse. This turned out to be a most fortunate choice. Now the attendance has been hugging the 150 mark. This is partly because of the new secondary school opened in the community, but this accounts at best for an increase of 25.

Another facet of our relationship to the Wukari church was Fran's attempt to be an integral part of the church's *Zumuntar Mata*, the Women's Fellowship. Throughout the denomination, this was a powerful organisation that gave much support to various aspects of the church's work.

LITERATURE DISTRIBUTION

We had earlier set up a literature distribution system, as you may remember. We decided to place greater emphasis on this ministry for now. As Fran wrote in September 1969,

We have established a sort of wholesale outlet on our compound where various agents, a dozen or so, come to pick up their supplies. We all live with the feeling that sooner or later, we will become *persona non grata* here in Nigeria, but every printed page released will stay and most of it will be read many times. Communist literature is beginning to flood the country, the price Nigeria is paying for military aid from the Eastern Block. Islam is running shoulder to shoulder with Christianity in its bid for dominance in the nation. The future of this country is in the balance.

THE MUSLIM COMPONENT

You remember the course Fran and I took in Islamics during our first term? We used our knowledge from the course in various ways. I used it in my preaching as well as in my teaching at CLTC, more than you might expect. I also used it in the commentaries I wrote in Hausa for the Nigerian church. I used it during the *Ajami* class I

taught in the Wukari church. It also helped me in my relations with individual Muslims who might cross my path. And, of course, the course increased my sense of urgency with respect to the need for developing archives on Nigerian Islam as well as on Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria, a project that I started early on and continued throughout my Nigeria days and beyond. I even sat in on the evening classes Muslims ran during the *hajj* or pilgrimage month. At the time, the mosque was under construction, so that the Muslims held their meetings under a large grass roof in the market, a public place from which they could not keep others out. Had it been held in the mosque, they most likely would not have allowed me in.

Ajami in the above paragraph, refers to Hausa written in Arabic script. In general, it refers to any language, apart from Arabic itself, which is written in Arabic script. Originally, Hausa was written only in *Ajami*, but the colonialists wanted to turn Northern Nigeria's orientation away from the East to the West. Hence, they began introducing our Phoenician script at the beginning of the 1900s. During our missionary years, if you wanted to be able to read popular Muslim Hausa literature, you still needed to know *Ajami*. It really is not that hard to learn if you already know Hausa.

I discovered that Wukari Christians were interested in learning to read it. So, I studied it not only for myself but also to teach other Christians. Eventually, I taught a weekly class in the Wukari church. The participants enjoyed it very much. I believe they felt it would give them a way by which they could delve into the secrets of their Muslim neighbours. Even more, eventually, since our ministry was not primarily aimed at Muslims, I became too busy to do the reading of *Ajami* texts I had hoped to do and slowly veered away from it. After some years, I lost this skill altogether, an accomplishment lost as quickly as achieved.

There was little overt outreach to the Muslim community on the part of either Church or Mission. Way back, at the beginning of the SUM, it was decided, under the pressure of the colonial regime, to restrict mission outreach to the Traditional community. The church in the North, therefore, consisted almost exclusively of for-

mer Traditionalists. Since there had been animosity between them and Muslims due to the slave raiding practices of the latter, there was not much love or trust in the church for Muslims. All our work was geared to and directed to the growing church that needed so much energy for upbuilding, training and evangelism among their own people. This was an early *conscious* decision on the part of the SUM and continued for all these decades.

There were additional factors inhibiting overt outreach. Apart from that historical enmity, there was tension between the sedentary agricultural Christians versus the nomadic Muslim Fulanis with their cattle roaming all over the place. This conflict between settled farmers and nomads is one of humanity's oldest conflicts and one that continues in Nigeria to this day. There was also the contempt of Muslims for Christians as former Animists, and at the same time, on the part of the emerging Church, a kind of inferiority complex with its new and hesitant Christian faith that still needed further fleshing out for them.

It was during our time that the consciousness of the need for Muslim outreach developed throughout the church in the North. In the CRCN area, the pioneer was missionary Ruth Veltkamp, at the time a teacher at WDCSS, who first began to reach out to her Muslim students and then reached out further into Takum town. In due time both CRCN and the Mission agreed to appoint her to a new Muslim ministry to be designed by her and overseen by the two agencies. The rest is history. Decades later, this evolved into a major Muslim ministry run by converts from Islam. In between, we got involved in her ministry quite extensively in Jos, but that comes later in the story.

Fake Muslim Conversion Story

Around that same time, an interesting but fake conversion story played itself out in Wukari town. Here's the story I quote from a letter of mine:

There is a rich businessman in Wukari who is also an active Christian. He comes from a Muslim family and the Muslims are trying their hardest to gain him back. A few weeks ago, they imported a

Muslim teacher and preacher, one well versed in Arabic and in Muslim theology. His assignment was to reconvert this businessman. Instead, this Muslim became a Christian! Now the Muslims are upset. Muslims often convert to Christianity, but not often important and educated teachers like this man. When his family heard about it, they sent away all his wives, while their children were divided amongst his siblings. All his belongings were taken from him as well. A Muslim convert to Christ loses everything, including all his rights. He becomes worse than a pagan. He does not seem to worry about these deprivations. One CLTC student is teaching him to read and write our Phoenician script. What he will do in the future remains to be seen.

This man, whose name we forgot, did not stay with it. He was accustomed to the comfortable lifestyle of a Muslim evangelist and could not put up with the poverty which he now had to endure. Christians gave him a place to stay and food to eat, but it was all too little for him. He disappeared, never to be heard from again. Later on, it was rumoured that he had not been serious to begin with. Though there are myriads of success stories, failures such as this weighed heavily on the entire Northern Church and led to soul searching as well as various experimental ministries for caring for Muslim converts. More about this in a later chapter.

Note: This businessman, named Ibrahim Usman Sangari and of tennis fame, was a friend of ours. He passed away in 2011 in his eighties. He was a most interesting individual of national stature, an elder in the church and a friend. Sangari was elected the representative of the Wukari Federal Constituency in the Nigerian Parliament in 1959, and in the 1980s was First Vice President of the Nigerian Lawn Tennis Association. Our friendship was close enough that we jokingly had agreed that our daughter Cynthia would marry one of his sons. We will surely miss him if we ever visit Wukari again, for the place is hard to imagine without his towering presence.

CRC'S CHRISTIAN HOSPITALS

You will remember that the Mission operated two full-fledged hospitals, one in Mkar and one in Takum. The first served the NKST com-

munity and its neighbours; the second, CRCN and its neighbours. Both of these hospitals were also the centres for extensive systems of community health clinics that were built, owned and operated by the local people but by law supervised and supplied by the hospitals.

Takum Christian Hospital was some 80 kilometres south of Wukari. The Mission had a large residential compound for the missionaries, while the Nigerian staff were mostly locals and had their own compounds in town. It was a busy place with an unending line of people requiring attention. The staff often felt harassed because of overwork. However, they served with compassion and professionalism.

I had begun to wonder about certain aspects of the hospital's ministry. Among other things, I discovered that, though there was a chaplaincy programme attached to the hospital, it was hardly functioning. The chaplain was an elderly pastor who had not been trained for this kind of ministry and no one seemed to pay attention or provide supervision. I took the matter to the hospital authorities, but they pointed their finger at the local Takum CRCN. They were officially responsible for the pastoral work; they had called him and installed him. The church, in turn, blamed the hospital staff for neither supporting the programme nor respecting the chaplain, but ignoring both.

So I went to speak to the CRCN pastor, Pastor Musa Yerima, a very gentle person whom I loved and respected very much. The result was that I met with the entire council, at which it was decided to invite the hospital authorities to establish a joint supervisory committee. The hospital agreed and so this committee was established with me as the 'outside' moderator. Over the years, we held occasional meetings to discuss the programme and encourage the chaplain. In that capacity, I would occasionally be invited to attend hospital board meetings.

One of the early decisions of this committee was to retire the current chaplain. Pastor Adamu Eyab was called to this ministry and accepted. He was a graduate of the Reformed Bible College in Grand Rapids. He and his wife Esther stayed at the hospital for some years

before they moved to Baissa, where we became neighbours.

During our Wukari ministry, I began to develop some doubts and questions about the hospital's almost exclusively Western medical approach. I had noticed that Wukari Christians when they returned from treatment at the hospital, would consult people involved in African Traditional Medicine (ATM) and even African Traditional Religion (ATR). As I began to enquire, I discovered that people felt the hospital had not touched the root of the problem. It had dealt with the physical manifestation of the sickness but had ignored the underlying issues. In Nigerian culture, sickness is never seen as purely physical, but that someone caused it. Perhaps an ancestral spirit had been offended or neglected. Perhaps someone was directing witchcraft at the person. Full healing required the identification of those causes and ways to prevent re-occurrence.

I began to visit the hospital with the specific aim of observing and asking questions to the staff, both Nigerian and missionary. How did they address the sicknesses that Nigerians tended to refer to as 'Black man's sickness?' Missionaries responded that they were not trained in such matters and so ignored them. The Nigerian staff either responded similarly or denied there was such a thing, but I had learnt enough to know that even these trained staff, when afflicted themselves, would take the same route. I fully intended to look into this more deeply if the opportunity arose in the future.

One specific case in which I became involved was that of an evangelist, a graduate of ours at CLTC and a fine person. He was called by the CRCN *Bege* to serve as evangelist in one of their villages. The local Christians applied to the chief for a plot to build him a compound. The neighbour argued that this was his property and that they had no right to it. When the Christians proceeded with developing the place, the man was heard to say something to the effect, 'You will see.' In the local culture, this constituted a threat of harm. The evangelist moved in and the two became good neighbours. The neighbour apparently never referred to the problem. However, the evangelist had heard of the threat. He sought to ignore it, but slowly it began to affect him. First, fear. Then he began to behave in unchar-

acteristic ways. Eventually, it was recognised by the people that the man's threat was beginning to take effect. They discussed the matter with Pastor David Angye, who, in turn, came to see me about it. We agreed to take him to Takum Hospital. They applied shock treatment and told us to come back for more. We took him two or three times without noticing any improvement. Then we decided to take him to Mkar Hospital, farther away but bigger with more services. Same treatment; same effect. David ended up taking him to a Tiv Christian 'native medicine man' in his own area. He stayed with the man for some weeks, after which he was dismissed as healed. And, indeed, his behaviour was back to normal.

This case convinced me that there was something lacking in the Mission's healing ministry. It avoided the deepest spiritual and primaevial issues with which the people were struggling. It led them to conclude the followers of Jesus could heal only certain restricted diseases but they had no power over a wide range of 'Black Man's' sicknesses. They were beyond the power of Jesus to heal. Obviously, something needed to be done. I began reading about Holistic medicine, starting out with a book by the Swiss Christian psychiatrist, Paul Tournier, entitled *The Healing of Persons*, a book that would have a lasting effect on me. I became even more convinced that I should look at an opportunity to seriously tackle this problem. However, I did not have the time during my CRCN ministry except to occasionally engage the medical staff in serious discussions.

TCNN – ACCUSATIONS OF LIBERALISM

The CRC mission was also partnering with the NKST, an arrangement she inherited from the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) of South Africa when they were forced to leave Nigeria. Like CRCN, NKST was a member of TEKAN and a participant in TCNN. However, NKST decided to establish its own Reformed seminary and sought the support of the Mission. Most of us CRC missionaries suspected that two of our ordained missionaries, Tim Monsma and Case Perse-naire, were behind this move. The majority of us were opposed to this move and interpreted it as an expression of Tiv tribalism, which was

always strong and kept the church isolated from the larger church community. We feared it would entomb NKST even more into its own ethnic group and prevent her Reformed nature from flourishing as an open and tolerant tradition.

To counter this influence of missionary majority, a missionary began to make accusations of liberalism at TCNN, something that always catches the attention of CRC ears. His accusation focused on Allen Chilvers, a British Evangelical lecturer appointed by COCIN. Now, it is probably true that British Evangelicals did not always have their theological act together, trained as they often were at liberal institutions. However, this CRC missionary made it appear as if a massive liberal influence needed to be exposed and expunged. He collected a massive set of notes 'proving' his point. As a Mission, we had to convince the home constituency that we were taking this accusation seriously. Hence a committee was appointed comprising all the ordained CRC missionaries to examine the charge. We had quite a few meetings and ended up recommending that the charge was greatly exaggerated and did not call for such serious accusations. We were all aware that the driving motive was to encourage CRC support for the proposed separate NKST seminary.

The CRC Synod finally decided not to get behind the seminary with financial and staff support. That did not stop NKST; they proceeded with their plans. Missionary Monsma then sought support within the CRC but outside the Mission by establishing 'Friends of RTCN' that promptly started to support the school. The end of the story is that the school was established with the aid of such funds.

It was a win-lose situation for NKST. It won the support of a certain group within the CRC constituency and developed its school. However, it lost its most supportive missionaries. Monsma soon afterwards returned to the US for reasons unknown to me, but Perse-naire, a missionary of many years' standing, was surprisingly refused a return visa after a Home Service period in the US, with no explanation ever given. CRC missionaries all suspected that someone in the Immigration Dept. resented his support of what most of us regarded as a tribalistic move.

As time went on, the CRC Mission gradually accepted the reality of the Reformed Theological College of Nigeria (RTCN) and began to supply a missionary lecturer. As a Reformed theologian, I was frequently invited to present special lecture on subjects of mutual interest. I was glad to accept such invitations because they gave me the opportunity to share a Reformed Kuyperian perspective that was more open, generous, ecumenical and dynamic with this isolated academic environment.

Twenty-five years later, the college, now settled with its own buildings on its own campus near Mkar, invited Monsma to deliver the anniversary lecture. Though Monsma accepted the invitation, not long before the event, he was forced to withdraw. Under time pressure, the college invited me to take his place.

PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY EVENTS

We continued to be involved in the wider community, apart from official mission or church assignments. For the Independence Day (October 1) of 1969 celebrations, I joined a local Christian group in a traditional dance and we won first prize! That same evening, we were invited to a cocktail party hosted by the district officer at his residence. During the extended celebrations, I also served the primary school community. I was a judge at the Annual Sports Day competition between two primary schools. I was also a judge at a debate put on by the staff of the primary schools.

From 9-11 June 1970, Wukari celebrated the installation of a new Aku Uka. Fran wrote,

What pomp and pageantry – everything was so majestic and well-organised. It really reminds you of Old Testament stories with the king and his throngs of people. Many missionaries came for part of the doings, so we had people coming and going all the time. Some just needed a drink; others, the bathroom; some needed meals and stayed overnight. Now everybody is gone again and things are quiet, a bit too quiet! To make it even quieter, John had to unexpectedly go away today to a meeting some 170 km away and won't be back till tomorrow.

Yes, those were interesting days, full of traditions that we only partially understood and which Jukuns are hesitant to share with outsiders. However, one outsider who found himself at the centre of the event was Dr Harry Boer, Principal of TCNN and the main teacher of the newer pastors in the area. No doubt it was due to their advice that he was invited to conduct the swearing-in ceremony on the basis of the Bible. This was a public declaration to the world and to both the traditional Jukuns and the local Muslims, which direction Wukari was heading. A choice had been made. Wukari people, including Muslims, should take note. Wukari town had come a long way from the days young Habila had to sneak-peak his way into the original Bible class.

Our presence at these celebrations may have been social more than ministry. However, lack of participation would have sent a negative message to the community, so that it was an important part of our ministry as well. This held true for other community events in which we did not always have an active role to play. Just being there spoke volumes about our interest in and concern for the community.

THE CHILDREN AND THEIR WORLD

Lydia – A Growing Girl

Of course, Lydia was still in the family, attending primary school in Wukari. In December 1969, we sent her to her parents for the Christmas holidays, according to our earlier explanation. Fran would have loved to keep her with us to help out with Kevin. During the school year when she was with us, Fran wrote, ‘What a difference she makes with all her constant chatter. And she is such a good baby sitter!’

In another letter, Fran wrote that she was giving Lydia extra lessons to help her along a bit. Tests showed she ranked ninth in her class of 43. Five months later, she was fourth out of 57, a considerable jump ahead. In June 1971, Fran wrote that ‘she goes to school every day without complaining. She seems to be one of the better students in her class. Just yesterday, she said she was the reading-group leader of seven kids and takes them outside to read with them.’

We always signed all our letters with the names of all *four* fam-

ily members, including Lydia. In that way, we encouraged people to think of her as part of the family. Oma Ellie even urged us to bring Lydia on our next Home Service time, but visa problems being what they are from Nigeria, that was very difficult to arrange, if possible at all.

Once when Lydia had gone to her village for her school holidays, Fran wrote that it was so quiet with her gone:

I miss her chatter and, of course, if she's here, so are many of her friends. She is good company for Kevin also. He likes to have other kids around. While she's gone, a young boy living in the compound has sort of taken over her baby-sitting responsibilities. He comes every afternoon to see if he may push Kevin in his stroller.

When Kevin got older and able to move around, he enjoyed the sociability that Lydia's presence created. He enjoyed the noises her friends made but did not play with them. He just sat and watched them contentedly. They were, of course, much older than him.

We celebrated Lydia's tenth birthday with a bang. She was now in Grade 3. We had the Evenhouses over for dinner on her birthday eve. On the actual birthday, she came home from school with an entourage of twelve children, many of whom were curious about white man's ways. She was joined by another twenty or more children from the compound. Two women from the compound cooked everyone's favourite: rice and beef. For a whole \$10, we fed that entire crowd of hungry kids and could even have them take some home with them. We gave her two dresses, a raincoat and earrings. Someone else gave her a coin purse while the Evenhouses chipped in a belt.

In 1970, Lydia travelled with us to Jos for the first time. Because we knew basically everyone in the expatriate community in Wukari and Takum, she assumed the same was true for Jos. She was fascinated with all the *Turawa (white people)* there and would ask Fran questions such as 'What is her name? How many children does she have? Why is she walking in such a strange way? Why is she wearing pants?' She was thoroughly confused when Fran was unable to answer most of her questions.

Lydia preferred playing games to reading or doing schoolwork, which, Fran surmised, is quite normal for someone her age, something she kept repeating in her letters. Quite a bit later, Fran reported again that Lydia preferred playing *and* taking care of Kevin, whom she would often carry on her back in true Nigerian style. She truly was his big sister. She also loved to cook and spent a lot of time in the students' kitchen, helping the women with various chores. Sometimes she even turned out 'complete meals' and called her little friends to share the food. A few months ago, her mother had twin babies. Now Lydia was more eager than ever to go home for the holidays to see them.

Kevin – A Growing Boy

When we started our second term in Wukari, we realised it would not be a simple continuation from before with Kevin around. He made all the difference, the main difference being the joy he brought us, but also problems. We had him baptised by Pastor Habila in Wukari. He was, of course, born in the United States, and II Highland Church had expected to baptise him before we left. However, we explained to them that Kevin would be brought up in the Nigerian community and that, therefore we preferred a Nigerian baptism. Besides, it would amount to the gesture of recognising their full status as a church. We were grateful that II Highland understood and accepted. We could have opted for two baptisms, one in each place, but we take baptism too seriously to play around with it.

Before his birth, we referred to the child by the Hausa name of 'Umaru,' but we had him baptised as '*Samu'ila Kevin Richard.*' The first name is the Hausa version of 'Samuel' of the Old Testament, which means 'I have asked him of the Lord,' a most appropriate name for him. 'Kevin' was just a name we picked out of the sky. To my later regret, we abandoned the Dutch tradition of naming him after one of his grandfathers. 'Richard' was after my youngest and only Canadian-born brother Dick. Dick, being born some years after Tinus, his immediate predecessor, almost grew up like an only child in a family of ten siblings! We thought thus to honour him and

help him recognise his membership in the family. Not sure he ever accepted or believed us on this one. While living in the CRCN area, people called him ‘Samu’ila,’ but when we moved to Jos and into the world of Hillcrest School, ‘Kevin’ became the more common one.

A few days after Samu’ila’s baptism, we held a naming ceremony and its attending party. We invited the entire church! That could theoretically mean six to eight hundred! Well, we took a chance when we were told we should expect around two hundred. The Women’s Fellowship would do the catering, while the MC would recruit some traditional drummers. It being the rainy season, we prayed for no rain, for it would be an outside event on our compound. *All* we would have to do is pay for it all. Yes, we took a chance, a *big* chance. Actually, about 150 people showed up. We had a typical Nigerian menu of rice, chicken, beef and minerals (soft drinks). Not every missionary would take this route, but for us, it was a way to demonstrate a spirit of unity with the local community by following their tradition.

A lot of children always swarm to such events. We did not disappoint them. One young boy, whom we did not know from Adam, was Nathan Elawa. When Kevin was a couple of years old, he got a ball that he would play with outside. When Nigerian boys see a ball, soccer fever takes hold and there’s no stopping them. So boys much older than Kevin from both the compound and the town would come and ‘play with Kevin.’ Someone would be appointed to protect the fragile little white boy, while the rest would just take over the game – and the ball. Nathan was one of these. He grew up to work for the Great Commission Movement and married Ann, a Canadian missionary from Campus Crusade. Today, Nathan and Ann are close friends of ours in our retirement in British Columbia, Canada.

Kevin was not an easy child at night. He cried easily, frequently and for prolonged periods. Early August 1969, Fran filled almost an entire letter about a bout of fever Kevin struggled with for almost a week – and we right along with him. As is normal in Nigeria, we treated it as malaria, probably the most common sickness in the country. At the end of it, Fran wrote, ‘It was all quite an experience, and we are surely grateful that it ended well. Fevers are dangerous and yet

they flare up so quickly, especially when it is malaria.' During January, 1970, she wrote of another six-week period of infirmities and listed them: 'teething, colds, flu, malaria and ear infection.' He was getting 'longer and skinnier.' He'd be better for a few days and then would be down again. It was not to be the last.

Nigerian custom had it that you do not allow a child to cry for any length of time. You pick him up, cuddle and feed him. We would sometimes allow him to cry for a while, but almost every time, one or two women from the nearby student compound would come and 'inform' us, '*Yaro yana kuka,*' 'The child is crying,' as if we did not know! It was their way of reprimanding us for cruelty and to urging us to feed him forthwith.

For some time, I would do the night shift for Kevin, feeling that Fran had him for nine months full time and now she still had a full-time day job, that I should now take a turn at 'it.' And then that generator we told you about in a previous chapter came, and all nocturnal hell broke loose for us.

You remember how that story began a year earlier. We went on Home Service with most of the ditches dug for the wires having naturally filled up again. The next dry season, they were opened up again and the generator finally installed. It worked but made an enormous amount of noise in the student compound and in our house. The generator did not look new either, so we asked the engineer about both issues. He refused to address the noise problem and admitted that he had given Highland's new generator to a 'more needy' station and gave us a used one. He assured us we would be happy with its performance.

Everyone was unhappy with the noise and complained, Kevin more than anyone else. He slept in a bed that looked like a cage, designed by us and locally made with even the top closed in with a hinged 'door' and wholly surrounded by permanent mosquito screening supported by wide-gauged chicken wire, ugly but effective. The very first night the generator operated, the noise so scared him that he got up and tried to force the top of his bed open in panic. He would never sleep with his bed closed again. A few weeks later, he still re-

fused to sleep in his 'cage.' We put his mattress on the floor next to Lydia's bed and 'now he sleeps peacefully.'

The issues were never rectified, but at least we had electricity. Two weeks after we first got it, Fran wrote, 'We're enjoying our electricity in the evenings. What an improvement over kerosene lamps.' It made our evenings a lot more pleasant and productive, even if noisy. It was like living along a high-traffic road: you get used to it and sleep through it.

The first word that Kevin repeated time and again was 'ada', exactly the same as small children of the Nigerian families on our compound, though none of us were sure what it meant. Coincidentally, Pastor Habila's last name is 'Adda.' So whenever he heard Kevin, he really laughed.

In her first letter of 1971, Fran wrote that Kevin was beginning to actually talk. Most of his words were Hausa with a little Jukun thrown in. Some five months later, we read, 'He is really beginning to talk now, but mostly Hausa.' He seems to realise there are two words for one thing because he often says the English and Hausa word together. By June that year, Fran wrote about his 'real hodgepodge of languages. Sometimes we have to ask Lydia what he means! But mostly it is still English and Hausa.' By October 1971, Kevin was talking a blue streak, mostly in Hausa. Nigerians were really getting a kick out of seeing this little white kid speak the language so fluently.

While Lydia had gone home for Christmas to see the new twins, Kevin missed her but soon found Briskilla to fill in for her. She was the seven-year-old daughter of a CLTC student, small in stature and thus not imposing to Kevin. He loved to play in his sandbox, where many compound children would join him. In a letter from this period, Fran apologised for the rambling nature of her letter. It was due to three of Kevin's friends in the room, all making as much noise as possible. He was getting 'so much more independent,' playing outside with his friends quite a bit. He needed Fran only in emergencies as defined by him.

In another letter, Fran described Kevin as:

...standing next to my table here, singing up a storm and taking collection with his friend! He is always playing church and preaching, etc. He says his name is 'the pastor who prays.' Kevin and his friend Manoah often walk together with arms around each other, totally oblivious of racial, cultural and language differences that adults make so much of.

Under the influence of the other missionary kids on the Wukari compound, Kevin began to pick up more English, though he still spoke mostly Hausa. People told us he understood some Jukun also, though he would reply in Hausa. Fran spoke and read mostly English to him, for she wanted to make sure he learned standard English. I, however, since pretty well all my communication with people around me was in Hausa, just naturally spoke Hausa to Kevin as well. He concluded that sometimes Fran and I did not understand each other. So, occasionally he would translate for us. He might say to Fran, 'Daddy says ...' And then he would translate my Hausa to English. Or vice versa.

Since we were thinking about going to Amsterdam in 1972 for study purposes, Fran hoped that he would also learn some Dutch while there. She sadly expected that in due time, he would forget all these so easily acquired languages. That ended up not happening as Kevin proved to be quite good with languages. Today he still speaks Hausa and a fair bit of English, his major languages from that period. In the meantime, Dutch has come and gone, replaced by Setswana and some French.

As we did for Lydia, we organised birthday parties for Kevin and his friends. His third birthday party was attended by twenty compound children, both Nigerian and missionary children. We played games, sang and had a big birthday cake. I am always amazed at how good Fran is at organising such parties and keeping them fairly orderly without spoiling anyone's fun. The cake part was also attended by the missionary parents.

There were now four of us, but we were not satisfied. In September 1970, Fran wrote that we were thinking about once again initiating adoption procedure with that Vancouver office. 'Maybe that trick

will succeed again,' she hoped.

OF RABBITS, VILLAGE SHAVE AND HUMAN BONDING

I also ventured into a branch of agriculture, namely animal husbandry. A Christian development agency of the SUM near Jos was promoting *rabbit keeping*. When we read their promotional literature, we decided it would be a worthwhile project for us in Wukari. Rabbits breed fast and furious. One rabbit can produce twenty-five young or more per year. Their meat is healthy and tasty. So we had a carpenter build two self-cleaning cages for us while we bought the feeding, drinking and nesting equipment from that agency as well as a male and a female rabbit. We were in business. We placed them in the shadow of our huge mango trees. We were very successful and had no problems with any sickness. We fed them grass, food scraps and commercially produced pellets along with water mixed with some kind of preventive medicine. Before long, we got our first litter, had them grow up and begin to breed and voila, a full-fledged rabbitry! In 1971, the project really took off. By July, we had twenty-four little ones, and three does were pregnant again. At another time, one doe produced six and another eleven, while two more were about to deliver within two weeks. '*We are eating a lot of rabbit meat these days,*' Fran wrote. We even sold some. We became so successful that Lou Haveman, the CRC agriculturalist, said he had never seen such a successful rabbitry and wondered about our magic. When the little ones were strong enough to be taken out of their cages, children loved to play with them.

In time, as they multiplied, we offered free rabbits to people who promised to look after them as per our instructions and who would return one full-grown rabbit to us. We did have some takers, but few succeeded. They did not build secure cages so that dogs got at the rabbits.

However, we liked rabbits for ourselves. In a town where good meat was scarce, they became our major meat source, while they also served as wonderful gifts, either alive or frozen. This industry followed us for the rest of our Nigeria days. Especially in Jos, we would



Fran's birth family at the time of immigration to USA, 1948



John's birth family at time of immigration to Canada, 1951



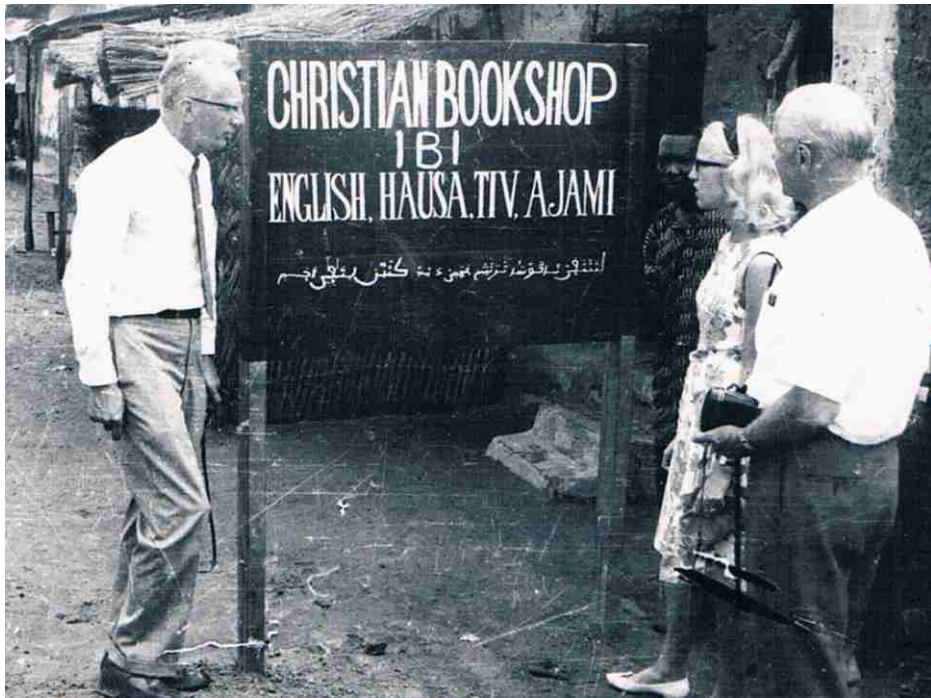
John and Fran's wedding in Grand Rapids, Michigan USA, 1962



Fran and her class in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, 1963



John and Fran in Jos, Nigeria, 1967



Fran at Ibi Christian Bookshop with executives from the Christian Reformed Mission Board, 1968



Baba Ayuba and his wife, our closest neighbours, 1968



Late Rev Dr David Angye and family, former President of the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN), 1968



Missionaries attending a wedding at a CRCN church, 1970



Mallam Ifraimu Gani (second from left), and other teachers at the Christian Leadership Training Centre, 1970



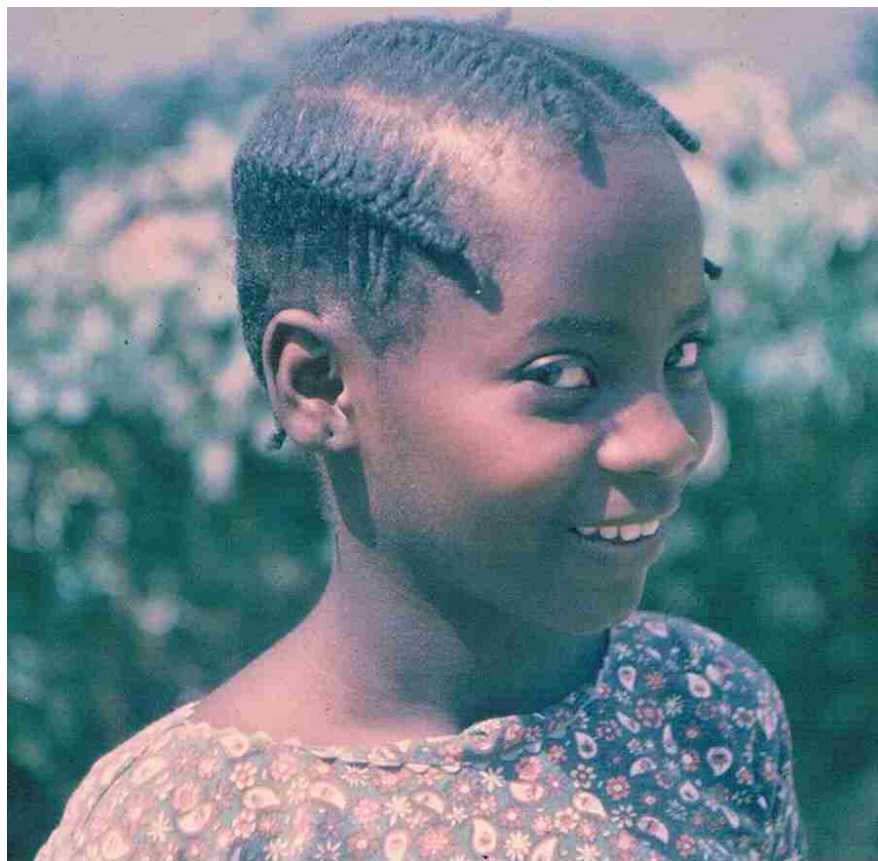
Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo and family, 1970



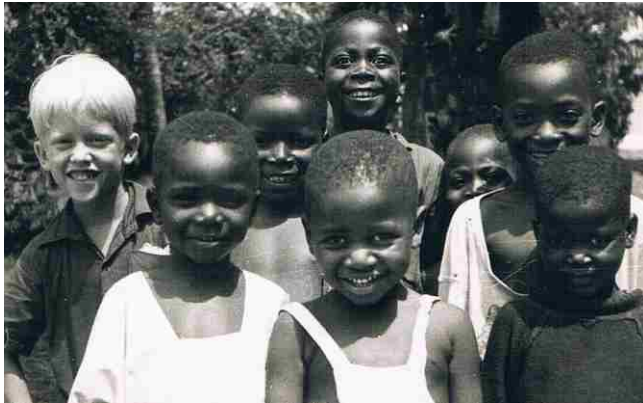
Fran and Kevin with Zumuntar Mata (women's fellowship) at CRCN church, Wukari 1971



Dan Azumi and Boer families, 1972



Lydia, Wukari, 1972



Kevin and friends at the Baissa mission compound, 1975



Boer family house, 1975



Pastor Adamu Eyab and Boer families, 1975

have anywhere from 80-90 rabbits at any given time.

Besides its developmental value, rabbitry had another missionary advantage also. Though most Nigerians around us were farmers, few missionaries either farmed or kept animals. Having these rabbits piqued their interest and provided interesting conversations. Even though rabbits were not traditional, keeping them created a bond of common interest and humanity between us that not infrequently led to far-ranging discussions, including the spiritual.

I've had similar human bonding experiences in other settings and they are always intensely precious and satisfying. They break down cultural barriers that interfere all too often in our relationships with people here. An old man in a remote village and I sat together on someone's front porch and both of us had a pipe. We exchanged tobacco and smoked together. It ended up as a time of sharing common humanity that, if I had lived there, could have developed into a deeper relationship of a spiritual nature. Still another such time was in a Taraba village. I had been on the road for a number of days and had forgotten my shaving kit. I came upon this local village barber shaving a client in the shade of a tree. Sitting on a log, I awaited my turn, while we were chatting between the three of us. This was a total first for both the barber and myself. We discussed the difference between black and white beards. He was surprised at the toughness of my beard compared to that of the average Nigerian. I did not look all that tough to him in other ways! Though discussing differences, we were drawn together in our common humanity, at least partially due to the intimacy of a shave. All of these were situations of no real consequence, but I have not forgotten those precious moments of shared humanity with people I had never met before or after and the potential for deeper discussion.

As far as my village shave went, Fran wrote that she had expected me to come home looking messy since I had left my toiletry bag at home. Instead, I came home with a cleaner shave than I tend to do myself. At least, not the cuts she was used to seeing when I hurriedly shaved myself, which was a bit of a shame since my father had been a professional barber.

MISSION POLICY ISSUES

Kuyperian Restlessness

You know about my Kuyperian orientation. It showed up in various aspects of my work. As much as we enjoyed the challenges of our work, I became increasingly restless working in the rural rather than the urban environment of Nigeria, in the Nigeria of yesterday instead of that of tomorrow. I felt far away from the 'action' of modern Nigeria. Fran wrote in October 1971 that I wanted to introduce Kuyperian perspectives in the Mission, but on the whole, did not find our colleagues very receptive. Some missionaries were sympathetic and even shared some of my concerns, but were not ready to rock any boats with me. Others were suspicious of my ideas and thought of me as a 'rebel and troublemaker.'

I dwelt extensively in semi-annual reports to the Mission on my Kuyperian theories and ambitions for the Mission as a whole as well as for myself, as in the one of November 1970, where I wrote a full page on the subject. In November 1971, I wrote a 'Semi-Annual Report' in which I let it all hang out. I argued that in addition to the rural emphasis of our Mission, we should also be concerned with the cities where the new Nigerian culture was taking shape. I wrote,

There is a whole complex of modern culture, imported from abroad, largely secular and humanistic, somewhat twisted to meet African needs, a culture that parades itself as the salvation of Nigeria. It is the culture that has already obtained strong footholds in the various sectors of modern Nigerian culture and its institutions of education, government, commerce and industry. It is quite obvious from the history of Western nations that these are the areas where the decisions for the future are made, not in the churches and not in the rural areas.

In arguing this point, I appealed extensively to Eugene Rubingh's dissertation, *Sons of Tiv*, in which he pleaded vigorously for holistic missions that go beyond the church into the heart of the culture where the choices and decisions for the future are made. I further argued that we missionaries have grown up with the modern structures and should know their strengths and weaknesses. Should we leave Nige-

rian Christians to re-invent the wheels of secular culture without our input?

This report came out of the context of a conference of tertiary Christian students who were deeply spiritual and committed to bringing others to Christ but who had never thought about how the love and justice offered by the Kingdom of God also affect the structures of industry, commerce, etc. They invited me as their main speaker because I had aroused the curiosity of their leaders during discussions I had with them in the context of my search for a ministry entrance into the student world. They wanted to hear me out and were impressed.

Towards the end of this five-page report, I proposed that our Mission work towards the establishment of 'some centre for Christian higher education for West Africa or for Sub-Saharan Africa.' Realising that this will be a long-term project, I also proposed that in the meantime, we develop 'a student centre in the shadow of Ahmadu Bello University' in Kaduna, the leading university in Northern Nigeria, where we would challenge students with a more holistic approach to their studies by integrating them with the Gospel.

If the proposal about higher education seemed preposterous, it was Karl Kumm, the founder of the SUM, who made a similar proposal way back in 1910, when there was not even a church to speak of in the Middle Belt. In the 1990s, NKST founded its fledgeling Hill-top University, while both COCIN and ECWA moved towards their own universities in the opening years of the 21st century. In such a context, the CRC educational history being what it was, my proposal was nothing outlandish. It was basically the lack of CRC vision in Nigeria that prevented us from pioneering this movement.

The lectures I delivered under the title 'Evangelism in Nigeria' at the afore-mentioned student conference reflected the above concerns throughout. I challenged the audience to recognise the broader meaning of 'salvation' as non-Christians seek it in Nigeria through their secular development plans. Christian and secular language may be different, but they are all concerned with the salvation of the country and its people and they are all guided by certain beliefs

and perspectives that express their different faiths. Christians need to contribute to that salvation hunger from the Kingdom perspective. I asked my audience why they had not invited the media to the conference. They thought it a funny question. Why should the media be interested in such a religious gathering? You see, both these Christian students and the secular media failed to recognise the commonality of their quest for national salvation. Development is seen as one thing; salvation as something totally different. However, both are guided by convictions and beliefs that can only be called 'religious,' for they are concerned with the ultimates of life. The way we structure development depends on the orientation of our hearts, where all the deep issues of life are determined. Why is it I asked them, that Marx considered religion the 'opiate of the people?' Actually, he borrowed that insight from an Anglican clergyman who was dismayed at how the Christian community contributed so little to the salvation and development of society.

Miscellaneous Experiences

In early March, 1970, we had a collision between our mission car and a truck. There were four of us in the car. Fran sat in the passenger's seat with Kevin on her lap, strange as that sounds today. This was before seat belts and baby seats. Ifraimu Nyajo sat in the back, the seat of honour in Nigerian culture. It was the dry season, which means that every vehicle on these dirt roads leaves a cloud of dust in its wake that makes it impossible to see ahead. Where there's smoke, there's fire. Where there's a dust cloud, there is a vehicle. The vehicle ahead of us stopped suddenly in the middle of the road. Before I could see, I hit him full force. There was blood all over both Fran and Kevin. We panicked, and without checking things out, we 'commandeered' the truck driver to drive us the 50 kilometres to Takum Hospital, where both were treated. Ifraimu was not hurt and stayed with the vehicle and arranged to have it moved to the side of the road. It turns out that Fran had protected Kevin by bending over him and taking the brunt of the collision herself. The windshield had jumped out without shattering; the wiper hit Fran's nose and split it in half.

Hence, all the blood. We were so relieved Kevin was all right, while Fran had her nose sewed up. There is still a slight scar running along the bridge of her nose. She also had to be stitched up at various other places on her face. But today she's as beautiful as ever! Our vehicle was a total loss. Fortunately, it was an old one slated to be discarded soon. In spite of my doubts and questions about the Mission's medical programme, we did appreciate the immediate and professional attention they gave us. They *were* very good at that.

Accidents involving personal injuries and insurance issues have to be reported. So the truck driver and I went to the Takum Police Office together. You see, we were amicable with each other. After we both gave them our written statements, they began to light into the driver something fierce but told us to go. Still not street-smart Nigeria style, I did not understand the dynamics until later. I was a member of a privileged community that was known to resist bribes. So, why waste their time on me? But, strictly speaking, I was the main guilty party since I hit a parked vehicle from behind. He, of course, was guilty of parking dangerously in the middle of the road in a cloud of dust. They went after the driver and, I suspect, milked him for all he was worth to avoid being put in jail. I had expected the driver to contact us again, but he never did. Communications being what they were, finding him would have been almost impossible. I have ever since felt bad for him and ashamed that I left him alone in that den of robbers.

Ifraimu later told us that he had preached on God protecting His children and used Fran as an example: the mother who bent over her child to protect him from an accident.

Things were not always going smooth with us either. Most of August 1970, Fran had been sickly and in bed. She had a stubborn case of malaria that just would not let up, along with an ear infection. She lost weight and went down to 99 lbs! CLTC women were sure she was pregnant again. When Fran denied she was pregnant, they replied that they had been fooled once with Kevin and would not allow that again! Since she had lost appetite, the doctor ordered Fran to eat her way back to health. She picked up again after we

attended the Mission's annual Spiritual Conference. I thought that Fran might have been too isolated, while I was often absent or, alternatively, that it might have been my presence that had caused the problem. I do believe that the fellowship and prayers at that conference helped turn things around.

However, her prolonged sickness caused me to go 'out of my mind,' according to her. She wrote that it was because of:

His (John) trying to take care of me, Kevin and Lydia, and do some of his own work too. At such times you realise, he said, how much work a woman does behind the scenes to keep the home running smoothly. The last week we finally found a gal to babysit all day so that I could rest and John goes about his other things.

One day late October 1970, we experienced the 'full cycle' of life. There was a wedding at church and a woman died in childbirth. We attended the funeral in the darkness of 9 p.m. that very evening. Then in the following morning, at 5 a.m. we were all woken up because a baby was about to be born on the compound. Here's Fran's version:

The men say they want their wives to deliver at the hospital in town, but the women usually refuse. They try not to let their husbands know they are in labour and secretly call their women friends. By the time the husband knows what is going on, the baby is already delivered! I was going to be helpful and quickly came with a razor for cutting the cord, but by the time I got there, the new mother was already outside of her room and washing up! These women are in such good shape physically and so strong that they don't seem to have nearly the trouble in childbirth that we are accustomed to. As long as everything goes all right, we, CLTC staff, don't mind if they deliver at home here, but we are always worried that someday there will be complications, and then it is often too late, which would be a shame when the hospital is so close. It's understandable that the women would rather deliver at home with their friends to help them because at the hospital, they are often made to feel like fools because they don't know the proper protocols. The young midwives laugh at the ways of these 'bush' women.

On 6 April 1972, Fran devoted a paragraph to a 'big day in the history of Nigeria.' This event called for the mandatory involvement of every citizen and resident in the country and *was* an unforgettable and quite amazing experience. Let me just give you her entire paragraph:

In addition to it being Easter, we changed to right-hand driving. One has to really think about where to be! The steering wheels are, of course, still on the right side. That means the driver is now on the edge of the road instead of towards the middle. That's confusing. Eventually, all cars will have steering on the left, but that will take some time. In the meantime, there are many policemen, soldiers, and boy scouts directing the traffic and trying to keep everybody going the new way. They have built many roundabouts. So far, there have been no serious accidents here in Wukari and we have not yet heard of any anywhere in the country that is caused by this change. However, medical doctors have been alerted to be on 24-hour emergency stand by.

Weeks before the deadline, new road and traffic signs were installed everywhere in the country. They were all covered up. Then a national curfew was announced the night before from 6 p.m. till 6 a.m. During this time, all the signs were uncovered and any old misleading signs were either covered or removed. By 6 a.m. all the traffic personnel mentioned above were in place, ready for the light Easter Sunday morning traffic. Nigeria eased its way into a new driving culture.

It truly was an amazingly successful exercise that would not have gone that smoothly had it taken place a decade later. Nigeria was still fairly orderly and stable at the time. The exercise was part of general decimalisation or metrification of the country that involved change-over from miles to kilometres, from inches to centimetres, from 'lb pounds' to kilogrammes and from the British pound to the decimal-based Nigerian Naira. Before these changes, Nigeria was a British measurement island in the midst of a metric West Africa. This step made it easier to effect the integration of West Africa into ECOWAS, the West African common market.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER MISSIONARIES

You have already read a lot about how missionaries host each other, feed each other and work on a lot of committees together. That was a major way in which we related to other missionaries. It usually was sweet fellowship, even though we may have had big differences in opinion.

Missionaries were entitled to a total of four weeks annual holidays while on the 'field.' We would often spend the major part of these breaks in Jos because of its cooler climate. It just felt such a relief to relax in the coolness of the Plateau. We also enjoyed staying at various mission guest houses in Jos because we would meet missionaries from other missions there. This gave us a chance to compare notes, especially about the common problems we all faced and the excitement of common challenges. We also enjoyed staying at our own CRC compound, called Mountain View, where we would meet our own colleagues whom we seldom saw. With them, we could profitably discuss in-house issues and challenges that were just as interesting. From Kevin's point of view, Mountain View was a great place, for there was much more space for him. Little did he know at the time that he would spend most of his primary and secondary school years living on this mission compound.

The last few days of one of these vacations was spent with new friends at Obudu Ranch, a resort about 300 km south of Jos, at about 1800 meters elevation. These new friends were Lou and Jan Havenman, the CRWRC agricultural couple based in Baissa at the time. Obudu offered all kinds of recreational facilities – horseback riding, tennis court, a swimming grotto with ice-cold water, miniature and real golf, hiking trails and indoor games. It was the first time in my life for me to even touch a golf club and, until now, at least, the last time. Fran grew eloquent in a letter describing all the delights of this place, including the food and the way it was served. The place 'made us feel like kings and queens,' she commented. 'How blessed we are that we have the means for such vacations.' The Havemans have remained good friends of ours ever since.

STUDY LEAVE IN AMSTERDAM

Throughout most of 1971, Fran and I had been thinking about and planning for our 1972 furlough, one of those things on which missionaries are expected to spend much time as to the where, when and what. We had decided to apply for study leave. By November, we had cut down the options to two, either the University of Toronto or the Free Reformed University in Amsterdam (in Dutch the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam or VU), founded in the 1800s by my hero Abraham Kuyper. If the former, I would probably want to do Political Science in conjunction with the Institute for Christian Studies, two institutions that were cooperating with each other. If in Amsterdam, it would be to study missions from a Kuyperian perspective. The Mission had already agreed on our having an extension of our field service in order to facilitate an academic schedule. Eventually, we decided to go to Amsterdam and planned to go there for a full year from September 1972 on. Our plans were approved by CRWM. It meant six months of paid study leave and then six months on our own. We had applied unsuccessfully for a scholarship the Mission was offering but decided to just go anyway and see what would happen financially. If nothing else, we would pray and/or borrow money. What happened was beyond our wildest dreams.

The Lord answered our prayer regarding the finances. First, II Highland agreed to directly cover our salary for the second half of the study leave based on a recommendation of Eugene Rubingh, now a senior executive in the mission headquarters. In addition, I realised that even though I had naturalised as a Canadian in the 1950s, I was still considered a Dutch citizen and received a citizenship certificate from the Mayor of Amsterdam. This meant a reduction in tuition fees and eligibility for scholarships and loans from the Dutch government.

We ended up staying in the Netherlands from late 1972 until early 1974, where we enjoyed amazing Christian hospitality and friendship and our family grew in unexpected ways. During this time, Kevin learned to speak fluent Dutch, our daughter Cynthia was born in Amsterdam, and Lydia started Wukari District Combined Secondary School back in Nigeria. We also spent time in the United Kingdom,

including the Rhodes House Archives at Oxford University. The study and the research became the foundation for my doctorate, which I completed several years later.

A little bit more detail on Cynthia's birth in Amsterdam. On 29 December 1972, Fran wrote a quick note to the parents with an announcement of far-flung implications for our family. A doctor in the Netherlands had just confirmed that Fran was pregnant again, and the baby was expected around mid-August 1973.

INTRODUCING CYNTHIA JENELLE

Cynthia made her debut at 2:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 12, 1973, at the VU hospital as planned. On the same day, I wrote,

The whole thing went so quickly and so perfectly that the medical team were greatly surprised. 'Ontstellend vlug,' was their reaction, or 'amazingly fast.' I was told to take Fran for a walk in the hallway and return every fifteen minutes for a check-up. The moment Fran stood up, the water broke there and then. No more walks! She promptly had the baby.

We had been told we would take Fran and Cynthia home around 3 p.m. that very day. However, complications set in. Cynthia had trouble breathing from having 'stuff' in her lungs that had to be siphoned out. Fran later wrote, *'After one of the most enjoyable and easy pregnancies and deliveries in medical history, you can well imagine my sudden shock that Cynthia needed to go into intensive care.'* She was put in an incubator, but we were told there was no danger.

Just as in the case of Kevin, 'Cynthia' was simply a name we picked out of the air. We thought it sounded nice and planned to call her 'Cindy,' something she in due time rejected vehemently and insisted on 'Cynthia.' Jenelle was a combination of 'Jennie,' Fran's mother, and 'Ellie,' my mother. And again, as in the case of Kevin, Cynthia also was a triple citizen of the Netherlands, Canada and the USA. Fran and I reported her to US and Canada respectively as a citizen born abroad. Even now, I find 'Cynthia' a nice name but do regret that we did not follow tradition more closely by giving her names that

reflected the names of her two grandmothers more clearly. The two grandmothers, likewise, were somewhat disappointed; neither one acknowledged the conflation 'Jenelle' as an acceptable substitute.

Fran came home the next day, but Cynthia had to stay, though no longer in the incubator. Further testing had shown that she had swallowed womb water into her lungs and that there was some infection in the blood. When I visited her, she looked bluish and breathed irregularly. She stayed in the hospital for ten days, a surprisingly long time.

Fran wrote another blow-by-blow letter about Cynthia's struggle and slow recovery. She also described Cynthia's appearance in detail. I went to see her every day and Fran started coming along after four days or so. Again our local Christian friends came through with various kinds of help. They brought baby clothes and lent us a crib and a baby buggy. They were simply marvellous in their generous support. I couldn't ask for more. By 14 September, both Fran and Cynthia had recovered 'very well.' At the clinic, they suggested that Cynthia was growing too fast and should slow down a bit.

During our last month in Amsterdam, January 1974, Fran wrote:

Kevin continues to amaze us with his wise statements which are all stored in his 'bolletje.' Last week he leaned against my stomach and was all excited and said, 'Mama, daar zit weer een baby in je buik en deze keer wordt het een broertje!' 'Mommie, there's another baby in your belly and this time it will be a little brother!' He asked us if it was true and I said 'Yes.' Then he said he knew it would happen because 'toen ik nog in je buik was, heeft de Here God het mij verteld dat je krijgt nog zo veel babies, je kan nooit weer stoppen!' 'When I was inside you, God told me that you would have so many babies that you can never put a stop to it.' Later, though, he seemed to doubt the truth of his discovery. Yesterday he told me very wisely that my belly was big because Cynthia had just been in there and then it takes a while before that goes away again. Isn't he the limit?

The above story is meant to alert you about yet another totally surprising pregnancy, Fran's third.

We were in for a surprise. Kevin must have secretly prayed! By late November, it was determined that Fran was pregnant again! Here is the announcement in her letter to my parents:

I must tell you some more surprising news! Surprise for us too! D.V. we hope to make you grandparents for the 30th time early in July '74!! After waiting so long for our first two we are very surprised to find a third so close behind! It did take us a few days to get used to the idea, but we really are very happy about it and do see it as another blessing from the Lord. At least these two won't have to complain about sleeping or playing alone as Kevin sometimes did.

Our family doctor in the Netherlands assumed we wanted no part of this pregnancy coming so soon after Cynthia's birth. Without consulting us, he casually said, 'Don't worry. Just come on over. We can easily take care of it!' Just like that. Life had become that cheap! He could not understand that we regarded this pregnancy as a blessing from the Lord, even though it was neither prayed for – nor planned. The doctor described it as a 'blind opgezette zwangerschap,' a 'blindly arranged pregnancy.' So it was, but a welcome one.

On the 22nd of January, I had my final exam on the thesis. On the 24th, we planned a farewell with the Bible study group and on the 28th we would board a Sabena plane to arrive in Kano on the 31st.

Our time to return to Nigeria soon became imminent. We had stayed away longer from Nigeria and achieved more than originally planned: I now had a *doctorandus* degree that put me between masters and doctorate. It meant I had completed all the requirements for a doctorate except for the dissertation. I was now entitled to put 'Drs' in front of my name. This was confusing in the English-speaking world, including Nigeria, where 'Drs' is the plural of 'Doctor,' not of the degree itself but of two or more persons having that degree.

My original intention for this academic interlude was more personal than academic. I needed to read and reflect on mission, but when the unexpected and unprayed for financial 'temptation' to work towards a degree confronted us; we took it with both hands. It seemed like God was just pouring it on, but He would not likely do so

without a good reason. We took that reason to be that degree and the consequent enhancement of my missionary status in Nigeria.

Somewhere along the line, I had sent a copy of my thesis to Mr Farrant, a long-time SUM administrator now well into his eighties. He was still mentally alert and found the thesis exciting. He told me that I should complete this work, meaning that I should go for a doctorate, continuing the same line of research. Farrant, you should realise, was a major figure in the thesis. His suggestion led to our decision to do just that. We reached that goal in 1979.

We continue to marvel at the way God supplied our needs during our Amsterdam venture. He was definitely pushing us along the path we had embarked upon. The advanced degrees I achieved over those years opened wide the door to Nigeria's university campuses. They became a passport to ministry in contemporary Nigeria.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRCN MINISTRY III

WUKARI AND BAISSA (1974–1976)

OUR RETURN FROM AMSTERDAM

We arrived in Nigeria for our new term of service on 1 February, 1974. We were supposed to land in Kano in Nigeria's far North, but the harmattan and the dust from the Sahara Desert at this time of the year can be like a thick fog that closes the entire world to you. So, the plane had to skip Kano and proceed to Lagos, the country's capital (then) in the far South on the Atlantic coast. They put us up in a good hotel and flew us to Jos the next morning. You will remember Jos as a frequent holiday destination for us and the centre of a lot of mission and church organisations. It was also the capital city of Benue-Plateau State since the states had been re-organised. Wukari was part of that state. Eventually, the states would again be re-organised and Wukari would end up in Taraba State with Jalingo as its capital, while Jos would end up as the capital of Plateau State.

Jos was also the location of the company from whom we bought the Opel that I picked up in Germany, used for a year in Amsterdam and then shipped off to Nigeria. That company had the vehicle

brought to Jos for us to pick up there. When I picked it up, it looked as good as when I shipped it off. However, the company told us that it had taken a beating during the shipping and they had to do a lot of bodywork on it. Well, they had done a great job: not a trace of an accident visible to the eye or noticeable when driving. It was not our expense, so I did not bother to enquire further about that, but I did respect the company for informing us.

Upon our re-entry into the country, we stayed in the SIM guest house in Jos for a few days to have discussions with our administration there as well as do local shopping. Yes, more shopping. It was harmattan season, an unhealthy time with many people getting colds and even pneumonia, not excluding our own little ones. Sure enough, it hit Cynthia immediately. She developed a cold bad enough that we took her to the doctor twice in one day. Fearing pneumonia, they gave her a penicillin injection. For two nights, she fussed and cried but then slept better and got over it all. Needless to say, we were relieved and thankful.

Kevin was not affected. He found a four-year-old missionary kid from Chad to play with at the guest house. Fran wrote, 'It's cute to hear the two talk to each other in their secondary language—English!' Kevin enjoyed the Jos weather and liked to wear shorts, even though this was the coldest time of the year in these parts and Nigerians were shivering from the cold, especially in Jos.

From Jos, we drove down to Wukari along a brand new paved road that did not exist when we left. It cut the distance between the two places in half. But there was still a river to be crossed by barge, this time the Benue River at Ibi. But since the old route also included a river and barge, we were happy with this new development, the result of the oil boom that had taken over the country.

LIFE IN WUKARI...AGAIN

Family and Social Life

We had left back in 1972, assuming that upon our return, we would again live in our original house, the match box, in Wukari. However, without anyone consulting us, it was arranged that we would live in

the Baas house, since they had moved to Jos during our absence. We were not happy about the change, for we preferred to live at the front of the compound, but it was a done deal. It really was a more pleasant place, for it was built to allow plenty of natural ventilation. In other words, it was designed with the climate in mind. The house was built on top of a 30,000 litre water cistern! A considerable advantage was that it was far from the generator with its annoying noise. So, we soon were reconciled to the move, especially because our former house would be needed for the Nigerian principal of the CLTC.

You've already read about Fran's third pregnancy and will be reading more below. In the meantime, being pregnant and having two children already, she could hardly be expected to do much in the way of ministry beyond the family or house. However, she wrote about using her 'spare time' typing my manuscript for my commentary on I and II Samuel.

February was not only our personal transition month but also our seasonal transition. It is the month when we change from the dry and cool harmattan season to the muggy season. It is the preparation time for the rains to return and is characterised by steadily mounting temperatures with humidity in the 90s; an unpleasant time for everyone, including Nigerians. We were fortunate, for at night, there would be a breeze on our hill station. In contrast to Jos a few weeks ago, Kevin now started to complain about the heat, while Cynthia was once again restless.

Fran found the heat of the muggy season simply too much. She complained, '*Some days I just don't think I'll make it to the end.*' 50°C (110°F) in the daytime and at 10 p.m. still 33°C (90°F) along with high humidity! We were once again sleeping outside on cots, but that was not comfortable for Fran. Here's her own description of her daily life at this time of caring for two small children and being pregnant in the heat and humidity of the muggy season:

I'm busy taking care of the children and preparing meals, etc. Doing or getting things takes longer in this country and you just naturally work slower in this heat. I have two people helping around the house for a total of 65 hours a week. Someone cooks the evening

meal twice a week in her own compound (within our larger compound) and brings it to us. Just today we hired a young girl to give Cynthia a stroller ride in the late afternoon. This all sounds like I'm a real lady of leisure, but I still find myself with plenty to do!

She was bigger with this pregnancy than she had been for the previous two. Nigerians did not know what to think. After all, you're not supposed to be pregnant within two years from the previous one. We had broken an ancient taboo and had become a hot button item for gossip.

Even Lydia was confused. Remember, she was at school in Nigeria when she heard that Mama was pregnant again. She explained to her friends that Mama was having twins, but one is coming later!

By mid-April, Fran felt a bit depressed, but, she wrote,

John keeps reminding me that as long as I manage to get through each day, I shouldn't worry about all those extra projects I want to do. It's a full-time job caring for our family at this point. He wants me to get more help, but somehow having people around you all the time isn't always helpful either.

Here are some of Fran's letters about her pregnancy with Wiebe, our last born:

May 13 – My doctor is a Dutch doctor who is doing a term of service for the Nigerian-Dutch govt as a sort of 'peace corps' deal. His name is Gerald Lips. He has just finished his M.D. training and will go for his specialty in gynaecology after his tour here is finished. I'm so happy that this works out; otherwise, it would mean frequent trips to our own doctors in Takum fifty miles away. I went for an appointment this morning. Everything is fine, but I'm a bit anaemic again, so he doubled my iron intake for a while and also I am losing weight but he said not to worry about that as I look and feel happy and healthy enough.

May 21 – I am very tired at the end of the day but I try not to let that worry me. I'm getting a bit of trouble with my legs, a combination of "growing pains," and strange rashes. I try to do as much of my work sitting down as is possible. Only five more weeks and then D.V. we will go to Jos for a month.

May 22 – I stay quite busy with the kids and the house and seem to need a lot of rest these hot days. I have about seven weeks yet to wait for D-Day and, as you well know, those last weeks are never the most comfortable, especially when it is so warm. But I shouldn't really complain because I do have sufficient help and can get more if I feel I need it.

June 19 – It seems that I wasn't drinking enough milk and then I don't have enough calcium in my bones and that gives me trouble. Actually, I have no reason to complain as I feel well and have plenty of help. I'm still losing weight, but the doctor says that doesn't matter. That means I won't have so much to lose after delivery!

Fran continued her hostessing with many guests coming and going. The *monthly* guest plates averaged around thirty, but just this one *week* she served fifty-two guests! She wrote, 'Seeing I get plenty of help and food from both the guests and our own household help, it really isn't all that hard, but it still is a lot of extra people around. I was a bit exhausted yesterday.' Anyone wonder why? This is a pregnant woman with two little children! But still she kept going. Another time with pregnancy advanced even further, she wrote that she kept busy typing for me to keep her from thinking too much about her pregnancy and its discomforts. A babysitter would come from 8 a.m.–12 noon. During that time, Fran would hide in another room to type. A few days and more guests. One day she had to host, including catering, a committee of fifteen!

And then, to top it all off, that same day I came home at midnight with the totally unexpected news that we were to be transferred to Baissa! Fran was okay with that. She wrote it would not make much difference to her since her job with the children was basically cut out no matter where. However, she would miss the Wukari friends and the tennis crowd.

Around the beginning of July, we went to Jos for a month's maternity stay at our own Mountain View Guest House. Here's the story of Wiebe's arrival.

Wiebe Karl Yohanna's Arrival (10 July, 1974)

After a curry dinner at the SIM guesthouse dining hall, we went to the hospital for the delivery on July 10 at around 8:30 p.m. Kevin hollered out of his bed, 'Have a good time having the baby, Mommy!' We left thirteen-year-old Lydia in charge of Kevin and Cynthia.

The delivery went so fast that the nurse was caught totally unprepared. It was her first delivery after some years of being off the job. She began yelling at me to help her in English words I could not understand, something like 'Old! Old!' I believe she meant either for Fran to hold the baby in or for me to hold or catch it! Fortunately, the doctor came just at that point and saved the situation. That doctor was our friend, Dr Glen Verbrugge, who had played the organ at our wedding and now he delivered our child. He had come to Nigeria only about a month earlier.

This is what I wrote to our parents regarding his birth:

Announcing the arrival of Sir Wiebe Karl Boer

Time: July 10, 1974, 9:45 p.m. (Nigerian time)

In another letter, I wrote:

About supper time, Fran felt something like labour kriebeltjes, by 8:30, she was in the hospital and at 9:45, it was all over. Like with Cynthia, Fran did not waste time! And again, like with Cynthia, it was a completely natural childbirth. Both mother and child were fine when I left them last night. By the way, 'Sir' is not part of his name!

Later on, Fran wrote:

This one was a still speedier delivery than with Cynthia and the nurse again insisted it was impossible and told me to quit pushing til the doctor got there! John had warned the nurse how fast the delivery went with Cynthia but the nurse wouldn't listen. In fact, Glen Verbrugge just peeked in the door to see how the labour was coming and suddenly realised it was his turn to do some work.

I wrote the following to our parents, ‘From everything I can see about him, I see that Wiebe is strong, handsome, intelligent, able, great genius – but well, what else would you expect from such a fine set of parents?!’ I signed that letter as ‘John the Patriarch.’ I guess I must have really been feeling my oats with three children to our credit! For the record, this was grandchild number twenty-five for the Prinses and number thirty for the Boers. He was also born on the birthday of John Calvin, the church reformer from Geneva who launched the Reformed denomination centuries before.

It was also the first time that my father Wiebe had a child named after him using his actual name, not some English ‘equivalent’ or random name starting with ‘W’. The middle name ‘Karl’ was *primarily* after Fran’s father, but changed from the Frisian ‘Tjalling’ to the German ‘Karl.’ The *second* reference was to Karl Kumm, the founder of the SUM about whom I had written so much. It really should have been ‘Charles,’ as Fran’s father was known by his English name, but that would have made Wiebe’s initials ‘W. C.,’ something he would not hear the end of when he grew up if he chose to live in Europe.

Naming Wiebe after our fathers was a departure from our previous children, whose names we picked out of the air simply because we liked their sound. Our living in The Netherlands made us realise that in the global world in which we now live, a Dutch name is as good as any English name. We had become more appreciative of our Dutch heritage, including their naming traditions.

Mother Ellie had written that Grandpa Wiebe never liked having someone inherit his exact name, but, she assured us, he was pleased. Fran wrote, ‘We are happy to have named him after his two grandfathers. Since we’ve been in The Netherlands, both of us feel more of a sense of history and want to carry on the family names.’

Here is the first letter Wiebe ‘wrote’ to his Opa (grandfather) on 15 July, 1974.

Dear Opa Wiebe,

Because I am named after you I thought I would write you my first letter. My mommy will help me because I can’t write too well yet.

In fact, about the only thing I can do well is sleep and then I wake

up terribly hungry and then someone comes along and sticks something in my mouth and then soon I feel better and fall asleep again. What a life!

I surely didn't give my mommy much trouble when I came into this world. But my daddy was a bit worried because he could tell I was in a hurry to see him and the nurse didn't want to believe him. Daddy even had to help the nurse find the scissors and tie on her mask and also the mask and gown for the doctor! But it's good for daddies to do part of the work too, isn't it?

Even though you are my Opa, I'm afraid I won't get to see you until I'm two years old unless, of course, you come here to see me. If you do come, please take Oma along with you!

Now I'm tired and I want to sleep.

Love,

Your grandson, Wiebe

Mother Jennie apparently did not like Wiebe's Dutch (actually Frisian) name. Fran responded,

I was surprised by what mother said about it. Why are people sensitive about a Dutch name? Kevin is an Irish name; Cynthia is Greek. We have neither Irish nor Greek blood in our veins but 100% Dutch. We feel a Dutch name to be meaningful. If he does not like the name when he grows up, he can always change it.

It turned out that Wiebe became very proud of his name and worked it for all its unique worth. It was symbolic that he was the last person to have a conversation with his Opa Wiebe Boer before my father went into a coma and passed away in 1996.

During this stay in Jos, our missionary colleagues there were very kind and helpful to us. We received many invitations for meals at their homes. At other times we would have meals catered from the kitchen in the student hostel located on our compound. This gave Fran a great chance to rest, especially with Lydia picking up most of the slack. The same thing when we arrived back in Wukari on the 22nd of July – Fran and Wiebe flew; I drove the rest, Lydia did some cooking and our regular cook did as well. After only a few days, Fran

felt up to preparing *stamppot boerenkool* and sausage. She was eager to get cooking again in her own spacious kitchen.

Further Ministry in Wukari Classis (1974)

The exact nature of my work in this new term had yet to be determined, but for the time being, apart from not running the CLTC, things were quite similar to our previous term. One group wanted me to take over the CLTC again, but a TCNN graduate, Rev. Ezekiel Adamu, had served as principal in my absence and was doing a good job. A missionary should not do a job for which there is a suitable Nigerian. In view of a dearth of Hausa Bible study materials, others wanted me to do more writing.

However, Wukari CRCN also called Ezekiel and he accepted. But this left CLTC in the lurch.

The committee called another new TCNN graduate, Umaru Rika, a very gentle and honest young man with whom we bonded readily. The problem was that he was Kuteb by ethnicity, the ethnic group that had seceded from CRCN in a spirit of mutual bitterness. He was not trusted by the Jukuns because he was Kuteb; he was not trusted by the Kuteb because he had not joined their secession. This circumstance led him to resign. The committee wanted to re-appoint me, but I stubbornly refused.

The writing won out, at least for the time being. In the mornings, I was studying in preparation for writing a Hausa commentary on the Psalms, while I used the afternoons editing materials I had written earlier. I was also administering a Bible correspondence course from World Home Bible League.

Of course, there was always church involvement. Early March, Fran wrote that I had to preach in the Hausa service in Wukari CRCN the coming Sunday. The following Sunday I would be in charge of the English service. And the Sunday after that, I was scheduled to give communion in Nyankwala, Lydia's hometown. 'So, his Sundays are getting booked again as before.'

This is how I described a typical week at the time:

I am presently spending most of my time working on a Hausa commentary on the Psalms. It is slow work. Today, I'm on Ps. 10. Tomorrow, I chair a denominational committee meeting that has been assigned to study marriage problems. We need to produce a report for Synod. Friday, I attend the monthly elders' meeting in Nyankwala. Saturday, I hope to finish Ps. 10. Sunday, I will be in a village some 20 miles away. Then I'll be home for a few days and do a few more Psalms.

However, all this work was provisional. The Wukari Classis would soon meet to discuss the main ministry they would want me to pursue. Then things would jell more firmly.

In April 1974, I officially notified the Mission of my interest in working with university students. Actually, I had a broader interest, namely to work in 'modern' Nigeria and address the modern structures in the country, but that would be too vague a concept. Hence I restricted myself to the student world, realising that in that context, the structures would be addressed as well. I was very grateful that the Mission's response was to set up a committee to study the matter. It had two members, Rev. Lester Van Essen, the General Secretary, and me.

However, in June, we were suddenly told that we needed to move back to Baissa. This was the opposite direction from where I really wanted to go, even further into 'the bush,' further away from modern Nigeria, literally into the rainforest. The reason was that the Baissa area was in much greater need of my services than Wukari since the latter now had quite a number of pastors.

In the evenings - in my 'own' time, in other words - I was working on the dissertation we had decided I should write in order to gain a doctorate. Some people who had read my papers at the VU on Karl Kumm, the SUM and colonialism, encouraged me to 'complete' the job with this dissertation. One of those people, of course, was the elderly mission administrator named Henry Farrant. We also felt that having a full doctorate instead of just the Dutch *doctorandus* (Drs.) that is not understood elsewhere would be good for the type of ministry I envisioned. The dissertation would be an expansion of my

thesis. I already had collected sufficient basic resource materials on the subject to do the job.

Having said that, during our maternity leave in Jos waiting for Wiebe's birth, I discovered that there were a lot of SUM archives at the COCIN headquarters, the church fathered by the SUM British. They gave me permission to research them. So, two weeks of the month in Jos I spent in those archives and found a lot more precious documents and information. The other two weeks I spent on the Psalms commentary.

In September, we took further steps to investigate university ministry by joining a five-day training course of Campus Crusade. My purpose was to see whether this would be a suitable organisation for me to join. At the end of the week, I decided this was not my cup of tea, for it is too narrowly focused on individuals and on evangelism, excluding all other areas of the culture. My interest was in the broader Kingdom perspective of Kuypersians. I concluded that I would be friends with them on the campus and cooperate with them, but not be part of them.

We planned another university exploratory trip during the last week of October. Before that, there was a dizzying schedule of ministry and meetings ahead for me that was nothing short of crazy. A meeting with the hospital Board of Governors, a hospital evangelism meeting, a reconciliation meeting between two factions of CRCN that split, a two-day Synod and, finally, a two-day visit from the CRWM Board. Except for the last one, they all involved travel away from home.

That visit from the CRWM Board was by Eugene Rubingh, our Africa Secretary, and Rev. Henry and Mrs Evenhouse. Evenhouse was the general secretary. Since he was about to retire, this was his farewell visit.

Upon my return from that university trip, the committee had reached the tentative conclusion that I should simply apply for a university teaching position. Several lecturers had encouraged us to pursue that route. I started the process of writing such applications before our move to Baissa. We committed the issue to the Lord and

would follow His leading in all of this. I was writing applications about the same time I was packing to move in the opposite direction to Baissa.

Actually, the move took several months. In the meantime, I engaged in various final projects in Wukari. I spent considerable time counselling and advising both Rika of CLTC and the new Nigerian director of the Youth Centre. Together with Bitrus Angyunwe, the new pastor at Rafin Kada, and Ezekiel Adamu, we ran a few courses. One was a course for businessmen. There was a new spirit developing in Nigeria, a more materialistic one that kept business people from 'sacrificing' their time for such courses. So, we did not have the enthusiastic participation we had expected. We hoped to modify the course for future attempts within CRCN. We also conducted a short course on Jehovah Witnesses, who were beginning to invade the area.

It is in order at this stage to report on the latest developments in 'my' congregations. Remember that Rafin Kada had called their pastor. Nyankwala was still in my hands but badly in need of a resident pastor. My greatest 'victory' was having persuaded Bakundi to call their pastor. They chose Pastor Iliya Abowa from Abong, on the border with Cameroon. They did not really have the finances to care for him properly and so would need some financial support for the time being.

Yes, the end to our Wukari area ministry had come. We had arranged for Fran and the children to fly to Takum and stay in the Lupwe guesthouse while I took care of the moving. Everything was packed in drums and crates. I had arranged for two mid-sized trucks from Baissa to come to Wukari and pick up our stuff, including, of course, our rabbits and their cages.

The Interim Months

The plan was for us to move to Baissa soon after Wiebe's birth. It was, of course, the place where we spent our first four months in Nigeria to study Hausa, so it was not new to us.

Mid-September, Fran described a gruelling few weeks:

Last week we spent one day at Baissa to assess the situation there. We are moving on 10 October. John will do that with the help of two Nigerians. I hope to stay at the Lupwe guesthouse for a few days until he gets things settled a bit. Right after that move, there will be a Regional Synod meeting in Baissa. On 21 October, John and two others have to do a week's survey and study tour of the Fellowship of Christian Students at Northern Nigerian universities. But before that, end of September; we will go to Jos for John to attend a week's course with Campus Crusade to check them out.

In view of this heavy schedule, we determined we should postpone our moving date to 6 November, a month later. That way, Fran would not be left in limbo for three weeks with the children.

During this time, we were getting letters from members of our Amsterdam congregation, enquiring whether we would consider accepting a call from their church. Wow, what a challenge, what an adventure – and what a temptation! Fran wrote, 'If it were just personal preference, we would gladly go, but we do feel the Lord has called us here for a purpose and now with our years invested in language and culture learning, we can't leave unless for very good reasons.' But had we acquiesced, how different our lives and ministry might have been. I did feel very honoured at being considered for such a church. Later on, we also received a letter of enquiry from an elder of the Gereformeerde Kerk in Grootegast whether we would consider a call from them. The Gereformeerde Kerk is the denomination in which we both grew up, the Dutch equivalent of the CRC. Grootegast is the seat of the county that includes Lutjegast, my birth village. That elder was the wife of my childhood friend Henk Rozema.

The move to Baissa happened in November, well into the dry season when it 'never' rains. Our strategy for packing was to have everything outside by the end of the day before the movers were scheduled to come. In the case of books, we carried them outside and placed them in drums there. We did not quite finish that part of it that day and planned to do the rest of the books early the next morning. So we left book drums outside open, for it 'never' rains at that time. Would you believe it? That night it rained, true, ever so little, but it hit the books and filtered towards the bottom of the drums. Those precious

books never got over it. They smelled ever since and looked ugly on the shelf. That, of course, only got worse over the decades, with each dry season contributing its quota of harmattan dust.

FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE CONTINUED

In the meantime, during the ministry period above, family and social life there also continued. In September 1974, shortly after Wiebe's birth, we had family company for the first time in Nigeria. Fran's cousin, Anneke and her friend, Marten came over. They were very active during their stay. They followed me around on trips to Ibi, Nyankwala and Takum. They followed our Dutch doctors around on their walks through the Wukari Government Hospital, something I was not sure was ethical but probably a breach of privacy; however, no one complained. They also ventured out on bikes, at one time as far as 17 km on dirt roads and bush trails. Anneke spoke to the people in Dutch, and somehow, they understood each other. Being young and venturesome, they found their way to Jos, then by bus to Kano and finally by bus to Lagos, all the way from the Sahara in the far North to the Atlantic in the far South, everywhere, spending a few days sightseeing. We thoroughly enjoyed their visit.

During the past few months, our drums from the US and our crates from the Netherlands had dribbled in via Mkar. Soon after Wiebe's arrival, the last one arrived. We had feared the worst, for it had gotten separated from the others, while it contained very important items.

Those loads included quite a few items we meant to use as gifts. Among them were several sets of Melmac dinnerware from Amway. Towards the end of September 1974, we had already given three sets away. We kept a double set of sixteen for hosting our many guests. It came in so handy to have such gifts around, along with rabbits, for special occasions.

Fran was also eager to start playing tennis again, but her doctor had told her to wait six weeks – and he was a member of the tennis club! She decided she'd better listen to the expert. How nice it was to have good medical people right in Wukari. There was no need to

make maternity trips of 80 km to Takum Hospital. So, yes, she'd better listen to him.

Fran wrote:

I was enjoying the homemaking role tremendously. It's almost embarrassing to admit these days with all the feminist talk, but I do so enjoy these little kids and I often tiptoe from Cynthia's crib to Wiebe's basket and watch them sleep. I try to hold Wiebe as much as I can, realising they grow up so fast and then they'll hardly sit on your lap anymore.

When Cynthia's birthday came around a month later, Fran was wondering whether she would have the energy to stage a party, but she wrote, 'I feel so great, I can't believe it!' However, a month later, she wrote:

I have a fairly good excuse for not writing: I've been sick. John had been worried for a long time about what he would do if I should get sick because caring for three little ones looks like a hopeless task to him. I've had my first attack of real malaria again. A course of the normal anti-malarial didn't seem to cure it, so now I'm on a round of penicillin yet too. It's a bad time to be sick, as John had an extra load already with classes to teach, meetings, etc and always lots of company and there is fruit (guava) rotting on the trees while I could nicely can it. But when you're sick, survival is the main thing. Malaria caused my ear pain again, too, so tomorrow I have to have my ears cleaned professionally; fortunately that can also be done at Wukari hospital now.

Lydia

One of our first thoughts upon our arrival in Wukari from Amsterdam was about Lydia, who was in boarding school at WDCSS only 80 kilometres away. We arranged for her to visit us over the first weekend. Though students in boarding schools are usually not allowed off the compound, we had written a letter to the principal and he made an exception. She had a rough time coming to our place. She waited two and a half hours before a taxi became available in Takum. She had to walk half a mile in total darkness after the taxi dropped her off at

the Wukari 'Lorry Park.' Then she stopped at the house she knew, but we were no longer living there. So she wondered what had happened – and all this in the dark. She did eventually reach our house but completely exhausted and upset.

Lydia wrote to us quite regularly during her time at WDCSS. Here are some samples:

The teachers have decided that throughout the week, they will be checking to see the cleanest classroom and that class will be excused from compound work which we do every Wednesday. Fortunately, last week, we were the cleanest and we were excused. We hope to have it in the coming week again.

Mama, please send me some cookies.

Mama, you see? My handwriting is improving! I need to buy some more underclothes. Please (the magic word) will you mind buying some for me? I am very well and at the same time enjoying my school work. I love you all as usual.

On Saturday morning, we had to run all the way to the town. It started at 5:30 and I am having sore feet now. This coming Saturday, we have to run again. The principal told us it was cross country, but we don't know the meaning. Mama, I can't see my French exercise book. Please check at Kevin's table or on the shelf where I put my books and clothes. Thank you very much for the clothes you fixed for me. Mama, please give Kevin, Cynthia and Wiebe a kiss for each of *them*. Greet Bulus, Bathsheba, Briskila, Cisilia, etc.

Kevin

The change from a wintry Amsterdam to an exceedingly hot and humid climate, along with changes in food and water, took its toll on Kevin. He would wake up at night for a drink. Though we left a glass of water next to his bed, he preferred to call me to help him. He never called Fran, for he knew I had night duty. Fran wrote, 'John says that seeing I care for the two kids all day while I am pregnant with the third, he will do his part at night.'

In a circular to our friends at the end of February 1974, we wrote the following about Kevin's linguistic journey:

He left Nigeria in 1972, a master of Hausa and with a Nigerian English accent. He has since forgotten Hausa, 'normalised' his English, learned Dutch to the point where he would correct that of his parents while his English was taking a beating again. Now back in Nigeria for three weeks, he is beginning to use more English again and less Dutch. He no longer understands Hausa and has his former Nigerian friends wondering what happened to him. Hopefully, he will pick that up again soon. What all this does to such a young mind, we have no idea.

The Nigerian children on the compound remembered Kevin but were puzzled that he could not talk to them as before. Nevertheless, they followed him around everywhere. By mid-October, he could still speak and understand quite a bit of Dutch. Quoting from a letter, 'We are trying to help him keep it up by reading and talking to him in Dutch at times. Right now we have those two Dutch doctors around. That helps too. He has also begun to understand quite a bit of Hausa again, but tends to be too shy to speak it.'

As to his social life, Fran had to guard the door, for every time Kevin came in, ten kids or more would come in tow. Among them was his old friend Manoah. They had resumed their special relationship, he enjoyed the freedom of a less structured school day and playing all day long, though in the afternoon Fran did some school work with him.

A month or so later, Fran wrote the following:

Kevin's room is full of kids and noise and toys. He enjoys playing all the time much better than going to *kleuter* school in Amsterdam because they kept telling him what to do. I guess he likes being his own boss.

Sometimes Fran found Kevin motivated to do some schoolwork, but it usually would not last longer than ten minutes. We ordered BC Government kindergarten materials for him to begin in September. We ordered courses for two individuals so that Fran could teach Kevin and a friend. Fran found Kevin an eager beaver as far as learning went. He loved stories. By October,

...he recognised all the letters in the alphabet and could even write some words with the magnetic letters. He was able to count further than we cared to listen to as well as do 'many 'easy' calculations.' He was ready for going off to boarding school at Hillcrest in Jos, but his parents were not! He talked about school so much. The other day he said he would go to school in the morning by airplane and then come back in the afternoon. I tried to explain that when he goes it will be at least six weeks before he sees us again. I really don't even want to think about it, but I do know that it will be the best for him. He needs social as well as mental competition.

A bit early at age four, perhaps, Fran wrote that Kevin 'thinks it is taking him way too long to grow up. The other day he started crying and said, 'It's taking such a long time before I can be a daddy!'' At around the same time, he was already talking about whom he would marry when he grew up! 'I'm going to marry someone I don't even know yet, but she has to believe in God.' Why was that? 'Otherwise, I might also start saying that there is no God.'

Kevin's fifth birthday was celebrated much in the style of previous ones. Twenty-six kids showed up, mostly from our own compound. We played games with them, but what they really came for was the good food they had come to expect on such occasions. They delighted in the feast of rice and beef.

In September, Kevin had reasons to feel lonely. All the Nigerian children were now going to school in the morning so that he had no one to play with. Fran tried to switch the kindergarten schedule over to the morning. Kevin found it difficult to await his turn for attention when she was feeding his siblings. He was alone for so long and thus was not used to having to compete for Fran's attention.

Fran worried that Kevin would have a rough time when we moved to Baissa, for he had so many playmates in Wukari. As she was writing a letter mid-September 1974, there were 'around fifteen of them playing games on our back porch, everybody singing and screaming with Cynthia enjoying it all, too, of course.' He would have to 'work his way in again at Baissa, for each group of children play in a different way.'

Two weeks before we were to move to Baissa, a local school teacher invited Kevin to visit her classroom. Kevin did and enjoyed it so much that he went regularly for the last two weeks we lived in Wukari. Fran wrote:

I admire Kevin's adaptability. There he sits in a class with forty-five Nigerian children and doesn't think anything of it. His best friend is also in that class and that helps. School starts at 7:45 and ends at 12:45. I am giving him and his friend two pennies each to buy a little food at the market during their break time. He carries his drinking water with him.

Cynthia

Cynthia had a bit of a hard time adjusting to the new climate. She suffered from terrible heat rashes. She was drinking a lot more, which was natural in the heat and was not sleeping as well as in Amsterdam. But she slowly adjusted to the new climate and routine.

Before the end of February, she began to sit up and had developed strong legs, so strong, in fact, that she wanted to stand on our laps, not sit. Fran wrote that she laughed a lot and was very friendly and happy. 'She smiles more for me than for anyone else,' but Fran surmised, that is normal for little girls. Her eyes 'are so bright and clear and she has such a wise look about her.'

Two compound girls started coming every late afternoon to give Cynthia a stroller ride. When they returned, they would play with her a while on the floor. Fran wrote,

It's good for her to get used to others so that she doesn't get too 'eenkennig' (shy of others). She still prefers us three to anyone else, but she enjoys sitting on a blanket and watching others play. She really has a great big smile for everybody, as long as they stay at a bit of a distance. She hasn't agreed yet to allow 'strangers' to hold her.

On Easter morning, 1974, Cynthia was baptised by Pastor Habila and, as per Nigerian Christian tradition, was given an additional name, 'Kristiana'. However, we were already used to calling her 'Cynthia' – 'Cindy' actually with due apologies to her the first time she reads this – that we doubted the new name would be used much. That turned

out to be true, but it is there as part of her name.

As we did for Kevin, we had a naming party for her in Nigerian fashion. We had invited many people and had our compound cook prepare rice and chicken, a traditional meal. Quite a number of people attended along with children from the compound as well as from town. At such parties, people often give little speeches, blessing the child and wishing it success in the world, etc. Ibrahim Usman Sangari, the local, politician, businessman, and Christian leader, was there as well and 'spoke' for Cynthia: She was to become the wife of his son Joshua. Such occasions were always fun and we enjoyed them as members of the local community.

She was also beginning to move, 'creep, not crawl,' according to Fran. She gets to where she wants in her own way. In general, she was a very happy baby, but she did not like the heat, especially at night; it would make her restless and sleepless. She enjoyed the crowds of kids that played with Kevin in the house, but Kevin found her a bit of a nuisance since she tended to grab things from them.

Three weeks later, she had begun to crawl, slowly and not far. She started pulling herself up on chairs and people. She was a very happy baby and by now very friendly to strangers, which, of course, always made them feel welcome. They would pick her up from her playpen and cuddle her with all parties happy. In the meantime, she now weighed in at 19 lbs, but no teeth as yet.

Another few weeks later, she was now crawling all over the house and enjoying discovering the world around her, for now, mostly the house. Progress for her, but for us it meant shutting the doors properly and putting things higher up. She was starting to make the usual sounds of 'mamamam,' 'daddadda' and 'byebye,' while she waved, all at the appropriate times. Fran wrote that Cynthia was developing 'that strange affection for Daddy that when she sees him she insists that he holds her at least for a while. John now has to be careful, she does not see him if he is in a hurry to go somewhere!'

In August, in other words, after Wiebe's arrival, Cynthia had begun to 'walk' outside, crawl on the grass and sand really. So it was a big relief for Fran to have this afternoon babysitter watch her. Her

first birthday was just around the corner on the 12th and Kevin had 'big plans' for a party. In view of Fran's recent delivery, we had smaller plans this year and invited only six children over, along with a girlfriend of Lydia. We also invited the two Dutch medical couples for dinner that evening.

Cynthia was becoming really independent. Fran wrote:

She wants to feed herself, but that makes her menu a bit of a problem. She feels she can handle mashed potatoes and ice cream with her fingers, but mother won't allow that. She likes bananas as long as we give her the whole thing. If we cut it up, she won't eat it! She had her smallpox vaccination ten days ago and has a really red arm now, but it hasn't bothered her temperament much. She's also getting her fifth tooth.

By September, she was able to stand up alone. In Fran's words,

You expect them to go through all these learning stages, but somehow it is still so thrilling to see their 'firsts,' especially from your own children. We are all trying to get her to try a few steps on her own, but that she won't do yet. She crawls so fast now that it's not worth the effort, I guess. But while she stands alone, she claps her hands for joy, as if she's really proud of herself! A month later, she was walking all over the place. How different from Kevin. We had thought he would never start!

My closing words in my final report on our Wukari ministry: 'We look back upon our Wukari experience with deep gratitude to both God and the Wukari people. They have greatly stimulated us in our Christian growth.'

BAISSA

The Baissa Scene

Since we were in Baissa for language study in 1966, it had not changed all that much except for faces.

Our November move to Baissa was not without problems. After the first truck was loaded under my supervision, I loaded our own vehicle and followed the truck all the way. No problems because there

was supervision at both ends. However, I should have stayed to supervise the loading of the second truck as well. It was done so sloppily that a lot of damage was done to sensitive equipment like the fridge and stove. Other things came through ripped and chipped and legs cracked. They left nine drums behind!

Well, there was an even more urgent 'first things first' upon our arrival in Baissa. The first thing Fran did was to look around for a good baby sitter. We found Damaris, an elementary school pupil and daughter of Mallam Joel, the principal of the Baissa Bible School, who lived right behind us. She was hired as a part-time nanny and stayed with us till we left Baissa. As to the compound, it was full of children, Fran wrote:

There are so many kids here under ten living within 1,000 feet of us that you wouldn't believe it! They all stand at the windows and call for Kevin. Just hope Kevin will find a good friend like he did in Wukari with Manoah.

This mission station in Baissa was on a hill much higher than that of Wukari, but we could not see Baissa town due to the jungle nature of the area – trees everywhere. We estimated the town had a population from 3,000 to 6,000. The compound included a dispensary or large health clinic, a maternity centre and a very large Bible school. So, this compound was full of buildings and people all the time. The school was next to our house, while staff and students lived behind us.

As before, there were three houses on this hill. We lived in the one formerly occupied by the Kuiks, who had returned to the US. The old one we occupied during language study was now used by the family of *Likita* Ezra Garba Kumknaba, our former Hausa teacher and dispensary attendant, as well as a core elder in the Baissa congregation.

The third was a single-person house built for the nurse in charge of the dispensary. At this particular time, it was occupied by Anita Vissa. She had been at Takum and Lupwe for several decades – since 1941! – and felt kind of exiled to this isolated place. This was be-

cause she could not adjust to the newly emerging Nigeria or hand responsibility over to Nigerian nurses. Furthermore, she had conflicts with the new doctors that sometimes came and went. We felt she should have been honourably retired, but here she was, doing her best among a people she did not like in a place she did not want to be. She had done honourable work for decades before this.

She also had a small rabbitry, but when she butchered one, she would put it in the back of her freezer for some time so that she would forget which rabbit it was she was eating. She was fiercely independent and refused to call on us when she had a patient who had to be transferred to Takum Hospital, even if in the middle of the night. In the morning, we would simply find her gone without a word to us. Our relationship with her was largely restricted to our weekly prayer meetings and, of course, the mandatory greeting when our paths crossed on the compound. We were sad about this and felt that she directed her anger for her 'exile' at us. But, when all was said and done, she was the one used by the Lord years earlier to bring Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo to the Lord when he was her leprosy patient in Lupwe. Through him, she had numerous spiritual grandchildren. It was to this last point that I spoke at the open mike at her funeral service in Grand Rapids years later.

Toward the end of our Baissa days, in 1976, Anita went for Home Service and was replaced by a Canadian single nurse from Ontario, Gremar de Koter. After the never-thawing frosty relationship with Anita, it was a great relief for Fran especially to have a friendly neighbour.

Later on, an additional house was built to accommodate Rev Adamu and Esther Eyab. He had a master's degree from Reformed Bible College in Grand Rapids and was the point man for the CRCN Evangelism Committee as an evangelist in the Baissa area. Eyab was a courageous and independent man. He was Kuteb, but when his people seceded from CRCN, he remained with CRCN. It meant that, like Umaru Rika in Wukari, he was not really trusted by either side. He was burning with evangelistic zeal. Though we were both working in the same geographic area and got along well with each other,

we did not work together. We had different assignments, different authorities to which to report, and very different thinking about what we felt called to do, though they were not opposite. When the Edgar Smith Memorial Bible College was opened at Baissa, he became the principal, but that was after we had moved on.

Lydia

Lydia, of course, was still at WDCSS in Takum. We were not seeing much of her. She came for a short visit during her December Christmas break but then went to Nyankwala at the request of her father. Lydia loved both of her homes and dividing her time was the best way of coping with the situation.

In March 1975, Fran wrote about how pretty Lydia was becoming and how boys noticed her.

But she isn't interested. I'm amused about the hard time she gives them. She writes us about some of the love letters the boys at school send her! A boy in Form 3 was trying to make her befriend him. He said that she must marry him. When she refused, he said that she was acting like a bush girl. So she told him to go ahead and look for another girl. At least, communication is still very open with our teenager!

Here is one of the 'love letters' which Lydia enclosed. Just to show us how her own English had improved, she underlined all the spelling and grammar mistakes!

Dear Darling. It gives me a great pleasure since it save my personal free chance. I hope nothing is unhappy with you. I am writing you this letter because I would like you to be my girlfriend or lover, but I don't know weather you love me or not. If you love me reply my letter soon, so that I may know weather you love me or not. Please Lydia make up your mind so that you enjoy me and how life will go. I wish you a successful life throughout your form five and may the Lord God guard you. Amen. Your loving boy, Rabiou Tanko.

She also wrote to us about a fake teacher:

Last term I wrote to you that we had a Math teacher who doesn't teach. Whenever he comes to the class, if we ask him to teach, his answer is 'Don't worry, we will finish this book in one day if I like.' He borrowed about N90 from a boy in this school. Last week he was trying to run away but the principal told the students to catch him. He borrowed much money from people in the town and from the principal. He now told us that he received a letter saying that the man is not a person from the National Youth Service course. He pilfered the degree from someone else.

And even a bit about a small student rebellion:

This morning we were supposed to have bread and tea. But they did not give us bread, so some of the students became angry and poured their tea on the tables. The principal put our whole class on fatigue today. Each student had to carry many blocks.

And there were some of the normal requests for money and other necessities and also thanks for the stuff we sent her:

When Baba comes next week, please have him bring me some groundnuts, cookies and oranges.

Thank you very much for the watch that Baba brought me last term. I like it very much and use it all the time.

When Baba comes, please give me some money. I don't have enough for transport fare (N2) to Baissa. If you don't mind, when it is getting near to the time of school holidays, you can send me the transport fare.

Thank you very much for the tin of milk which Baba brought to me last time; also for the loaf of banana bread, which I enjoyed very much.

Mama, I don't have even a kobo (penny). I had N1 left last week, but it was pilfered.

And then about the other things she was involved in:

I am one of the executive members of the Fellowship of Christian

Students (FCS) and I am the Prayer Secretary. At first I was shy, but before everything was over, I felt alright. Maybe this coming Sunday, I will lead the first part of the service. I also conduct group Bible studies every Sunday night.

I am now working in the library, putting books in alphabetical order. I also read newspapers every day.

Every time Fran or I went to Takum we would visit Lydia at her school. However, one time maybe Fran tried to skip out:

Mama, is it true that you came to Takum? Some of the girls went to the hospital and when they came back, they told me that they saw you in the hospital. I said maybe it was another white woman that they saw, but they insisted that you were the one. Please remember that if you are coming to Takum, you should try and bring something to me if possible.

In August 1975, Lydia's parents came to Baissa for a visit. Unfortunately, I was away in Jos, working on Hausa translations for a conference that was to hold at Ife in the south. Fran wrote:

They were nice guests. Lydia's mother is willing to try all new foods, but father Iliya is a bit more hesitant. He feels safer with bread and jam. I had Bulus' wife cook the evening meal each time, because I knew they preferred Nigerian food.

In September, Lydia entered the equivalent of grade 9 and turned 15. Fran wrote, 'She can be very mature and also very childish, which, I'm sure, is quite normal at that age.' Fran saw her for a few moments during a visit to Takum and was told that she was getting used to her seventy new dorm mates again.

They have two bunks in a small room. In addition to their bedding, they are allowed one large trunk and one box in the room. All studying etc., is done at school. Just this last vacation she told us she would like to go into radio work after graduation. She has a good singing voice and is already part of a group of students who go out preaching on weekends. So, that looks like a good start.

Kevin

Kevin was adjusting well to his new surroundings. He scouted out the compound on his own and soon had quite a few friends. I commented that he really was quite an amazing little fellow with his ability to adjust to any situation. Though Fran was busy as a homemaker with three kids, she still found time to have regular teaching sessions with him. She played Monopoly a lot with him. The educational value of that game is amazing, especially for learning the basic processes in arithmetic. He could read the dice quickly and could read from the cards what he had to pay and could even make the right payments.

A few weeks later, in answer to a question from Mother Jennie about birthday celebrations, Fran wrote that

Kevin is so conscious of hours, days, weeks, months, years, birth-dates and numbers, that we are paying more attention to birthdays. How many days in a month? How many minutes in an hour? How many seconds in twelve minutes? How many days has Wiebe been in the world? I have to be correct and specific in my answers, because he has the memory I used to have and I can't fool him by just saying something! When I say that I don't know, he brings me pen and paper and 'orders' me to figure it out.

Shortly after, Fran wrote,

Kevin talks most of the day – almost always it's questions, questions, questions. He is fascinated with airplanes. He's had many rides in our little mission plane already. Once, he got to 'help' the pilot and another time he had a 20-minutes ride with just himself and the pilot. He builds airplanes out of everything: blocks, wood, string, paper, etc. From Sinterklaas on 5 December, he got a big set of Tinker Toys. Those are great with wheels and wings for making 'real' airplanes. He really enjoys being read to and can pick out several words already. He's also doing very well with numbers. He is certainly ready for 'real' school.

Kevin had his sixth birthday while I was on a trip to Ibadan, but he wanted his party regardless. It was so nice to have all these little toys

we had in our drums just for such occasions. Fran issued a general invitation to Kevin's friends, which under such circumstances included all far and near who heard about it. She wrapped little presents for thirty children and then had balloons for those beyond that number. She also baked a cake and 24 cupcakes – a typical Fran-organised party that kids always loved.

The party was a roaring success – 'fun and wild,' as Fran put it:

Everyone enjoyed the games while the cake and cupcakes were devoured in short order. Since they were not brought up with this tradition, they don't understand our idea of cake and candles and singing "Happy Birthday," but they are happy to join in on the fun and goodies! Now we'll have to start thinking about our July and August birthdays.

Indeed, family life had become more complicated. And indeed more conscious. Kevin was now 43 lbs. and 4 feet tall, very conscious of the fact that he was skinny. He said, 'I'm going to eat a lot so that I'll get fat.' He was afraid that Cynthia would catch up with his weight! Some months later, he began to despair that he would ever gain weight. One evening he 'ordered' an extra bowl of yoghurt so that he would soon reach 50 lbs.

All the time, there was a steady flow of packages from Grand Rapids, often for Kevin. By September 1975, 'he can't figure out who these mysterious people are that keep sending him things. He loves you all, but doesn't remember anything about our stay in Grand Rapids in 1972 or even really of Mom and Jane visiting us in Amsterdam. He has so many experiences that he forgets quickly.'

As far as language development went, Fran wrote:

He's to the point again where Hausa is easier than English. He talks Hausa to us most of the time, but I always speak English to him and, of course, also read to him and teach him in English. He does seem to have a knack for languages and enjoys speaking whatever is the local thing. He knows a fair number of words in Ngoro (local Baissa language) too, of which John and I know nothing.

Kevin developed a real interest in the mission plane and, later, in avi-

ation in general. The pilots were aware of his fascination. So, when the plane brought people to our station one day and planned to pick them up again in the late afternoon, Gord Buys, our second pilot, invited Kevin to come for the ride to Lupwe, play with the children there for a while and then fly back. This invitation did not need to be repeated! Those small planes were really nice, for, because of the short distance between these two places, the pilot usually flew low so that one got a good view of the countryside. Kevin went, played with Lupwe children, had lunch at Buys' place, and came home again. What a day for him! Both pilots, Browneye and Buys, liked to give children a chance to 'operate' the plane or, at least, 'steer' it, something right up to Kevin's alley.

About a year before Kevin reached school age, we already began thinking about a very difficult decision we would have to make sooner or later. All missionary children attended boarding school at Hillcrest in Jos; it was the natural thing to do that no one questioned or hesitated about, even though it was painful to all parents to send their children away. Local schools were of very low level and their English poor. All our colleagues advised us against sending him to the local school. We were struggling. He seemed to be too young and small to send so far away. If he were to get sick, he would want our care. We had no qualms about the low local *academic* level since Fran was a teacher and would supplement what he would get in school. She knew that Kevin was already a bright student and an eager learner.

We worried more about the *social* aspect. His couple of weeks in that Wukari School had gone well, but the problem was that as the only white child, he got far too much attention, something missionary children don't need. At Hillcrest, he would be with children like himself as well as with a rich variety of others. Fran wrote, 'Our heads know it's best to send him, but our hearts don't agree.' If he were to go, that would be our first big 'sacrifice' in Nigeria. 'If it must be done, I'm sure the Lord will give us the ability to make the break, but our parental hearts can't bring ourselves yet to make the decision.' We realised that most children did well at Hillcrest; it was the parents who suffered the most from the separation.

However, a month later, we filled in an admission form for Hillcrest, having decided that it was the best option. 'Other children and parents survive, so we presume that we will too. But it's a sacrifice that we are not willing to make for long. Children are too precious to be boarded out to others.' By mid-December, Fran wrote:

Although we are not looking forward to the separation, we do feel it will be the best all around for him to attend the missionary school in Jos. He already knows several of the missionary children who will be in first grade with him and he's looking forward to the plane ride to Jos as well as to living in a dormitory with thirty other children.

Around that time we took a holiday in Jos and spoke with the Hillcrest Principal, a CRC Canadian missionary from Alberta, Norm Brouwer by name, who, upon retirement, settled in Chilliwack and became good friends to my brother Jim. We told him that, after weighing all the pros and cons, we had finally decided to keep Kevin at home. He would attend the local school and we would supplement him at home. Norm did not try to talk us out of it and wished us success, but he did warn us not to 'dump' Kevin on Hillcrest in the middle of the school year and expect Hillcrest to help him catch up! He gave us the names of the textbooks for Kevin's class and advised us to order them. Fran wrote, 'We do hope we are doing the best for all concerned, and feel that for our situation and after much prayer and thought, this is what the Lord is telling us to do.'

Shortly before starting school in Baissa, Kevin wrote an *actual* letter to Grandpa and Grandma on our manual typewriter. Here it is, warts and all:

Dear Grandpa Grandma, This is Kevin
We have a cat.
We went to m marraba.
I played with Jeff
Daddy went to Zing. On Feb. 12 mommy and I will go to the dentist
with the airplane.

26 January 1975, was a really important day in Kevin's life. He started

school in Baissa.

We wanted to try it but thought we'd wait till he felt settled and confident. A few weeks ago, he asked us if we wouldn't ask the teacher if he could go to school as he had in Wukari. So this morning, off he went with all the others, dressed just like them in his school uniform. How long this will last and how it will go and how satisfied we'll be all remains to be seen, but we are happy that he is brave enough to attempt this adventure.

The Headmaster, Mallam Yohanna Garba, had agreed to the arrangement and promised to keep in touch with us about how Kevin was doing. A few weeks later, we wrote we were happy with the situation, but we did have to make allowances for the Nigerian style. One day a teacher was sick. So, they joined two classes and ended up with almost 100 children, most of them sitting on mats. Kevin was one of the few lucky ones to be assigned a bench. Here's a paragraph about this adventure from February 1975:

Kevin really enjoys school. For roll call, he understood the kids to say, "Praise him, sir" instead of "Present, sir." However, on the whole, he understands Nigerian English quite well. The Bible story and questions are all in Hausa and he can follow that all right. I think because he knows most of the Bible stories, that helps too, but he said yesterday he had even answered some of the questions. So, he doesn't hesitate to speak Hausa anymore now either. Today he came home with a new song sung to the tune of "London Bridge is falling down": "Off to Egypt you must go, you must go, you must go, Off to Egypt you must go, to buy food."

We received good reports from Mallam Yohanna Garba. One day, after they had played some classroom games, Kevin reported to us that he 'ate them all.' He knew it was not correct English, he told us later, but he couldn't think of the right English. The expression is a translation of the Hausa '*Na ci duka*,' literally meaning 'I ate everything,' actually meaning, 'I got everything right.' Some months later, Dr and Mrs Harvey Bratt visited us and told us how impressed they were with our

'Nigerianised' children, especially Kevin with his fluent Hausa.

One day Fran went to visit Kevin at the local school during recess. She wrote, 'He was doing fine and playing well and had already spent his four pennies with his friends. He said he knows about ten kids now out of the fifty in his class.' Just a week or so ago, at the end of a brief school holiday period, the Headmaster, Mallam Garba, came to us for a visit. Kevin told him at that time that he was ready for school again. It did not seem he was suffering from attending this school. In fact, he was enjoying himself to the hilt at school. Even after school, 'he is eager to have Fran teach him more stuff!' He simply could not get enough of school. After school, he would often play school with his friends. He would be teaching them from the very book that Fran was teaching him. I made him a couple of blackboards and he used them in his play-school to teach the other children.

Some days later, he came home from school smiling, from ear to ear. He had been declared 'No. 1' in his class, meaning he had done the best in his class on all the year-end tests. He never got tired of either schooling. When Fran thought it was enough and wanted to quit, he wanted to keep going: 'Let's read some more yet,' would be his response. She decided that as long as he wanted to continue, she may as well also. Fran was keeping him up with his class at Hillcrest.

Fran was also teaching Kevin from books that her sister Jane sent. Some of these were substantial books of up to 200 pages with stories of 20 pages. But Kevin was handling the materials well. The math books, in fact, were too easy for him. They went through them 'just for fun!' His school teacher told his class to learn the multiplication tables and Kevin was doing quite well with them.

Kevin was beginning to read on his own by the end of October 1975. On weekends, he would put a book under his pillow so that, when he woke, he would read a story to himself before getting out of bed. He was reading the same books he would have been reading at Hillcrest and understood them well. At school, he continued to do well. At the end of November, his teacher assigned him to teach reading to a group in his class. He said the kids listened quite well. He found it a great experience.

As we have already seen in this saga of Kevin's schooling, education can take many forms, much of it outside the realm of school. Late February 1976, he was learning all sorts of stuff. Playing soccer would be the most familiar to you, but he also learned 'what grasses and leaves will make brooms and ropes and how to set traps for different birds and wild animals.'

During an April 1976 holiday in Jos, we took Kevin to Hillcrest to check how he was doing compared to the kids there. The teacher said that he was doing very well after she tested him somewhat. We were, of course, very happy to hear this. It showed that we had not cheated him academically by keeping him at home.

Fran started teaching him map reading. 'He could soon find cities on the Nigeria map by locating it in the index and then following with his fingers to B7 or J2 etc.' He also learnt to read the distance columns, which fit right into his continuing aviation interest. 'He is so exact about numbers and has quite a memory for details,' a typical Prins quality that Daddy sadly lacked/lacks. The Mission aviation people have a chart that shows the distance between various airports and strips, the time it takes between them and the fare for each ride. Kevin soon had that entire chart memorised! He became jealous of all the rides I got and was full of aviation talk. He declared he wanted to become a pilot when he grew up.

'We gave him a battery-operated airplane for his birthday and he's always building planes with his Lego. Every room is a runway for a different Nigerian city. It's all so real to him.'

Cynthia

Fortunately for us, Cynthia was also doing well in her new surroundings. She remained her happy self and kept everybody laughing most of the time. Fran wrote:

Cynthia is almost always happy and playing. John says he didn't know real babies could have such nice personalities and be so cute!

He thought that was just in baby ads. Cynthia jabbars a lot and already says a few words that mean something to us. She is always happy and trying something new to make people laugh. This morning she was pulling at clothes on the line and sucking the water out of them. Later, she took her favourite spoon to the sandbox and started eating sand with it. She still has a very limited vocabulary but can manage to get herself understood. She's on the verge of speaking and can imitate words very well.

First thing in the morning she's out the door to her baby sitter's compound! This morning she was trying her hand at the mortar and pestle and chasing chickens away, etc. She comes back with palm oil around her mouth indicating she's had food with someone again! Then she pulls "Babee," her little friend, along with her and comes back to the screen door calling "Ga-ga" ("Gafara" is Hausa for "excuse me.") and then she points and jabbars so that I can tell she'd like more food and then the two of them sit down on the kitchen floor with their plate and eat whatever there is. She's just following exactly the way of Kevin and Manoah in Wukari.

Towards the end of the month, Cynthia was still just jabbering a lot with only a few words intelligible. She talked to everyone and was so friendly. She wandered through the compound behind our house. One Sunday morning, I found her somewhere inside a student roundhouse listening to the radio along with the others.

Not long afterwards, she 'was starting to say quite a few words, mostly repeating what she hears or understands us to be saying. Which language will be dominant is hard to tell because she uses both Hausa and English words.'

After she started talking, Cynthia never quit! This was a common refrain in the letters of early 1976. She understood English but preferred Hausa. She also learnt to speak fairly well in Panso, Damaris' language, though we never heard her speak it. In my January 1976 circular I wrote:

Cynthia is becoming a proper lady and a good conversationalist, not to say blabbermouth, and preferably in Hausa. She is a real little Nigerian and prefers Nigerian food. She frequently pushes aside her plate scornfully with the remark, “Abincin Bature,” i.e., “white man’s food!”

Again, according to Fran, ‘Whether she has anything to say or not, doesn’t matter. She just keeps talking. If you don’t understand her in one language, she tries another.’

Hausa-English is getting in her way. She sees a picture of a cat but insists that it’s a “kulle”; she sees a picture of a fish and says “Kamar kifi fa,” “Why, that’s like a fish.” Hausa is definitely stronger with her right now than English. If she wants something badly, like food or drink, she first says it in Hausa and then, if she thinks I might not have understood her, she repeats it in English.

A few months later, she began to show more interest in reading and stories. If she and Fran were looking at and talking about pictures without reading, Cynthia would demand, ‘*Ki yi magana fa,*’ ‘Hey, read aloud.’ One day, she brought a book to me and expressed surprise that I could also read. I often played with her in the evening but seldom read books. So she said in surprise, ‘*Ashe, kaiya!*’ or ‘What do you know, you know how to read too!’

Wiebe

In my first Baissa letter, I indicated some impatience on my part about Wiebe’s progress. He was still a baby, but I wanted him to start doing things prematurely. I used the excuse, ‘That’s the Boer in me, I guess.’

A month later, he was already ‘enjoying his baby swing, ‘sits up’ a little, can roll over and makes lots of noise and noises.’ He decided to greet in the new year of 1975 with two teeth almost simultaneously without anyone noticing. Fran felt something with the spoon in his mouth; she looked and, *voila*, two teeth! She reported that Kevin was a bit jealous ‘that Wiebe is the winner with getting teeth first.’

By February 1975,

Wiebe seems to be determined to be fast at everything. Two teeth at five months and now at six months, he is creeping. He's long and tiny and there he is on all fours, rocking away and trying to move. He is so aware of his accomplishments that he grins from ear to ear. He can move quite a distance, but it doesn't yet qualify for crawling. Sitting doesn't interest him in the least. He sleeps till 7 a.m., when "we sit gezellig with him and Cynthia both."

Then, at the end of the month, all of a sudden, he sat up, alone even. By the end of April, he had become an expert at crawling. However, at this time, Fran was having a tough time finding the right foods for him since we had shut down our fridge due to a lack of bottled gas. Wiebe had a great appetite for bread and milk but was not growing much. She boiled peanuts with carrots and mixed it with a banana and cereal – and he liked it! Peanuts were, of course, the 'perfect food' and readily available. Also, we had oranges growing in our backyard.

Though Wiebe grew up blond, at that age, 'He definitely has red hair like his Opa Boer, so I guess we named him right.' By late October, white hair was overcoming the red – 'unfortunately,' according to Fran.

Wiebe got sick quite a lot in his first year, but by his first birthday, he started regaining his weight and was once again happy, playing with toys and with other children, crawling all over the place and screaming for attention. Fran planned one of her typical parties for him that would include a host of compound children. Kevin bought a rattle for him from his weekly allowance. We gave him a Tonka truck and a Fisher Price bus.

Soon after his first birthday, Fran wrote, 'He is crawling vigorously, getting into everything again like cupboards, wastebaskets and bookshelves.' To put a stop to it all, Fran took the books off the shelves and tied the cupboard doors. A few days later, she returned the books and untied the doors. Wiebe had lost interest in them, at least for the moment. But sure enough, he started it again. This time we tried to

teach him that this was a no-no, but he did not heed us. Fran wrote that 'even a strong reprimand (and slight slap) from Daddy did not discourage his efforts.' When we say 'No!' he just looks at us and raises his hand as if to say "Why not?" Once I wagged my finger at him and he promptly wagged back! He loved Damaris and enjoyed being carried on her back. Damaris would pull both children in the wagon.

He had become quite set in his routines. At the end of November 1975, Fran wrote:

Wiebe is a little rascal now. He climbs on everything, pushes things out of his way, hauls everything out of the cupboards and bookshelves and then crawls in there himself. He doesn't respond to "No." He just looks at us and grins. Even gentle spankings from Dad don't impress him. He has that "ondeugende" (naughty) look in his eyes. Didn't John throw his wooden shoes in water when he was little? Well, Wiebe feels that's where all shoes belong. He often throws shoes in a pail of water we usually have in the bathroom.

He still refuses to walk. He stood alone for the first time on his sixteenth month birthday. We all clapped for him and he thought that was cute, so he did it a few more times, but since then, he's lost interest. He just gets on his knees, grins and claps for himself. I think he knows we are watching him and want him to try, but he has his mind made up!

Wiebe started to walk on 8 February, 1976! Kevin was relieved that Wiebe was actually slower at walking than he was! A couple of days later, Wiebe was already trying to run. He goes all day now and says 'Big boy, big boy.' He was obviously pleased with himself. 'He's getting many enthusiastic cheers from his siblings, Damaris and friends. He's decided he wants to grow up fast now, as he also wants to use the potty chair.' We planned a party to celebrate his walking. 'Good excuse to butcher some rabbits,' wrote Fran.

As to discipline, he was very different from Cynthia, who was overly sensitive to it. In that same 1976 circular, I wrote,

In addition to refusing to walk, he refuses to learn the meaning of 'No!' When we say 'No,' he only wags his warning finger at us and

merely lets out a disapproving grunt – only to repeat the offence. All his mother's considerable teaching skills have so far run amuck, not to speak of his father's clumsier attempts.

In February 1976, Wiebe began to respond to talking in Hausa. Two months later: 'He's saying more words all the time now; some Hausa, some English.' Fran remembers one humorous incident of Wiebe's early Hausa. We all needed cholera shots to be administered by Gremar, the new nurse on the compound. Cynthia cried a little, but Wiebe just laughed and said, 'Auntie, *allura, haka*,' That means, 'Auntie, this is how to give a shot.'

THE INTERACTING FAMILY

We had planned a family holiday in Jos for March, 1975 and intended to drive up there. However, we could not get on the ferry to cross the Donga River. The approach to the ferry was too sandy for the car. We decided to turn around and go via Takum. While there, we were told an empty mission plane was going to Jos. So, the family was put aboard and flew while I drove the six-to-eight-hour road by myself. Such flights, by the way, are quite costly, but with three little children, we considered the extra cost well worth it for Fran.

During the Jos holiday, Cynthia pushed Wiebe down three steps in his stroller. He tipped over and landed under the stroller. His lips and nose were bruised and bleeding while he had a little bump on his forehead. 'It's amazing how tough kids can be,' commented Fran. Being in Jos, we asked Verbrugge to take a look at him for internal injuries, but, thank God, all was fine. We were reminded of how alert we had to be constantly with three children around. Cynthia did many of such things in 'pure playfulness,' without realising that she was hurting him. She cried this time simply because Wiebe cried. Kevin thought that Cynthia deserved a real spanking.

In early July 1975, I was invited to the Ife National Congress on Evangelism, a spillover of the International Lausanne Conference on Evangelism, to be held mid-August at the University of Ife, some 80 kilometres from Ibadan. I was asked to translate the main pre-

conference documents into Hausa, which indicated we had by now a wide-spread reputation for our Hausa skills. I was very excited about this conference, for it would give me the opportunity to share my concern about ministry to modern Nigeria with people from all over the country. Perhaps it would give some new leads, a hope that was fulfilled more than 100 per cent. Unfortunately, the event would coincide with the Mission's Annual Spiritual Conference, something in which we loved to participate. It could not be helped. The family and I went our separate ways during that time. As both Pastor Adamu Eyab and Dr Harry Boer also attended the Ife Conference, we flew together in the mission plane. Ah, what wear and tear that saved us both personally and our car. It would have meant a round trip drive of some 2700 kilometres.

My hopes for this conference were fulfilled 100 per cent plus. I met two people who became my friends and more. As I was walking along a covered walkway between two buildings at Ife, I saw a man approaching me who looked just like Charles Spurgeon, a famous British preacher, scholar and author of the 19th century – beard and face, body type and all. I stopped and greeted him as 'Mr Spurgeon.' He stopped and smiled from ear to ear, so pleased he was to be identified with Spurgeon. In fact, he told me Spurgeon was indeed his hero. This was Graham Weeks, a British pharmacist serving with SUM British Branch. We became friends instantly and remain so till this day. You will be hearing more about him.

The other person was the Rev Dr Adeolu Adegbola, a short, quick, sharp-witted Yoruba Methodist clergyman from Ibadan. He was the Director of the Institute of Church & Society (ICS) there, the Institute whose foundational stone-laying ceremony we attended during our Ibadan course eight years before. He told me about the ministry of the ICS and I immediately recognised that this could be the right place for me to minister to contemporary Nigeria since universities had not opened up. I explained my passion to him and we agreed to find a way in which I could join him. He wanted me to establish an ICS branch office in the North. This, I felt, was a Godsend. We agreed that I would come to Ibadan at the end of October to work out

things further. I was elated with this contact. My main personal goal for Ife had been achieved more than I could possibly have hoped.

During my involvement at the Ife Conference that eventually led us to a turning point in our ministry and brought me into contemporary Nigeria, Fran, Lydia and the younger children flew to Miango, near Jos, for the Mission's Annual Spiritual Conference.

But while at Miango, Cynthia was looking for Daddy. She had seen me leave with the plane just as she herself would a couple of days later and she expected fully to see me at Miango. When she did not see me there, she declared, 'Daddy *ya gudu,*' 'Daddy ran away.'

We met up with each other in Jos after both conferences. Things had not been easy for Fran at the Mission conference, though Lydia did her very best to help with the younger children. No problems with Kevin, but Cynthia got malaria with all its attendant difficulties.

In another January 1976 letter, I summarised our situation as follows:

As a family, we are all doing well. Kevin is enjoying himself to the hilt at the local school. These kids are growing up in the most carefree surroundings here, with all the space in the world to play. They are becoming increasingly Nigerian in their interests, lingo and thought world. From that point of view, any move we make away from here will be for the worse. We'll never get a better place for them.

Nevertheless, as you know, I was determined to move from Baissa village into the city to be part of modern Nigeria.

BAISSA MINISTRY (1974-1976)

In a July 1974 letter from Wukari, this is how I described the church situation in the Baissa Classis:

There are some six or seven congregations here, all of whose pastors have moved away and whose evangelists have largely quit because they were not cared for by the people as they had promised. In some congregations, many are under discipline while others should be! I am requested to see if I can do anything about this situation. It is a challenging job but it will take me further from the university, not

closer. So I told the Committee that I agreed to the assignment, but on the condition that as soon as university work opened up, I should be allowed to go.

That bleak Baissa situation was the result of a New Life for All (NLFA) campaign for which no follow-up provisions had been made. Throngs of people joined a church that had weak leadership to begin with.

My first letter from Baissa, dated 25 November, 1974, contained the following paragraph:

We have settled in pretty well. We do not come as complete strangers, of course, for we lived here before. In addition, through the years, I have met many of the leaders in various meetings. This means that many of them already know me fairly well. As to what we will do here remains to be seen. I will go on writing as before, but I will also try to work in the churches, some of which are in a rather bad shape. I trust the Spirit will guide us as we seek His will. One thing we will certainly be doing is giving weekly courses to evangelists.

In an early Baissa letter, Fran described my initial activities in these words:

John is trying to find his missionary place in this community. He's made quite a few contacts already by visiting at the clinic on our compound and in the town. He's also trying to catch up on some committee secretarial work and doing the final editing on a Samuel commentary while continuing his writing on the Psalms.

In some ways, the Baissa ministry resembled that in Wukari. Fran wrote about my first wedding in the area in Ndafero, some four kilometres east of Baissa.

As in Wukari, the 'African time' element always plays a role at all occasions. We can never seem to get it right. When we come on time, we are often far ahead of everyone. When we come five minutes late, the occasion may have started already. You simply can't win the time game. Nigerians always seem to sense when to come on time or when later. Not us! I am not sure we will ever catch on.

Early on, Fran also wrote that I was happy working in this classis.

He feels he can work everywhere without stepping on anyone's toes. The people are open and welcome him. Because he is a pastor and already knew many of the leaders, he is well accepted. John sometimes has trouble getting along with other missionaries, but he is generally respected and well-liked by the Nigerians and that is, after all, why we are here.

The only people who were not so open to me were the elders of the local Baissa CRCN. Ever since their Pastor Yohanna, whom we met when we came to Baissa for language study in 1966, had left, they had not called another pastor. They wanted to be the boss and did not want any pastor to rule over them. They ruled over their parishioners with an iron fist. They had not taken the *spirit* of Reformed Church order to heart, only the *letter*. From it they had understood correctly that a congregation does not require an ordained pastor in order to be complete and they milked that one for long. So, they kept me at a distance and called on me only when they wanted to use me for some specific purpose.

It was a problem that would plague the Baissa church for many years. Though we did not stay in Baissa very long, people from Baissa would frequently visit us after we moved to Jos and complain bitterly about the situation, especially the failure of the church to engage in effective evangelism. Their rule was experienced not as that of a spiritual shepherd but as of an iron-fisted tyrant, completely out of line from Bible-oriented leadership.

During the course of February, 1975 I went to preach on a Sunday morning in a village a predecessor of mine, Rev Robert Recker, the first resident missionary in the area, had preached many times. There were still very few Christians in the place. With the permission of the village chief, I preached outside and stressed that I knew Recker very well and that he had authorised me to preach here in his name. I was sad; I told the people that I would have to report to him that still very few people had answered the call of Jesus.

As in Wukari, I was soon invited to serve as counsellor/advisor/pastor-in-absentia by three different area congregations: Ndafero,

Na'ashong and Abong on the river bordering with Cameroon. The elders in these congregations tend to be very independent when they are vacant. The only things they may not do are the sacraments, i.e. communion and baptism. As I have indicated in earlier chapters, I am unhappy about such arrangements since the sacraments are the easiest of all. Preaching, counselling, running the church are much more difficult. So, why have we as a Mission imposed such unnecessary and impractical arrangements on the Church? It is also expensive for a vacant church to invite a pastor from another congregation to conduct the sacraments and pay him for his services and expenses. For poor congregations like those in the Baissa area, that is quite a burden.

Many Nigerian villages have special market days every so many days often not conforming to the pattern of the Christian week. Baissa had a comparatively large daily market, but it also had a special market day, which did adhere to the weekly pattern. It fell regularly on Mondays. Like all such regular markets, the Baissa market was a magnet for area crowds who either came to buy or sell or simply for socialising. Since area evangelists were also drawn to this Monday market, they would frequently come up our hill for a visit. After some time, we decided together we should make use of the day to do Bible study for an hour or so. And so it came about that every Monday, when I was not away at least, we would have a Bible study and prayer together with the normal tea.

In addition to the Monday Bible study for those that were near enough to come to the Baissa market, I also ran a monthly two-day evangelist course in Abong for those farther away, right on the Cameroon border. We were studying my Hausa commentary on Genesis. Though it was 33 kilometres from home, I usually went home for the night in order to support Fran. I made those trips by motorcycle because the Opel was not made for these roads and because of a shortage of gasoline. Some of these evangelists had to trek a day and a half across mountains and rivers, but they were so eager for the teaching, encouragement and fellowship that they came regularly.

All of these evangelists from Baissa and Abong were working

amongst very backward people and in a church that was in a sad state, as I explained before. Animism, fear and witchcraft were very strong, even among 'Christians' who were baptised some years earlier but had not been followed up with seriously. 'The struggle between the evil spirits and the Holy Spirit is very intense in many lives,' I wrote.

My schedule was hectic. In a May 1975 letter, I described the week I was facing:

I leave tomorrow morning at 6:30 for a village 35 kilometres from here by car and then 8 more kilometres by foot. And I will spend the Sunday there with the evangelist and his people. Return home Monday morning to meet with our evangelists' Bible study group for three hours. Tuesday, an elders' meeting with the Na'ashong congregation, while Wednesday, a meeting with the Takum Hospital Board of Governors. Thursday, I meet with the Fellowship of Christian Teachers (FCT), also in Takum. Friday, I will visit a baptismal class in a village where nine adults are scheduled to be baptised a few weeks from now. That same day I also plan to visit another village where we hope to begin evangelism.

That, I commented, 'gives you an idea of a typical week.'

Mid-June 1975, I was invited by the Pagan chief of a village to explain the Gospel to his people. For some reason, the man had taken a liking to me. I went there several weeks in a row but reserved the discussions exclusively for the chief and his village elders in order to impress upon them that the Gospel is for chiefs and elders as much as for children. I tailored my messages specifically for them and emphasised the wisdom found in the stories of creation and the parables of Jesus. This was deep stuff, I repeated, fit for elders more than children. After several weeks, they thanked me for my visits and told me that for now, they had enough to chew on. They would give it all further consideration. The local church soon offered them a part-time evangelist for follow up. As in this case, it was sometimes the role of a missionary to open a door into which Nigerians would then step in and take responsibility.

The approach I used was a combination of a double evangelistic

experiment I had devised. One part of it was a small manual someone wrote to guide one in the initial approach to a Traditionalist community that would address *worldview issues* by comparison and contrast instead of calling for individuals to step up to Christ and separate themselves spiritually from the community. The other part of the combination was to begin by zeroing in on the local chief and his council of elders. Once the village hierarchy has become receptive to the Gospel, most villagers will follow. Again, an attempt to keep the community together, to have them move over to Christ together instead of creating division and hostility between Traditionalists and Christian converts as so often was the case. The experiment was short-lived due to the many other aspects of my ministry and my search for ministry to modern Nigeria. I believed it had great potential for an evangelist, whether Nigerian or missionary, who would have the time to concentrate and refine the method. I did discuss it with our evangelists and with my missionary colleagues, who seemed very fascinated by it. I was really only one of two missionaries full time in frontline evangelism in the CRCN at the time. I am not aware that my colleague across the mountains in Serti took the opportunity to develop it further. Evangelism had largely become the business of Nigerians and the Church, with the Mission or, more commonly, individual missionaries sometimes subsidising an evangelist or project here or there or, perhaps, 'adopting' a village for weekend evangelism.

After a hectic August, we had six weeks of respite, during which I hardly travelled. Locally, travel was difficult because of the full rivers that could not be crossed, but by late October, it started again. Fran was not looking forward to it. She wrote, 'It is hard on me to be alone with the children, especially at meals and bedtime.'

One reason for local travel was an assignment from Classis East. In the fall of 1975, the Classis discussed the lack of giving in the churches and the need for hiring evangelists. Indeed, it was dreadful, even considering the general level of poverty in the area. People simply did not consider giving systematically or even at all; it was not part of their culture. That was a major reason the pastors had moved away and the evangelists had little time for evangelism. They simply could

not subsist on their meagre stipends. I was assigned with two elders to visit each village church and challenge the members about giving.

This was all conducted during the darkness of the evenings by the dim light of kerosene lamps. The treasurer's record would lie before us and each member would be called to the front. They would be asked how much they had given during the year. If they did not know, they would be told. They would then be asked how much they would try to give per week from now on. People known to have really nothing to give would be dealt with graciously; the others would naturally feel embarrassment and shame, a powerful factor in the culture. The last one to do was Serti, where we flew by plane. This time the family came along to visit our colleagues there.

The event would always end with a short reminder of what the Bible says about giving, why we give, etc. Also, to convince them that increased giving could bring an evangelist to lead them. If one of the elders took the lead on this, it would often consist of severe chastising. When it was my turn, I tried to insert a spirit of compassion into the discussion, knowing that everyone was struggling to make ends meet. Probably the Nigerians knew their own people better than I did and knew it was time for calling a spade a spade rather than for 'compassionate pussyfooting.' I was not sure this was the most effective way of stimulating giving, but I could think of no alternative. One of the duties that came out of this campaign was for me to teach church leaders something about bookkeeping so they could keep track of both income and expenditures – not exactly my forte. By the time we left Baissa, the churches had dared to call pastors again and employ a few evangelists. That was progress. Now they had someone on the ground to nurture them in the faith on a regular basis.

During the Christmas season, students came home from various secondary boarding schools. During Christmas 1975, the elders of Ndafero CRCN asked me to address the youth after the morning service. I was supposed to sternly advise them to behave themselves and act like good Christians. I was hesitant about this approach, as it was based on an attitude of fear and mistrust. The youth stayed behind. As I was about to address them, one of them stood up and asked for

the floor. He then explained the entire programme they had prepared for the village and the church that was so positive; it put the elders to shame for their suspicion. Their plans included a hymn sing for the community, an afternoon of skits, plays, games and bringing food to the poor and elderly. I never did hold my assigned speech: no need. I was so proud of them. I thanked them for their positive plans and promised our cooperation.

Let me tell you about a family, the father of which was one of the original Christians in the area. Very unfortunately, three of his adult children had strange mental disturbances. They felt driven and possessed by spirits and powers they couldn't explain. I had developed close relations with this family and loved the old man. I was always filled with compassion for them and wondered about the working of God in their situation. One was like a full-time wanderer all over the area. The second, a woman, felt strange 'animals' crawling around in her body. The third, Nicodemus by name, felt that Anita's house belonged to him and sometimes he would force his way inside. Then we would have to find a way of coaxing him out again without violence. He was generally a gentle person, but when under this spell, he was considered dangerous. At one time, he wrote me a letter in Hausa in which he complained about what people were saying about him, that he was insane and wanted to take over that house. He said he had no ill feelings towards me and wished God's blessing on me.

Many people used this family as an example of what can happen to you if you become Christian. So, we considered it important to try to heal them. We arranged with Takum Hospital to bring them there for treatment. I drove them. The hospital intended to give all three of them shock treatments, a flashback to that Wukari evangelist a few years earlier. After the first one received the treatment, he ran away and found his way back to Baissa. The next day, his son, who had been sick for some months, died the day of his father's return. As if that were not enough, the aged father died of a heart attack about the same time! Because everyone was afraid and feared the workings of witchcraft, no one dared touch the old man's corpse. At 4 a.m. Saturday morning, I was called in to handle the situation since we had that

close relationship with the family. We brought the corpse to Baissa and had a proper funeral service and burial for him. I was so moved by the suffering of this family that I publicly wept. During the Sunday morning service in Baissa CRCN, the preacher compared the old man to Job, who, in spite of all his trials, stood firm in the faith. Fran commented, 'It is such a sad and tragic story.' Indeed, but it was not finished. A few years later, we arranged for Nicodemus to be brought to Jos for treatment.

One Sunday, after the afternoon adult Sunday School in Ndafero, we were about to go home, when I was called on to pray in a compound for a seriously sick person. I did not know the people, but was quite prepared to pray for the patient and his family. It was clear that the man was at 'the mouth of death' – *a bakin mutuwa* – as it is said in Hausa. So I prayed. After the 'amin,' the people wanted me to carry the patient to the dispensary on our compound. So they put him in the backseat of the car and off I went. However, once into our compound, a car appeared speeding up behind us, vociferously blowing the horn and motioning me to stop. I did. Four men jumped out of that car, opened the rear doors of our car, roughly dragged out the patient who had by now become a corpse, and yelled, '*Wannan namu ne! Wannan namu ne!*' – 'This one is ours! This one is ours!' They were Muslims and wanted to claim the corpse for Muslim burial. Whether he really had been a Muslim, I did not know, but refusal on my part would clearly have led to a struggle I could not possibly have won, barring special divine intervention. Though the matter was of great importance to them, the manner of his burial would not have affected the man's eternal destiny. Without much choice, I let them take the corpse.

Early January 1976, I began to see the fruit of my efforts to return some semblance of order back into the area. 'My' three congregations east of Baissa had agreed to call a pastor together. His name was Samu'ila Gakye. He was a native to the Ashuku congregation, the village in the centre and would live there.

One of the first things we, the councils of the three churches and ourselves, did upon Gakye's installation was to start a money-raising

campaign to purchase a new motorcycle for him. His area was just too large without transport. The churches actively canvassed all salaried members, meaning mostly teachers and government staff. Both Nigerians and missionaries, including ourselves, contributed towards it. Eventually, our Mission airplane mechanic in Lupwe, Case Van Wyk, took care of the purchase, registration, etc., after we had already left Baissa. Gakye was good to go.

Not long afterwards, one of the congregations, Ndafero CRCN, withdrew from the arrangement and called their own pastor, Nuhu Pamciri, a native of Ndafero. He already owned a house there, a great convenience to the congregation, of course, while the other congregations had to build a compound for Gakye from scratch.

I was very happy with the progress made during our ministry there that these congregations now had enough confidence to take such an important step. I had worked myself out of my job, a major purpose of missionary ministry. You should notice that they called pastors, who had grown up in their villages, not strangers. These pastors knew all the ins and outs of their congregations and really functioned as village elders with all the prestige attached to that office.

Though my work among the local Baissa congregation was basically of an occasional nature, my presence did, I believe, have a positive effect among them. If the elders kept me at bay, the members did not. I would often challenge them to push for various changes, especially the need for a pastor. Though a Reformed church does not require a pastor to be complete, in most cases in the CRCN area, lack of one will lead to stagnation and power play by the elders, most of whom do not understand much about positive leadership. The elders finally decided to call a pastor. The man they called, Pastor Iliya Abowa, was a saint of a man and generous to a fault. Always very poor, but you could not really help him, for he would promptly pass on any help you gave him to someone more needier than him. His family suffered on account of this generosity. Well, the Baissa church called and installed him. Now at least they had a saint in their midst and on the pulpit. Abowa was the same pastor who had come to the rescue of the Bakundi congregation, as told earlier in the story.

Trekking in Forests and Mountains

While in Wukari, visiting villages could often be done by car, motorcycle or bicycle; in Baissa much of it had to be on foot due to the rough terrain. It included a lot of hard physical labour, much more than we had envisioned. Treks could be long and arduous.

In March 1975, I had gone on an extremely arduous week-long trek into the mountains behind Baissa. This was under the auspices of Classis East. There were three of us, Pastor Markus from CRCN Asha, an evangelist from CRCN Abong, and myself. We were assisted by a few carriers, who carried our trek beds, water and a few other basics. There was no road in the entire area, only trails through the forests up and down the mountains. The people there lived almost as if in the 19th century. Villages were far apart. Sometimes it would take hours of steep climbing to get to them. Most of them had no Christians at all. But they received us well and usually insisted on cooking for us. A couple of villages would give us chickens and even two goats to take home or to slaughter along the way. One time, when no one was sure of the direction to take at a cross trail, we asked a Fulani man on the trail how to get to a certain village. He tried to send us down into the deep valley before us. Fortunately, some members of our entourage were familiar enough with the area that they recognised this to be deceit. We followed their uncertain hunch and found the place. In every village, we would ask the chief to gather his people because we came with an announcement of a great King. It always worked and we always were able to present them with a witness to Christ. The idea was that the evangelist with us would later make the same rounds again and do a follow-up.

When we arrived back at where we had met as a group, we dispersed. A couple of carriers went ahead to Abong, where my car was parked. I was so totally exhausted from this trek that I did not have the stamina to walk that last 17 kilometres and decided to spend the night in that village. While resting, the people pointed me to a clear pool half a mile into the bush. I went there, stripped and spent a couple of hours in its cool, clean water. What a total delight that pool was, such release and relief – like heaven itself. Like that cup of tea

in Taraba. Two parallel events that will forever remain sketched in my consciousness. The next day, I walked the rest of the way, found the car and drove home. It took me some days to recover from my exhaustion.

A month later, I visited a village across the Baissa River, where the evangelist needed encouragement. It took a six-hour one-way trek, half of which was a steep climb. We did our usual thing of holding a discussion with the villagers and doing some preaching. The next morning, we returned home, but by the time we had crossed the Baissa River, I was so tired that I sent someone home, less than three kilometres away, asking Fran to pick me up by car.

The differences that I had to traverse that month of March 1975 were almost beyond the imagination. Within the space of a couple of weeks, I trekked into the farthest reaches of the jungle to witness to the most 'backward' people you could find in Nigeria, only to preach and negotiate with the Ahmadu Bello University Christian community about worldviews a mere few days later. Truly, it was an immense cultural distance to transverse. My ministry has always been characterised by such differences, but this one broke all records. More about this later.

Mission Aviation

Denominational meetings could be time-consuming and expensive for missionaries since travel by car was along rough roads and often over long distances. So, the use of the Mission airplane(s) – first one; later a second and larger one was added – saved a lot of time and expense. This was true for all the time we were in Nigeria, but especially during our years at Baissa. It would take me/us to meetings and also bring people to Baissa for meetings.

Fran wrote once, 'This week, the plane is coming eight times! Meetings, meetings and meetings. I sometimes wonder what they are all meant to accomplish.' Fair enough, but being involved, I can testify that these committees often solved very knotty problems. The alternative would be a hierarchical bishop system where one man has the power of decision. The Reformed have always rejected that

approach and prefer to spread power through the more cumbersome, messy and time-consuming method of committees.

I was always grateful for these planes, though I do remember unhappy and even fearful moments. Our two pilots were very good and took few chances, but occasionally they had no choice. Various fearful flights come to mind. I remember several times being engulfed by fog or harmattan with zero visibility in mountainous zones. You may know an area, but you still need some visibility to be safe. If you can't see a mountain, it does not help much to know it is there. I remember being asked to 'co-pilot' by looking out for mountains more than once. I remember several times circling and circling around airstrips, desperately avoiding nearby mountains, looking for a hole in the fog and then suddenly dropping down. One day, flying from Baissa to Serti over a mountain range early in the morning, there was a thick fog. The pilot flew just above the treetops, following the contours of the mountains, up and down, up and down. At another time, I remember circling around in a very thick bank of clouds way up, going round and round and round, higher and higher like a spiral in the dark.

Aviation always has an element of risk involved. Our CRC pilots, experts as they were, flew for decades without any serious incidents, though they did have some close calls. In 1988, a new and less experienced CRC pilot got entangled with high voltage wires near the Jos Airport and was killed instantly. This tragic event signalled the downward spiralling of our aviation programme and it was closed down soon after. I remember watching the long funeral procession for that pilot along Yakubu Gowon Way in front of our house in Jos while I was recuperating from a long bout of pneumonia.

We also had a crash landing at our local Baissa Airstrip, but that was another plane. For weeks an international team had been flying over our area doing survey work for, I believe, the United Nations to determine the exact border between Nigeria and Cameroon. For reasons I have forgotten, the plane needed to land and had no choice but to use our strip. The pilot was not accustomed to bush airstrips and so ended up sliding far beyond the open strip into the bush. Fortunately, no one got hurt beyond needing a band-aid from our own

Likita Garba. The plane was severely damaged.

We hosted the three-man crew for some days as they awaited instructions by radio from their headquarters. They stayed in our guest house and ate at our table. One was from Western Nigeria; the others were Canadian and British. The last two had crash-landed like this several times and took it all in stride. It was a first for the Nigerian and he vowed never to fly again! In the meantime, they observed our Nigerianised kids, and we could see them shake their heads at each other. Were these people – us – crazy or something? Our kids spoke Hausa, played drums and Cynthia carried her dolls on her back! Our guests had never seen such a situation before. To them our family was unreal.

After a few days, the crew was ordered to find their way to the nearest airport and come home. I believe our pilots picked them up. The company pledged to send a crew to assess the damage and decide what to do with the plane. An engineer flew in from London, who decided that though the plane was quite salvageable, it was in such a remote area that bringing in a repair crew would cost more than the value of the plane. So they left it. It sat there for years, a wonderful attraction to local kids as it slowly was overgrown by the jungle. I took out a few gadgets of interest to me, especially the compass that I attached to the dashboard of our car. Our pilots also cannibalised it for some parts they found useful. Eventually, somebody came and stripped the fuselage completely with the aim of turning it into eating utensils!

Community

And then there was the social life with the wider community, both Nigerian and expatriates. It was not as rich and varied as it was in Wukari. There people would drop in more readily, and we had the tennis gang. Besides, it was on the way to Jos, while Baissa was on a dead-end; it served only as a destination, while Wukari was a through-way to Jos and beyond. Fran found that there was really nothing to do there for diversion, especially during my absences. That was a reason for frequent bike rides on her part.

The above paragraph described the daytime situation. The evenings were something else! The Bible School teachers would come as a group almost every evening.

Of course, there was the usual Monday market traffic, including the evangelists. As you have read earlier, that turned into a Bible study event. But on the whole, Fran was right: socialization in the Baissa area was slim. One occasional exception was the Headmaster, Mallam Yohanna Garba. He had a Hausa background from Sokoto. How he ended up in Baissa, I have forgotten, if ever I knew.

One memorable visit was that of Mr Samu'ila Gani, a Wukari person high up in the Federal Government as a permanent secretary. He was a brother-in-law to Addi Byewi and son-in-law to Yamusa, a senior church leader in Wukari and retired mission driver. Mr Gani was a fine Christian and needed a place to get away from it all. So he requested a few days at our place. He expressed amazement that with Fran's university degree, she was content to be a homemaker and homeschool her son.

Christmas 1975 was a mixture of all three, family, missionaries and community. We spent the major part of Christmas Day itself with Lou and Jan Haveman at Mararraba, some 50 kilometres towards Takum. Halfway there, we attended a church service at Tati Ngoro, the home village of our first domestic helper Ibrahim Amman. On Boxing Day, we drove some 35 kilometres to Bakin Kogi of the Bakundi congregation, a place where we spent our entire Christmas celebrations in 1967. By midday, we would drive another 35 kilometres the other way to pick up Bulus, our current helper, together with his wife and Damaris, who was also from the place and then return home together. The children were so happy to see them again. A very mobile Christmas, but we could count on some good food all along the way. The next day, Saturday would mean lots of cleaning since we expected the Graham Weeks family, missionaries from the SUM-British branch, for a couple of days over New Year's.

Nigerian Conditions

In 1974, the Benue Plateau State Government established a sawmill near Baissa, in the middle of the rain forest. They brought in an Englishman and a Dutchman with their families to operate the plant. Why they should bring in 'experts' from countries without forestry is beyond me, but there they were. The mill itself made sense since the entire area was/is a forest by nature, moist rain forest like the West Coast of British Columbia where I spent my teenage years and, later, our retirement years. However, both men were terribly discouraged, for the project was mired in red tape and corruption that kept it from moving forward. Both parties soon broke their contracts and left in disgust. The sawmill is still there, and the government of Taraba State are seeking investors to privatise and revive it. In parallel, the forests are being hacked down and shipped by the container load to China for a fraction of the value of the wood.

These conditions had penetrated the entire culture, politics and economics; eventually, even the church. In February 1975, it had led to difficult economic conditions that affected our personal as well as working lives. Friends were no longer coming to visit us in Baissa due to an acute fuel shortage in the country. All travel was to be kept to a minimum, while pleasure driving was out altogether. We now ran our generator only for two and a half hours in the long, dark evenings instead of four. Bottled gas, propane, used for our fridge and stove, was becoming expensive and scarce. We shut down the fridge and boiled our water on the wood stove in the outside kitchen. Kerosene, a common kitchen fuel in Nigerian homes, was now sold at 'black market' prices.

And all of that in a country that daily exported tankers of oil! In the midst of the forest, the sawmill had no lumber to process; in the midst of oil, the distribution system had no fuel to distribute! This situation had its repercussions throughout and caused unrest among government workers, unhappiness among everyone else, and hoarding of farm produce by farmers waiting for better prices. Nigeria had begun the vicious cycle that would continue to run it down for many decades, literally a bottomless pit. The only thing that increased was

population and scarcity.

Similar conditions and attitudes prevailed in the education sector. The Baissa School situation as Fran described it in September 1975 was typical:

At Kevin's school in Baissa he has learned a lot of math, games, songs and Bible stories. Unfortunately, they don't spend the needed time in English and reading. There are so many problems: too many kids in a class, poor facilities, not enough benches etc. for the kids, no textbooks or craft materials. The teachers themselves often have trouble with English. In spite of all these handicaps, some kids do finish primary school with a fair amount of knowledge and skill. Many of these things could be corrected through aggressive leadership on the part of the principal, but no one seems to know how to change the system.

The problems of bribery and corruption penetrate way down to the lowest level, and for those reasons, there are no books and equipment. No one objects because if you complain, the other guy will make it tough for you when you need his help. In spite of all this, there are many individuals who try hard to do their part in a Christian way to make the school operate well, but it's hard to 'buck the system.' The growing pains of Nigeria are tremendous.

She followed this up in an October letter:

The school situation here is really hopeless and I see no way out without a major overhaul in the whole system. Language is, of course, a big problem. English is foreign to all, including the teachers and only used because it is the common denominator as the national language. But no one speaks it outside the classroom. There are very few textbooks available and no library books, so even the bright kids have very little possibility of improving their skills.

In August, 1975, Yakubu Gowon was overthrown in a bloodless coup while he was at an Organisation of African Unity meeting and General Murtala Muhammed took over. The coup went so smoothly that we really did not notice the change of government at first. Even in Jos, people hardly noticed. The ousted Gowon continued to enjoy tremendous respect and he went quietly into exile in the United Kingdom, where he studied for a degree in political science. Imagine

how he must have intimidated his classmates with his real-life examples after running Africa's most populous nation for nine years even though he was still only forty-one. Of course, he was originally from Benue-Plateau State (BP), of which Jos was the capital. It was a shock for us that the Christian governor of BP, Joseph Gomwalk, also a son of the BP soil and a close relative of Gowon, was replaced by a Muslim one. Gowon, by re-arranging the Nigerian states, had broken the political back of the Muslim core north, while Gomwalk had been working hard to establish the Christian character of BP in the face of Muslim attempts to gain power there. To replace him with a Muslim governor over a predominantly Christian state seemed like a deliberate move to reverse Gomwalk's Christianisation policy.

Search for Contemporary Holistic Ministry

In March 1975, we planned a holiday in Jos. During that time, I spent a few days in Zaria, some 200 kilometres north of Jos, the seat of ABU – Ahmadu Bello University. Some months earlier, we visited with the Protestant Chapel Committee there and had begun negotiations about ministry under their umbrella. They were very positive about our approach. We, i.e., the committee consisting of Les van Essen and myself, produced a lengthy report for the Mission to discuss in April. Early March, I wrote,

It looks as if things are gradually moving in the right direction. I submitted an earlier report way back in 1972 in which I described the spiritual situation on the campus. Now they will hear the same thing from our committee. I have exercised a lot of patience in this matter, which now seems to be paying off. Above all, I pray that the Lord's will be done in this regard. I do not believe that He would place this burden in my heart for all these years and even give us the tremendous support he did in Amsterdam when we went there for the very purpose of preparing for a university ministry.

What I proposed was 'worldview ministry.' Though the dominant religious power at ABU was Islam, most of the courses were taught from a secular and often a Marxist perspective, whether the lecturer was Muslim or Christian. That's the modern worldview they focused on.

There was capitalism, of course, but that was too closely associated with colonialism for it to be even considered. I intended to acquaint them with the Kuyperian worldview as it touches upon every area of knowledge, a comprehensive Christian perspective. The Christianity they had inherited from many missionaries and the prevailing one on the campus was semi-secular, dualistic and narrow. It was totally irrelevant to their studies and to the ideas they were struggling with daily. My ministry would present them with a full-orbed Christianity that would help them contribute to a positive development for Nigeria. I would try to get my perspective across by personal relationships, open myself up for giving lectures in the various faculties, serve as a counsellor to students doing research, develop Christian fellowships within each faculty, and, of course, through occasionally preaching in the chapel. Since there was already a full-time chaplain at the university, I would be considered an 'associate chaplain.' My financial support would continue to come from CRWM, but I would be responsible primarily to the Protestant Chapel Committee, while the Mission would receive regular reports.

We had been asked to meet with the Protestant Chapel Committee once again in March 1975 and for me to preach in the Protestant Chapel on the campus. Now they wanted to test my orthodoxy by this trial sermon. This was the month of the great cultural leap for me, from the Baissa jungle villages to this modern university, from the challenge of Animism to the Christian view of art. They chose the subject of art because this was the time of *FESTAC*, one of the largest cultural displays ever held in all of Africa. Nigeria seemed intoxicated with the festival, held as it was in Lagos. They told me I passed, but they cautioned me that they were subject to university authority and would need their approval. This particular time was probably the most opportune moment for such an application in the entire history of ABU. The place was usually governed by Muslims, but at this time, General Yakubu Gowon, a Christian and son of an Anglican evangelist, the gentleman who kindly wrote the Foreword to this book, was the military head of state, and he had installed Dr Ishaya Audu as the provost. Audu was a strong Christian and sympa-

thetic to our application.

I was quite hopeful about the possibilities, but just at this point, CRWM needed to cut down both expenses and personnel and was in no position to expand into other ministries. But we felt that even if it should mean a cut in pay, this is where the Lord wanted us to be in the future. We hoped to complete our term in Baissa, finish my dissertation, obtain my doctorate and then move over to university work.

Then the bomb fell! Literally. In August 1975, Gowon was overthrown in a coup and the no-nonsense Muslim, General Murtala Muhammed, took over the country. Ishaya Audu was immediately replaced by a Muslim, and that was the end of our dreams about ABU. It would no longer be considered. It was not to be, after all. The ways of the Lord are inscrutable! We always knew that, of course, but it hit home this time with double force.

In the meantime, I had also applied for a teaching position in Church History at the University of Jos (UJ). At the time, that campus was a satellite to the University of Ibadan, the first Western-style university in Nigeria and at the time the premier university of Nigeria's South-West. We received a radio message from Jos, inviting me to an interview and promising there would be a letter with more details coming. (As to that radio message, please remember the radio system by which missionaries communicate with each other.) The promised letter took the form of a terse telegram informing me that the interview would hold in Ibadan only a few days after its arrival. Ibadan was some 1100 kilometres from Baissa.

At 6 p.m. that same evening, I drove to Takum in the hope of travelling by mission plane. Not a chance. The next morning on to Gboko, a large town near Mkar, in the hope of a bus ride. Again, nothing available that would get me there on time. So, off I went by car, all alone, something not advisable in Nigeria, especially since I was not a fix-it guy.

I was not the only person alone. Fran was left alone with three small children, not knowing how travelling was panning out for me, where I was or when I would return. Communication was well nigh impossible, except for the off-chance I would find a *working* tele-

phone by which to call our Mission in Jos that they would then relay to Fran by radio. She wrote, 'So maybe at four this afternoon I'll hear some news. I try not to worry, but it sure is always nice to hear some news. He's gone so much lately for treks and committees. I'm not sure when he will be back.' She was left to fret and pray for me, while she organised Kevin's birthday party.

It turned out I was gone for a full week without getting a message through except towards the very end. Here's the picture as Fran gave it,

By that time, I had gotten a bit worried. I don't usually worry very much, because I know it doesn't help any and it's not good for the children, but this time somehow things got a hold of me, and I couldn't stop worrying. One thing led to another. I was pretty dragged out by the time John finally returned.

By the time I returned, I had put on 2399 kilometres, only to find the trip a wild goose chase. They had already hired the man they wanted, but protocol demanded they interview every applicant. But they put me up in a good hotel and fed me well for a few days, while I used the time to visit some friends from our 1967 Ibadan days as well as do research for my dissertation at the university library. That was the most fruitful for me. As to the roads travelled all these kilometres, they were still in terrible shape from the war years. Well, if I had not gone, I would always have felt like, 'What if...?' The university instructed me to send them a bill for my travel expenses. I concocted the highest bill I could ethically account for – \$300. Eventually, they paid up.

As 1975 progressed, we also progressed in our thinking about future ministry. We decided that we would not do another term in rural Nigeria. If we could not get into a contemporary Nigerian ministry, we would consider South America. However, we hesitated to throw all our experiences here along with the Hausa language overboard. It had taken too many years and Mission resources to gain all that to play lightly with it.

Throughout all of this, I was making progress with my dissertation, but too slowly. This, too, was part of my preparation for ministry

in modern Nigeria. By May, I had decided that I was cheating myself by working too many hours and days on the Mission and not taking enough of my own time for the dissertation. So I decided that once a month I would dedicate every morning for a whole week to the dissertation. I would hide in our bedroom and not show myself outside. If people came to the door, they would be told I was not available, sometimes in the form of a so-called 'white lie.'

Early in 1976, the ICS Board proposed to the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), its proprietor, that the ICS open an office in Jos to address the needs of the North. They also recommended that I should be in charge as Northern Area Co-ordinator reporting to Adegbola. This sounded very exciting to me, though I still preferred campus chaplaincy. However, as the ICS headquarters often addressed student concerns, the Northern office most likely would do as well, while we would also minister to other segments of society like professionals, business people and politicians.

Even before the above arrangements were finalised, the ICS asked me to serve as Theological Consultant for the writing of a national Christian syllabus for teaching Religious Knowledge in secondary schools. I felt that this was a way for them to try me out. Under this umbrella, in February 1976, I travelled to Asaba, a city on the Niger River for a three-day writers' conference on the subject.

Asaba is north of the famous Onitsha Bridge across the Niger River. Just for the experience of it, I crossed that bridge by foot during that conference. While doing so, various travellers speeding by yelled I should get off the bridge, for there had been an attempted coup, a time when major bridges were always the focal point of security issues. I did not feel comfortable during the rest of my walk after that. I had been brought to the conference by our Mission plane, but now all airports were closed. I had to find my way back to Baissa by a combination of buses, taxis and other forms of public transport. It took me a couple of days, while the plane would have taken one hour. I found Fran overwrought with worry about my whereabouts since there had been no opportunity for any communication during all this time. No wonder really, for coups are always tense times. I remember feeling

very guilty for having left her without a clue during that tense time, even though it was far from intentional.

The result of the coup was that General Muhammad was assassinated, but the overall coup attempt failed, and his deputy, General Olusegun Obasanjo succeeded him as military head of state. Joseph Gomwalk, plus a number of senior military officers from Benue-Plateau, were accused of plotting the coup and were executed. Many of their widows became close family friends during our years attending St. Piran's Anglican Church in Jos, and the children became close friends with our children when they schooled together at Hillcrest School in Jos some years later.

Around mid-June 1976, our future was beginning to take shape. The CCN had officially requested the Mission to second me to them to open and operate this new Northern office in Jos. I would be working with professionals, students and other groups, including the churches, to stimulate them to develop a holistic Christian mindset and worldview with which people would conduct their lives and affairs on a daily basis.

My Relations with and Reflections about the Mission

The first thing that needs saying is that we were and remain proud of being missionaries. This is a class of people often berated and demonised by many elements of society. We expect that, for even the Bible predicts that for us. No problem. It slides off our backs like water. In the meantime, we have been instrumental in establishing Christian churches the world over and have spread a Christian worldview that is operative in various ways everywhere, often without people recognising or acknowledging its source. Modern notions of human rights, democracy, equality, including that of women, would not have gained ground without the combination of Christianity and its rebellious child, Humanism. We're part of that messy process and proud of it. Above all, we have been agents of reconciliation between the fallen human race and God; we have contributed to the salvation of the world and of individuals. We have spread joy and liberation. We've done it imperfectly as we humans do everything imperfectly,

but we've done it. Judging from the end result, in so far as we can speak of 'end result' of a project forever in motion, God has graciously blessed these fallible human efforts.

And we, Fran and I, have participated in this work in the context of the CRC and its world outreach CRWM. We have helped build up CRCN, a viable community, that has done much to lift up people out of poverty. If you don't believe that, ask those who originally and personally made the transition. They will give you an earful of what it has meant to them, but you'll have to be quick, for they are a dying breed. The patriarchs and matriarchs of the Nigerian church have almost all gone to their reward in heaven, but there are always the more recent converts to be consulted.

Farewell to Baissa

Though we have not mentioned it, during the course of our term, we had been corresponding with the Mission and with CRWM about the shape, location and timing of our next period of Home Service. It was going to be a study leave of one year in Grand Rapids, during which I would be working on my dissertation for the VU. Half of that year would be paid Home Service, while during the other half we would be on our own.

During the month of July, we had a lot of farewell parties, some organised by the congregations I served, some by ourselves. All of them meant butchered rabbits. By the end of the month, the supply had dwindled from around seventy down to fifteen. We used them for the parties, gave some as farewell gifts and actually sold a few.

The tail end of our term was not only closure to the rural Baissa story but also the opening of a new venture in modern Nigeria. You have already read that the CCN had requested the Mission to second me to the ICS to open up their new Northern Office in Jos. The closure and opening came simultaneously. I could only see God's hand in this happy 'coincidence.' I had been waiting, praying and working towards such an opening for ten years. I had learned something about patience. I always regarded our ministry in rural CRCN as preparation for ministry in contemporary Nigeria. Over the years

in this new ministry, I became increasingly aware that we have a wise God directing our lives. Given the opportunity, I would have jumped into a modern ministry immediately upon our arrival, but God knew that I needed to be grounded in the reality of rural life, where most Nigerians found themselves, even though that's not the dynamic direction-providing sector in the country. So it took ten years to come to fruition.

Though I regarded our CRCN years as a period of preparation, that does not mean it was not more than that. It was also a genuine ministry with its own values and purposes. CRCN had some very capable pastors to take over, but there were not yet enough of them. Those in place were worked to the bone. In the meantime, I learnt a lot from them that stood me in good stead in my later ministries. I have long been grateful for the restraint God placed on reaching my long-term goals. Late June 1976, I wrote, 'We have enjoyed these ten years, but we are also grateful for the pending change, for that was, after all, what we have had in mind for many years.' We thanked God for the past decade and now looked to Him for an exciting future with Him, the ICS, the entire Christian community and the entire North.

Off to Grand Rapids, it was for us – for me to work on my dissertation and for Fran and the kids to enjoy the fellowship of the Prins family. Of course, she would continue contributing her typing and editing skills. If she had known just how much she would be involved, she might have hesitated. Try typing a 530-page document four times, footnotes and all – on a typewriter and end up with a perfect document! It was going to be an exciting year, very different from our Baissa time.

SECTION TWO

Jos Ministry (1977–1996)

CHAPTER FIVE

JOS I

DISSERTATION, FURLOUGH AND MINISTRY (1976–1979)

MY DREAMS AND GOD'S REALISATION

It wasn't anything like I dreamt when the Lord grabbed me by the collar and 'forced' me into the ministry. But once He had done that, He kept pushing and nudging me in the directions I did not dream about. It would be Canada, I had decided. It would be a city church. But it was to be none of that. We unexpectedly found ourselves in Nigeria. Once the location was settled, it became more of how the Lord supported me in that dream; how He pulled me by the hair into the Kuyperian tradition and how He miraculously provided funds to finance all the preparations while still holding me back to get a proper grounding in the more traditional Nigeria.

But we weren't there yet. There was this hurdle of an academic dissertation yet to be overcome to make me fully acceptable at all levels. The Home Service period (1976-1977) in Grand Rapids was primarily dedicated to the completion of the dissertation but was frequently interrupted by mission-related activities. After that, we returned to Nigeria for two more decades, based in Jos.

BACK TO NIGERIA

Life at Mountain View

We travelled back to Nigeria from Vancouver, where we had been visiting with my family and preaching in various churches at the end of our Home Service period. After a few days in the Netherlands, we travelled on to Kano, where we ran headlong into the devious Customs and Immigration officials for which Nigeria is known and feared. It took us some hours – yes, *hours* – to get through it and arrive at our hotel. The following morning, Ray Browneye met us with the mission plane and flew us to Jos. By 9 a.m., we arrived and were welcomed by a few of our colleagues there. We were duly informed that we would be living in three different locations in Jos over the next few months.

The first of our three locations was the Mountain View (MV) Guesthouse behind the hostel for CRC Mission children at Hillcrest School. It was a good place for the children, with a wide and long porch for them to run around in as well as a sandbox outside and swings. Kevin borrowed *Hardy Boys* books from the Evenhouses, our former neighbours in Wukari who now lived in one of the houses at MV.

The first Sunday back in Jos, Kevin and Wiebe went with me to a Hausa service. We were both curious about how Kevin would react. He seemed to understand a bit but did not dare to speak Hausa to anyone yet. We assumed that he would probably start again when we were not listening.

Kevin soon began to look forward to his new school, Hillcrest, just down the road. He had already met a few third graders, including Rusty, son of our friend Dr Verbrugge.

We had sold our Opel through the aid of Lee Baas before our extended study leave and now had to purchase another vehicle. We ended up with a 12-seater Toyota Hiace commuter bus that would help us shuttle people around in the context of our upcoming ICS ministry. Before we actually took ownership, the price had suddenly jumped upward by 500 naira (\$750) without explanation.

Our next temporary move was to the house of Ralph and Coby Kok. They lived along the long Mountain View driveway, popularly called 'Lower Mountain View.' They were meticulous both as housekeepers and gardeners, with a great flower and vegetable garden. We were worried, for neither one of us had a green thumb. The dry season would present an ethical problem to us, for they would want their grounds watered at a time the entire city suffered from a scarcity of water.

At the same time, governments at all levels were encouraging people to grow their own foods. While during Baissa days there was the Green Revolution, now there was 'Operation Feed the Nation,' basically a similar programme but with neither yielding the promised results due to corruption and inefficiencies. So this emphasis would demand we use up the scarce water. The programme also encouraged the keeping of rabbits and chickens. It was supposed to make rabbit cages and chicken coops available at subsidised prices. That sounded hopeful for my animal husbandry hobby.

In early August, I flew to Baissa to pack our belongings with local help before the Mission truck would come to move it all to Jos. The truck could not take the last rabbit cage we still owned. We had sold the other ones when we left Baissa a year earlier, and now we had to sell this one. Whether we would keep rabbits again in Jos remained to be seen at that time. I returned to Jos on that lorry.

The next issue was to find a place to store it all, since we would not need most of it while living in someone else's house. That was somehow solved with the goodwill of Les Van Essen, our Nigeria Director, by storing it in an empty room on the other Mission compound.

We were now going to live in a city of ease: with running water and electricity. At least, so we thought. We had decided to sell our gas stove in favour of an electric one but had to supplement it with a kerosene two-burner in case electricity would be off! We also exchanged our propane fridge with an electric one. Whether these were wise exchanges remained to be seen.

We were ready for a new life in Jos and beyond, but still without having completed my dissertation. That beast was still staring me in the face.

Family and Social Life

It took the kids a while to agree they were back in Nigeria. They were in denial, for the place was so different from Baissa. They were right, of course: It was very different. Just the (occasional and theoretical) fact of 24/7 electricity and running water made such a difference for everyone. However, before too many weeks, the power interruptions started to increase and we had to use our kerosene burner. We had not yet sold our gas stove and decided to hold on to it since rumours had it that power interruptions would happen more and more. The house into which we would soon move was in a section particularly hard hit. In our section of the city, water was running regularly, but not so in some other parts.

Soon the water problems started. Without going into details, we again found ourselves using the drum system. Now that was more annoying than it was in Wukari or Baissa, for there we had our own system that was labour intensive but worked without fail. In Jos, we ended up with two systems: the public and the private one. Even the latter did not work as well as it should since a major tank used for the entire compound was built too high. We were back to a bucket and drum routine. Occasionally a tanker from the Local Government would come to fill up our large compound tank. They owed it to us since we were paying for water supplies from them. These tankers would hold two to three thousand gallons and, if judiciously used, would last for some days. Remember, our tank served three homes, a hostel and a guest house with six units. It meant we could actually take a hot shower instead of the sponge baths to which we often had to resort.

Food-wise, things had become very expensive since our Baissa time. Fran was experimenting with Nigerian cooking, and Kevin said it was as good as that cooked by Nigerians. Meat was readily available but also expensive. It might be cheaper to buy whole pigs again, but with constant power interruptions, we did not want to keep much meat in the freezer. So we missed our rabbits. However, keeping them now would probably make their meat as expensive as any other, since those expenses had also gone up. 'But,' wrote Fran, 'they were

such fun to keep.’

As the price of food increased, so did our complaints. The cost of living increased so much and so rapidly that by April 1978, our cost-of-living bonus overtook our beginning salary when we joined the Mission in 1966. By May 1978, we had started going to the meat market and buying our meat directly from the butchers.

You will hear about Fran’s 36th birthday further down, but that was one of these times of electrical failure – and this time I was home. Let me review with you how that would typically go here, following Fran’s report:

The electricity was off most of the day. Usually, that doesn’t bother me, but when you are planning a party, you want electricity, lights, etc. I asked the Baases to bring plenty of ice cubes. It being a hot season, cold water goes nicely with a spicy meal. It affected only two houses: ours and one neighbour. We reported the fault at 8 a.m., 2 p.m. and 4 p.m., each time actually going to the office. At 5:30 p.m. they came with a crew of four and found out that a fuse had blown in the transformer across the street from us. That took all of 30 seconds to repair!

Actually, we feared that it was an administrative problem about unpaid bills and that they had cut us off. We always pay promptly, but their records are often confused or not up to date and then they will cut you off. The onus is on you, not on them or their records. Evenhouse had this happen sometime earlier and they were without power for nearly two days. Some people even longer for this reason; some, much longer.

As we neared the time of moving to our permanent location on Zaria Road, we hired a new house helper, a Muslim by the name of Hamza, an elderly married gentleman with lots of experience of working with expatriates. However, he had never worked for missionaries before, a different breed from foreign government workers or businessmen. We were pleased with him, at least at first. He was pleasant, proficient and quiet. However, it did not take long for some cultural issues to arise.

During this time, we bought our first TV, a thirteen-inch screen,

which, Fran commented, 'was big enough for us.' Programming most days would start at 5 p.m. and end at 11p.m. This became a big neighbourhood attraction for the kids. Our motive was to encourage our kids to want to be at home. That gave us more control over them without force since few of their friends had TVs at home at that time. They immediately enjoyed the TV immensely, regardless of the limited choices.

Life on Zaria Road

Zaria Road was a major artery through Jos with a lot of traffic. With an ICS sign at the road, we were easy to locate for people and easily accessible by Nigeria's public transport system. Behind us was the large luxurious compound of the Roman Catholic Bishop Ganaka, a very graceful and learned clergyman of great oratorical skills and of impressive stature. In a corner, between our two compounds was a small house owned by the Catholic Diocese that was rented out to a Catholic gentleman called Hubert Sheldas, owner of a dry cleaning business and a contractor, who was heir to the throne of the chieftaincy of Shendam, in the southern part of Plateau State. Some years later, we attended his enthronement. He always had his door open and our children soon became his regular visitors. He was very kind to them. Once he left, he was replaced by Father Emmanuel, an Igbo priest, equally friendly to our children. Next to us lived a Plateau State Commissioner, that is, a member of the Plateau State Cabinet. One of his young boys became a regular visitor at our house. Whenever the family had birthday parties, they always invited all three of our children.

The house on the other side was inhabited by an elderly British couple. When they moved, it was vacant for a long time. The exterior of all three houses consisted of rough stone. Originally they must have belonged to one owner.

Across the road from us was a Catholic girls' secondary school called St. Louis College. The school was run by nuns, who lived on that compound. Also across the road was the only ten-storey building in Jos that housed the local newspaper *Nigeria Standard*. Of more

practical relevance to our family, there was also a small food market there, where the wife of Hamza, our steward, sold freshly fried yams and other goodies we all loved. We were among her regular customers.

And then there was the village Tudun Wada close behind us with tons of children, many of whom started coming to our compound to play with our children. Expressed more accurately to play with our children's soccer ball and other toys. Among them was a little boy called James Kpanto, who years later became our driver.

Vignettes on Zaria Road

18 February, 1978 marked my 40th birthday. Leave it up to Fran to organise a big party. We had invited the Weeks family to spend the weekend with us. Fran made her famous 'snow on the mountain' curry dinner for twenty people. We ate outside on the cement patio behind the house. It was such a nice and *gezellige* party in the moonlight. For the first time in a long time, a store in town sold ice cream. Fran bought and we splurged that evening. All in all, a great party and a great entrance into my forties.

The end of my birthday did not mean the end of the birthday season, for Fran's comes only three weeks later, on March 11. Her 36th in 1978 was an exciting day for the kids, for they had two birthday parties to attend. First, one for Thor Evenhouse, who was born on Fran's 30th. They went to the Jos Zoo and later had cake and ice cream at the Evenhouses. Then home for Mommy's party. The Lee Baas family, our other former Wukari neighbours, joined us for the occasion. Fran had Mrs Hamza do the best pounded yam and chicken stew she had ever made for us. Lee took instant pictures with the most modern camera ever seen, the famous Kodak Polaroid. Our gift drum was still full of little presents. Thus all the kids, including the Baases, received a present. Even I did: Fran had wrapped up my thesis with 'page 600' on the label! The kids and I had gotten her a long Nigerian dress, 'all embroidered in front. It's very comfortable and pretty.' It was a typical all-out Fran party.

We had an interesting visitor from Wukari, namely Pastor Luka Agbu. He graduated under us from Wukari CLTC. From there, he went to the Junior Seminary at Lupwe and eventually graduated from TCNN. He was soon appointed Principal of Wukari CLTC and moved into the house we first lived in. He also worked with the Evenhouses in their Jukun linguistic programme and is credited with being the person to translate the Bible into Jukun. He came to visit us during a linguistic workshop in Jos. Some years later, he was appointed a commissioner in the State Government and thus became a member of the state cabinet. Sadly, like my star student at CLTC, Yakubu Masoyi, Pastor Luka perished in a car accident a few years later. Many years later, in the late 1990s, his eldest son Mathias knocked on our door in Grand Rapids. He had won a Green Card in the US Green Card Lottery, and we were the only people he knew in the US. We connected him with Rev. Caleb Ahima, then a student at Calvin Seminary, and now the President of the CRCN. Between connections from Ahima and our son Wiebe, Mathias eventually got a job in the oil industry in Houston. Years later, his children and Wiebe's children became close friends when they were both expatriates with children at the American International School of Lagos.

We gradually moved away from the simple lifestyle of our rural CRCN past. We had already bought a TV and a piano. In May 1978, we purchased a used stereo from a missionary colleague. It was an old-fashioned model but produced beautiful sound. Kevin thought the sound was great.

I have hinted at the difficulties of travelling in Nigeria. Local travel was tough, mainly due to a shortage of petrol. Especially in Jos, this became a major obstacle for us, both for the family as well as ministry life. Nigeria was/is an OPEC country and thus a leading oil exporter, especially to the US. Fran wrote early June 1978:

When you stand in line for an hour and actually get your tank full of gas, you feel you've accomplished something big. Yesterday I was lucky and got the car and the extra jerry can I carried filled after a mere ten-minute wait. That does not happen every day! When I got home, John was so happy about it.

The above paragraph talks about an hour, but it gradually got worse to spending an entire day in the lineup. Often there was no point in lining up, for there would be no supplies for days on end. Many years later, we finally smartened up and hired our own private driver who might spend a whole day in the lineup and come home with a mission unfulfilled, that is, without any petrol. That was one of the smartest things we ever did.

Church Life

By March 1978 we had been in Jos for seven months, but we still had made no decision about which church to make our permanent home. We had started with COCIN Gigiring, a Hausa-speaking church near us, hoping that the children would pick up Hausa again. It was a church of *talakawa* or ordinary grass roots people with whom we liked to associate.

Most missionaries worshipped at the Hillcrest Chapel, but we had decided not to associate too closely with that strange missionary 'apartheid' hour. It made no sense to us that missionaries living in Jos should separate themselves from Nigerian churches. They lived next to each other in their missionary compounds; they socialized mainly with each other; they worked together at Hillcrest or other missionary settings. For many of them, their contact with Nigerians was marginal, mostly restricted to mission situations, somewhat like the situations I complained about with reference to Takum and Lupwe. In short, they were too confined in their comfort zone.

One Sunday evening, we did attend a Hillcrest service. A colleague who was sitting behind me and aware of our objections to these services tapped me on the shoulders and with a grin on his face, he asked whether I would be willing to preach at Hillcrest services. He thought he had caught me in an uncomfortable position. I replied that since I preached to Animists, why not to missionaries? I hasten to add that our attitude towards Hillcrest services did not represent our attitude towards Hillcrest as a school community. We were happy it was there, even though we often cringed because of the fundamentalistic tendencies of some SIM teachers. We were happy

Kevin could attend there without being sent off to boarding school. We participated in its functions as all active parents would.

We finally settled on St. Piran's Anglican Church. It was a cosmopolitan Nigerian English-speaking low Anglican Church of mostly professional, business and civil service people. The church had a colonial background in that it was started by and for expatriate tin miners in the 1930s. St. Piran is regarded by Anglicans as the patron saint of miners. The church was so 'English' in look and character that when Queen Elizabeth visited Nigeria in 1956, she made a point of attending the Sunday service in St. Piran's in Jos. The name made sense since the Plateau had long been a world centre for tin mining. Though it was part of the Anglican Diocese, the faraway bishops in Kaduna had always kept their hands off and allowed it to follow its own path. However, during our time with them, a local diocese was established with bishops from the south of the country. A decade later, Benjamin Kwashi, a local Plateau clergyman who graduated from TCNN, was appointed bishop. He took strong control over St. Piran's and encouraged it to comply with Diocesan policies. It became both more Anglican and more Charismatic.

Yemi Ladipo, the one who had started Campus Crusade or Great Commission Movement in Nigeria, was the pastor when we joined. Kevin joined the children's choir, Sunday School and the Boys Brigade, the Anglican version of Boy Scouts. Cynthia enrolled in the Sunday School class for four-year-olds. It met during the service. There was also a playgroup for three-year-olds, but Wiebe announced that 'in my whole life I will never go to a Sunday School.' Hence, at that time, we let him stay with us during the service.

Fran soon started to teach Sunday School and actually enjoyed it. I also played an active part. Occasionally, I would be asked to read the Scriptures, something I have always enjoyed doing since interpretive reading is one of my passions. After one such reading, Yakubu Gowon, the former Military Head of State, attended and complimented me on my 'expressive reading.' One year, I led a Bible discussion group on Revelations. I also participated in my capacity as a clergyman. Now and then, I would preach and sometimes even give com-

munion. I was also part of the church's Council for a term.

We joined this church for various reasons. Being Reformed and CRC, we should have joined the NKST congregation in town. After all, they were CRC partners. However, most of their services were in the Tiv language, which we did not understand.

The first reason for joining St. Piran's was the children. The services under Ladipo were dignified, simple and short. Secondly, as churches go, this one also served the functions of a club, much like the Wukari Tennis Club did: It provided us with useful contacts in the community. On the one hand, I regretted losing contact with the grassroots we had at Gigiring. On the other hand, my ICS ministry was often helped considerably by the relations St. Piran's helped us develop in the upper echelons of society. We tended to always have good personal relationships with the vicars that came and went. Thirdly, at St. Piran's we were ordinary members; our status as expatriates did not mean special status, respect or privilege. We enjoyed just being part of the crowd.

One of the things I especially appreciated at St. Piran's was its leadership development. Many of its vicars came out of the ranks. They were professionals or academics in their own fields that gave leadership in the church and then were sponsored to take part-time theological training. Over time, they would be appointed part-time vicar and eventually move into full time. After that, they were often snatched by the bishops and transferred to other congregations, often continuing, especially their academic careers part-time. This way, they always had experienced people in leadership positions, not just young men who had graduated from some theological institution and then were appointed pastor without real previous leadership experience. The vicars also would have income from their other work so that they did not depend solely on the church's meagre stipend. I considered it a great leadership development model that I advocated in CRCN.

Steward Issues

I have already referred to Hamza not being too happy with his work situation. Soon after Lydia came back to living with us, he started complaining to her and grumbling about his work situation. Lydia reported his complaints to us. So we had a good talk with him and advised him he should find another job more to his liking. A day or so later, he announced he had found one and would be moving out the next day.

It was not a good time for us to have to find and train a new worker, since my parents were coming the week after, but we had no choice. I went to the pastor of the Gigiring Church to see if he could think of anyone in his congregation who might be suitable. The idea of going through that church was that they would recommend someone they really knew and trusted, for if things did not go right, it would reflect on them. Furthermore, if problems arose, they might call in the person and have a talk with him.

It was only a few days later that the pastor brought us a young couple named Kiliyobas and Lydia. He had never done housework or worked for expatriates before. So, it was training from scratch. However, he was willing to learn and was cooperative. After a few days, we decided to train him for permanent employment. Our relationship with him and his family lasted many years. The couple had one little child with whom Cynthia and Wiebe soon started to play. Our Lydia also got along very well with the couple, while we were happy with his work. All in all, it seemed like a positive change.

CONTINUED DISSERTATION STRUGGLES

I had made good progress on my dissertation during our Grand Rapids days, but there remained a lot to be done once we returned to Jos, especially editing it all. I used every opportunity available to work on it. In September, we had the two-day Ramadan (Muslim fasting) holiday and I used them to work on it. But working at it on the limited 'spare time' I had, meant little progress. At the end of September, I had completed Chapter 8 and was ready to move on to the last, Chapter 9. Fran had decided on her own to continue typing on the project

without my taking care of the kids. She would do both, for she wanted me to make progress with the ICS.

A month later, she had finished typing Chapter 8 except for the footnotes. Unfortunately, I lost the reference to an appendix, which meant that she could not proceed further till I had retrieved the information. Such were the pre-computer days! It took some months before everything in Chapter 8 was all together. Fran reported that she had typed 535 pages so far for this project, but that does not take into consideration that many times pages had to be done over again due to new data or mistakes, however tiny. Then there was still a Chapter 9 to work on as well as all that other stuff at the back of scholarly books. And then the *entire* document would have to be reworked and typed all over again. Well, one day at a time, she wisely concurred.

During the week between Christmas 1978 and New Year, Fran pushed hard to complete Chapter 9, the last one, for someone was travelling to the Netherlands later that week and was willing to carry it there. In the meantime, I took the kids all over the place, shopping, hiking in the hills, the zoo, anything to occupy them and keep them out of Fran's hair. It was a week of many drop-ins, but I took care of them while Fran stayed hidden in the office. She finished the project on time. However, it was not till March that the manuscript was actually carried by someone who promised to personally hand-deliver it to Rodopi, the Amsterdam publisher, whom we had eventually picked as the printer for the book. Fran commented, 'It's hard to believe it's finally to this stage!' The project had started in 1973 and had kept us preoccupied most of the intervening six years.

Of course, the dissertation was only part of the entire doctorate programme. The next step was to prepare for the public defence of the dissertation at the VU in Amsterdam. The date for the occasion was set for October 25, 1979. Now things were moving rapidly.

A young American couple by the names of Lyn and Elaine Failings were interns at ICS Ibadan. They came to Jos to attend the Conference on Theological Renewal scheduled for April 1979. They right away offered to come and care for the children for the entire time we

would be gone. They had noticed that the life of expatriates in Jos was much more relaxed and pleasant than it was in Ibadan, with the local Jos people being more hospitable. They were looking forward to a Jos break. We were more than grateful for their offer and considered it an answer to our prayer, for we had been wondering how to arrange things. The Failings and their children stayed at our house during the conference period and built up a great relationship with our children. So we had every reason to accept their offer with the confidence they would do a good job of it.

BEGINNING ICS NORTHERN NIGERIA

The earlier section of the dissertation took us all the way into 1979. Let's return to 1977, the time we moved to Jos and began the story of the Northern Area Office of the ICS. On 29 April, 1978, the local Jos newspaper, *Nigeria Standard*, published the news about my appointment as Co-ordinator of the Northern ICS on the front page under the heading, 'Reverend Boer Is Now New Co-ordinator for ICS.' The article quoted Adegbola explaining that 'the people of the Northern states have much to offer in the increasing dialogue between the Church and the society.' The article also stated that 'Boer will be assisting the residents so that... they will be deeply involved in the discussions on the social issues of the day.'

So, here we were in August 1977, ready to reach out with a pioneering ministry that would aim at transforming various sectors of modern Nigeria.

The initial ICS Northern Office board meeting did not produce much in the way of guidance or ideas. It was all too vague for the members, and Director Adegbola was abroad. Besides, phoning him in Ibadan was unsuccessful most of the time. Again Fran wrote,

In the meantime, John is meeting with student and youth leaders as well as with prominent church leaders. He met with the secretary to the Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS), a branch of the same group under whose umbrella he would have worked at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) if our plans there had not been aborted. The

secretary was very encouraging. John also attended a meeting of the Associate Fellowship of Christian Students (AFCS), alumni of FCS. Any kind of new work needs time to take shape. He has some leads and helps as to which direction to take.

It wasn't that I had no ideas of my own, but I did want to hear everyone else's and be stimulated by them. Fran wrote that I 'was very enthusiastic and eager to get going.' Absolutely. Other organisations with which I met included the Christian Social Movement, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Gideons and even the Nigerian Field Society.

Not only did I want to hear the opinion of others, but I was also eager to share mine for people to respond to. That initial meeting with AFCS mentioned above led to an early opportunity to present a lecture to them in September 1977 about 'The Christian in the Secular World.' This title represented the core of the concern I wanted to share with Nigeria. It was really my debut and that of the ICS. By 'secular world' here I meant the world separated from God. Of course, there is no such world, for not only did God create this world, whenever and however, but He also upholds it minute by minute, without which it simply *could* not exist. It is only that mankind excludes God in its *thinking as if He does not exist or as if He plays no role* in our lives. Then I traced where this thinking came from, how it developed and what effect it has had on human history, including our individual lives. It was to be the theme of my entire ministry with the ICS for nearly two decades.

In 1966, Rev. Smith had introduced us to the Chief of Jos, a Christian. Now that we lived here, the ICS felt we should be introduced to the current chief, also a Christian. So, in the company of Rev. Machunga, a well-respected clergyman and chairman of my Board, we paid a visit to the chief. As was the custom, the chief thanked us for coming and showed great interest in the ministry of the ICS. He promised to pray for it and support it. He gave us gifts: a chrome serving tray for Fran and me and a robe for Machunga.

Social life soon started with what seemed like an avalanche. Sometimes it would be related to the ministry and get in the way of

family stuff. One Sunday afternoon, I had promised to take Kevin for some mountain climbing in the hills just outside of Jos. However, someone who was supposed to come in the late afternoon showed up at 1 p.m., a classic situation we would run into time and again, though usually people would be late rather than early. Pastor Nuhu Pamciri from Ndafero in Baissa country came with a young man who was a student at ABU. I should have proceeded with the Kevin plan, but I often gave in eagerly to potential ministry opportunities. Officially, Nuhu's was a personal visit, but it did not take long before I recognised the intersection with ministry – and disappointed Kevin by leaving him hanging.

This particular student was very interested in the application of the Christian faith to his studies. While the pastor left the next day, the student stayed for a couple of days for discussions. I gave him several books I had brought for just such occasions. This fellow was also active in the FCS at ABU. So, next time I would go there, he would be helpful in a renewed introduction to the new generation now in charge of this group. This, of course, was exactly the kind of person I wanted to minister to. I was always delighted when I ran into them.

Such a relationship can last over many years and can at times, even yield handsome rewards of gratitude. An example is Dr Obed Mailafia, who, as an undergraduate at the University of Jos (UJ), would quite frequently visit me at home or office for discussions. He graduated and disappeared from my life till many years later. In between these early interactions with him and later during our retirement, Mailafia climbed the academic and professional ladder, and eventually found himself in presidential circles and decided to reward us handsomely for our influence on his early life. It was with great sadness that we received the news that Dr. Mailafia died unexpectedly in September, 2021.

I soon became aware of a stark difference between our social standing in the CRCN area and in Jos. Before, we would always be invited to participate in public events as members of the elite. We would be given prominent places to sit. In Jos, we were new and would have to earn our place. On Independence Day, 1 October, 1977, we stood

up for two hours watching a parade move slowly around the polo ground while the town elite sat on comfortable chairs in a shaded place. The truth of the Hausa proverb hit me: '*Giwa a wani gari zomo ne,*' or, 'An elephant in one town is a rabbit in another.' We had moved from elephant to rabbit. I hoped that over time I would become known at least as a small elephant, for that would give me much greater access to places, public events and offices as well as greater public respect.

CONTACT WITH ICS HEADQUARTERS

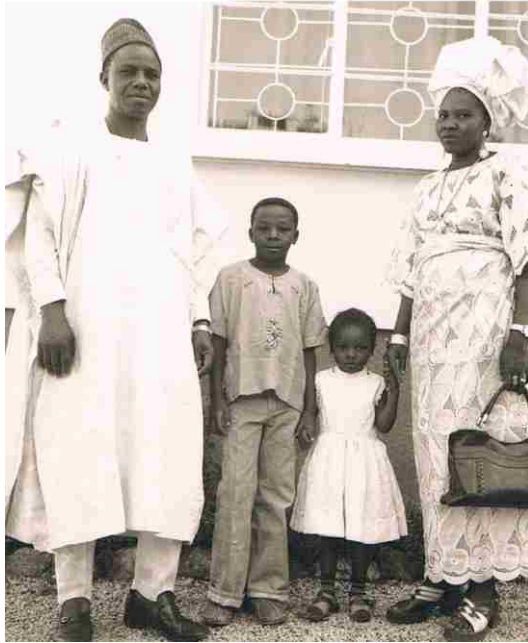
There were major teething problems. Communication with headquarters in Ibadan was basically impossible except by snail mail – and believe me, snail it was, weeks and weeks, years before the term was invented.

In addition, Director Adegbola had travelled abroad without leaving me a trace or a schedule. That meant I was totally on my own without any guidance. I proceeded but wondered how much I would have to backtrack on his return. It turned out that Adegbola had complete confidence in me and encouraged me to proceed as I had. But sometimes, I would have liked a bit more communication and guidance.

I remained basically on my own for most of my ICS years, except that I had a local board to whom I was responsible. Our relationship throughout was one of mutual trust and appreciation. I have always been grateful to them for their advice and support.

Another major teething problem was – you probably guessed it: money. Headquarters really had none to spare. There was no local provision for it. It was left up to me to find a way. Well, at the beginning, it was a matter of putting our money where my mouth was: Our giving all went to the ministry, while we used our own car and had an office in the house. Also, we hoped as much as possible to have projects and ministries pay for themselves.

You may remember the difficulties of travelling to Ibadan I had during Baissa days and the almost total lack of communication with Ibadan. That did not change much in Jos; there were still no de-



Mallam Ibrahim Sangari and family, 1978



Wiebe and Cynthia, Jos, 1978



Wiebe and Cynthia, Jos, 1978



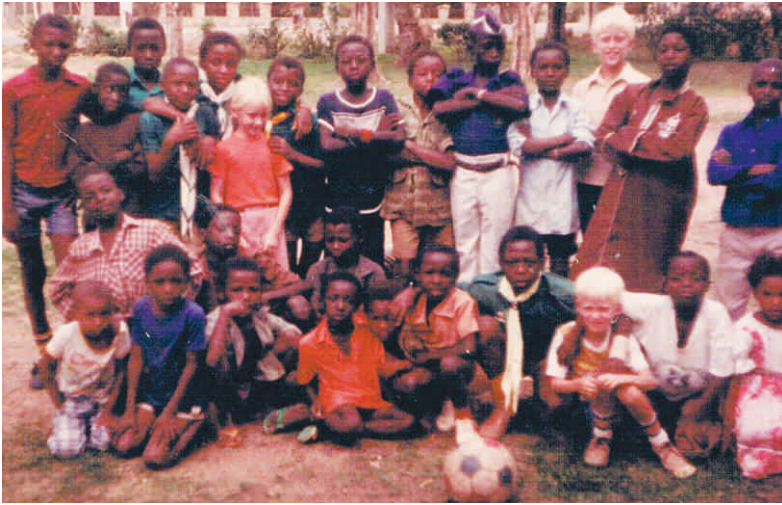
Fran's birth family – 1979



Kevin, Cynthia, Wiebe – Jos, 1980



Boer Family – Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, 1981



Kevin, Cynthia and
Wiebe with Zaria
Road Soccer Club,
1981



John at the dedication of United Faith Gospel Tabernacle SS, 1982



Boer Family, Vancouver, British
Columbia, Canada, 1984



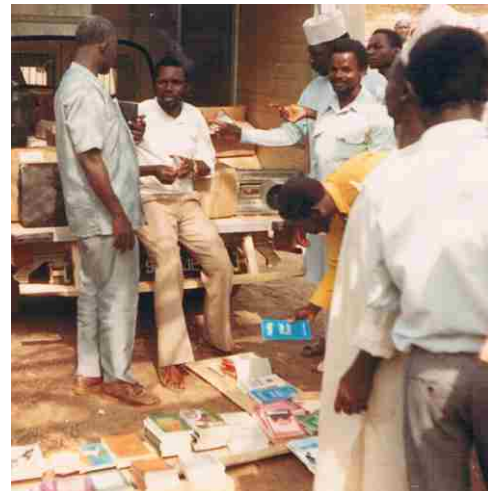
Bishop Nathaniel and Rhoda Yisa, 1985



Fran teaching a basic Hausa class to Hillcrest teachers, 1985



Boer Family – Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, 1987



Matthew Adams, bookseller, in ICS Literature Program, 1988



ICS Jos Handover, Rev Dr Jabani Mambula, Chairman of ICS Jos Board, handing keys to Emmanuel Kumzhi, the new Director, with John looking on, 1989



Participants at ICS External Debt Conference, 1990



Fran with students and artwork in her classroom at Hillcrest, 1990.



Fran telling a Bible story about Moses holding up his hands in prayer, 1991



The Abaga family – Chris and Lydia with Jesse, Jason and Jude, 1991

Chris, Wiebe, Lydia and Cynthia – Jos, 1992



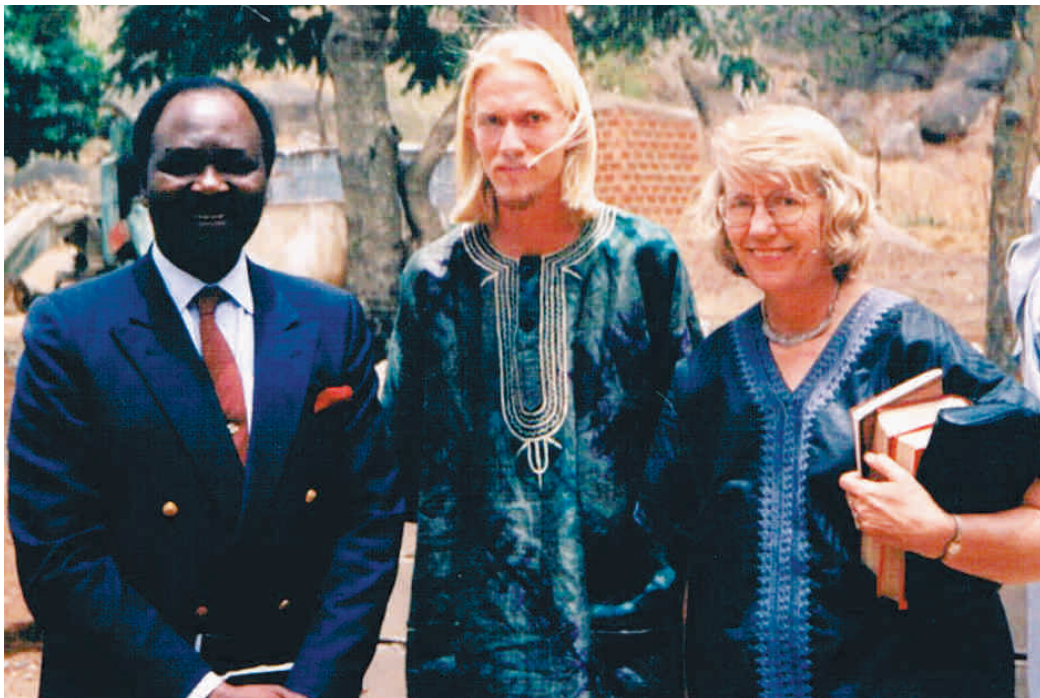
Jude and Jesse performing at Fran's 50th birthday party – Jos, 1992



Wiebe the runner – Jos, 1992



Dr John and Esther Orkar, CEO of CRC World Relief (Nigeria), 1992



General Yakubu Gowon, Rtd., Wiebe and Fran at St Piran's Church, 1995



CRCN visitors, 1995



Wiebe and John enjoying peppersoup at Plateau Club, 1995



Lydia and Fran – Jos, 1996

pendable telephone connections. Mid-December, 1977, I was to go to Ibadan for consultation. I hoped to go by Mission plane, but that did not work out. Then I decided to go by bus, since travelling almost 900 km by car alone was not considered advisable, though I had done it before. The problem was the scarcity of petrol along the way.

The bus trip to Ibadan went well. They stopped often enough to buy some ready-made food and take care of other needs. I arrived in Ibadan at 4 a.m. on Wednesday, faster than I could have done since I did not drive at night due to dangerous road conditions. I met Adegbola and spent three days consulting with him.

Finding my way back home on Saturday was another story. Buses all started in Lagos, some 100 kilometres south of Ibadan, and they were totally full by the time they reached Ibadan. There was an airport near the ICS, but planes to Jos were only twice a week. They, too, were always overbooked. I waited in a bus line for four hours only to find there was no room. Then I heard of a professor from the University of Ibadan, right next to the ICS, who was driving to Jos. I rode with him and arrived home on Tuesday afternoon, several days later than planned. I could not find working telephones anywhere throughout the journey, including those at ICS.

Such trips full of uncertainties would mark the years of ICS ministry and were always stressful for both of us because of the lack of communication. I actually was glad I had taken the trip by bus, for now, I knew how it worked. Next time I would go by bus again but then arrange with the Mission plane to pick me up again. Adegbola wanted me to come monthly, but, in view of the time it would take, I wanted to concentrate on ministry in the North.

While in Ibadan, I would also always contact Modupe Odeyoye, the manager of Daystar Press, the publishing arm of CCN, and editor of the CCN monthly *Nigerian Christian*. He was also a linguist who drew very interesting conclusions from linguistic data about the historical relations of peoples and nations. We became good friends, so that I often visited his home and ate at his table. I say 'his' table, for though married, his wife worked with the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva.

BUSINESS ETHICS COURSE

One of the first projects I started was a course in Christian business ethics to be conducted in local churches. It was started in the Jos NKST congregation and subsequently in COCIN Gigiring and the United Faith Gospel Tabernacle Church.

I based it on a collection of Bible verses, beginning with the Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1. We would read a passage and then discuss its implications for business. It was a real eye-opener for the participants, for they were accustomed to applying these passages to private, family and church life, but to business? That, for most of them, was unheard of. I tried to break through the attitude of 'business is business' and change it to one of service to God and neighbour. Specifically, the components were:

The relation of business to the Kingdom of God

Old Testament teachings directly or indirectly related to business

New Testament teachings directly or indirectly related to business

Specific principles covered included:

- *Stewardship of property and wealth
- *Fair profits
- *Advertising
- *What to sell or not to sell
- *Caring for employees and customers

The course went well in some places; in others, there were some problems. It went well in the COCIN Gigiring church, where we worshipped at the time and where people understood Hausa well. About 20 people attended. It was no different with NKST. They had a close relationship with our Mission and were proud, I believe that a CRC missionary was running this important ministry. They were open to me and I am grateful they gave me opportunities to minister.

One part of the course was really of great interest to them. We talked about property in the Old Testament and recognised that their traditions in this regard were very similar. This brought up challeng-

ing discussions, also challenging for me. It revolved around philosophical issues of differentiation in the course of history and the role Western Capitalism was playing in Nigeria. The question became: What were modern Christians to think in the context of this swirling vortex of historical developments? And what had been the role of missionaries in these developments? How was I to explain the jump from *relative* private property ownership in both Bible and Tiv tradition to that of the West's form of absolute private ownership that was being introduced in Nigeria? My explanation was secular dualism that separates affairs like property ownership from religion and the Bible and that was supported by many missionaries, by omission more than commission, by what they did not teach more than what they actively taught.

I kept teaching this course in different churches not only but also in some institutions. In April 1978, I spent four days teaching the course at the RTCN in Mkar, an NKST seminary. As to church courses, they were marked by constantly fluctuating language circumstances. Sometimes in Hausa, but then perhaps translated into another Nigerian language like Yoruba or Tiv or others; sometimes, in English with translations into various languages.

Student Ministry

Occasionally I would be invited to preach at UniJos. At first, the Anglicans were in charge of the chapel there and one Anglican lecturer was a part-time chaplain. The services tended to be dry as dust. The children liked the services there, for they could count on them being short instead of the usual two-hour-plus services in other churches. The next part-time chaplain was also a friend of mine, a COCIN clergyman and professor of Religious Studies at UniJos. He would also invite me to preach while he would do the liturgy. One day, I came to preach but found the chaplain missing. I had to conduct the liturgy without prior preparation as well as preach.

Later on, a full-time chaplain from ECWA with a charismatic streak in him was appointed. Danjuma Byang was a sociologist by

training and a journalist by profession. He was also the author of a fine dynamic book with the title *Sharia in Nigeria: A Christian Perspective* that I used and quoted numerous times in my own book series on Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria.

In May 1978, I was requested to teach a course on Ethics at Uni-Jos in the next academic year. Though I am no Ethicist, the subject was closer to my ICS heart. I accepted without having any idea about textbooks or library resources for the course. I started preparing early during the long university break. However, Nigeria's universities had become restless places of stoppages and strikes. Everything had been cancelled, this time due to student unrest and riots. No one could predict what would happen next or when they would open again. I discovered there was neither curriculum for the course nor textbooks anywhere. I desperately searched the major bookshops in town to no avail.

With the opening of the new term in September, I did actually teach ethics, two hours a week, to a class of five students. The lack of proper resources made it difficult going for me.

I was invited to deliver lectures to various groups of Christian students at different campuses. One was on the subject 'Christian Work on the University Campus.' Most Christians students would understand that as referring to activities like prayer and evangelism, but then in a very narrow sense. I explained to students the dominant worldview with which they and their non-Christian colleagues were operating, namely the dualism between religion and culture. 'Christian work' in that context would mean just that: Christian evangelism to individual students or lecturers. I then brought the idea of the Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1 into the hopper and insisted that any work done in response and obedience to that mandate was religious by definition and that it could not possibly be restricted to prayer and evangelism. 'Christian work.' I proposed should include students seeking to integrate their studies with the Bible. This could best be done in groups, where they would struggle together. Of course, I did not discourage evangelism; that continues to be necessary, but done in a way that fits the academic community, where they should learn

to veer students and lecturers away from the secular Marxist perspective to that of the Kingdom.

NETWORKING AND ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

ICS belonged to the CCN and was thus an ecumenical institution, geared to work with all the denominations, including churches that did not consider themselves ecumenical but that did nevertheless network with other denominations. My preaching and lecturing in various churches and institutions was an expression of the networking in question here. One really delightful ecumenical experience was during the Universal Week of Prayer in January 1979. A city-wide prayer meeting was held in a large Baptist church. It was humorous to hear them announce that we will sing hymn 'such and such,' which is number this in the Baptist hymnal; number that in the Methodist hymnal, and number 'so and so' in the Igbo hymnal. And then to hear everyone sing the same hymn in their own tongue!

Ecumenical work and networking brought me in touch with many churches and their umbrella organisations.

TEKAN – FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN NIGERIA

From its early days on, the SUM had hopes of ending up with one single unified church consisting of all the denominations created by the various SUM branches. It was not to be. I think the reason the unified church did not happen is that the hope was not buttressed by firm and clear plans to move in that direction from the start.

However, those denominations did unite into a fellowship popularly known as 'TEKAN' – the acronym of its Hausa name: *Tarayyar Ekkelisiyoyin Kiristi a Nijeriya*. The English name constitutes the heading of this section. It was founded in 1955 with the CRC's Edgar Smith as the founding General Secretary (GS) and A. W. Machunga, his successor, as the first Nigerian GS. Machunga, you may remember, was also the first Chairman of the Board of the Jos ICS. The current TEKAN secretariat was dedicated on 8 January, 1978, and

is located along Noad Ave., behind the Central Bank in Jos. I was already involved in some TEKAN projects while still working in CRCN, but with Machunga as my ICS Chairman, I came very close to the organisation. For one thing, until ICS had its own meeting room, ICS North's Board meetings were held at TEKAN free of charge, gracious service to a fledgeling body.

During our CRCN years I had gotten involved in a Bible School Literature Committee under TEKAN. This committee had kept working all these years. As its secretary, I had been collecting materials from throughout TEKAN for a complete Bible school syllabus. The end of March 1979 found me collating all those materials into one final document to be approved at the next committee meeting.

THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF NORTHERN NIGERIA (TCNN)

TEKAN is the proprietor of TCNN. Its first chairman was, again, Edgar Smith, while our own Dr Harry Boer was the founding principal. The first Nigerian principal, later called provost, was Dr Musa Gotom. Over the years, I associated closely with TCNN, one of the ways in which I have closely associated also with its parent body, TEKAN.

Shortly after our arrival in Jos, I offered to assist TCNN by teaching about social issues as they affect pastors. They could not accommodate me as requested due to an overcrowded curriculum. However, they suggested I devise a correspondence course for their graduates that would deal with issues like Communism and Capitalism.

On 21 April, 1978, we attended a retirement dinner for Dr. Harry. He had reached the age of retirement at sixty-five. He had served in Nigeria for thirty-one years, beginning in Baissa in that old house we lived in during our initial language training period back in 1966. He moved to Grand Rapids, where we would meet him again. He was highly appreciated in Nigeria, while he was rather unpopular within much of the CRC for his challenges to conservative theology. He donated quite a few books from his library to me for either private use or for building up an ICS library. Some of them were classics in Islamics.

CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (CAN)

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was a new organisation when we arrived in Jos and still had to determine its shape and functions in society. Eventually, it became the primary voice of the Nigerian Church, especially in relation to governments and Islam. By embracing almost all traditions, it wisely overcame the duality of Evangelical versus Liberal, though that duality did exist in some other organisations. The Pentecostals took many years before deciding to join.

At first, CAN welcomed me to their meetings, but once it became more firmly established and focused, I was politely asked not to attend any more, for they did not wish a foreigner to sit in on their political discussions. I knew the person well who proposed this call. We were and remained on very friendly terms, but he was just being honest. He might have done better to take me aside and discuss it privately. I would have fully understood. Some years later, I once again attended a series of CAN meetings when ICS was in the process of handing over an ICS-initiated project to CAN. By that time, CAN was more sure of itself and could 'tolerate' the presence of an expatriate, as long as it was on their terms. CAN features prominently in my series on Christian-Muslim relations, *usually* favourably. The incident did give me a clear hint that the days of expatriate missionaries in sensitive ministries was drawing to a close in Nigeria, including ministries like that of the ICS.

Community Development

Community Development is a wide term that could be used to cover most of the ICS's ministries in both Ibadan and Jos. I was always interested in the relationship between development to religion and spirituality. My thesis was that unless development programmes in Nigeria incorporate spiritual or worldview components, they will not take root. This was eventually developed in various projects/programmes. Over the years, I delivered, wrote and distributed lectures, booklets and magazine articles on their integration.

The topic of the conference that had brought my boss Dr Adegbola to Jos in July 1978 was ‘The Christian Mission in Rural Development.’ Twenty five people attended and it was held at TCNN. Its major concerns were two sides of one coin: (1) To describe the oppression and poverty to which the poor are subject on the basis of anecdotal data and experience (2) To discover ways to improve the lot of the poor and the church’s role in this. The description of oppression identified three aspects, each of which was supported by anecdotal evidence. They were: (1) Inertia caused by fatalism; (2) Exploitation by the educated and the clever; (3) Exploitative institutions.

League for Action against Bribery

Bribery and corruption are global phenomenon. In Nigeria, it has long been widely recognised as the major cause of poverty and underdevelopment. The subject would occasionally arise during ‘my’ ICS Board meetings until it came to be recognised that perhaps ICS could be an agent for countering bribery. Once that was decided in Jos, we took the concern to Director Adegbola and his board. All agreed some action should be taken. I was asked to poll people at various levels to see what ideas for action and solution might be floating out there.

In short, we established a committee consisting of a wide variety of Christians that frequently met at first, with everyone taking polls in their own communities and bringing ideas and proposals for action to the table. We decided on a name: League for Action against Bribery. The committee mandated me to write a brochure in English that was subsequently translated into Hausa, Igbo and Tiv. The English and Hausa versions sold very rapidly. It obviously was a subject of great interest. I was hoping to get this project going and then fade into the background, but that did not happen. It required nurturing for a long time.

It was like pulling teeth to get the group to discuss concrete actions. They tended to be fatalistic not only but also fearful. Under the umbrella of ICS, I was invited to speak in many places on the subject, even in the barracks of the 3rd Armoured Division in Jos. I explained the Biblical perspective, something totally unknown to most. They

were not aware of how strongly the Bible speaks against it. I described the effects it had locally and nationally and how especially the poor suffered because of it. A very popular campaign, but every concrete proposal met with strong reservations.

Quite a few people saw nothing wrong with the practice when it came to dealing with the government. In the meantime, the beneficiaries of the practice became filthy rich, while its victims, 90 per cent plus of the people, became filthy poor. However, the newspapers and magazines recognised it as the main scourge of Nigeria that kept the country not only from advancing, but dragged it backwards, underdeveloped it. There was hardly a newspaper or magazine that did not feature an article on the subject in every edition, whether daily or monthly. More frequently than not, they would contain multiple articles.

On 11 March, 1979, we planned for a big open public rally against corruption and bribery, with the local Catholic Bishop Ganaka as the main speaker. The rally was to be followed up by a TV interview. I was invited to participate in that, since I had been the organiser of the event. However, I judged it better to keep in the background throughout the events of the day and just help co-ordinate it all behind the scene. It was better to have this recognised as a Nigerian-inspired project, which in fact it was, even though I was invited to get it moving.

It was a total success. It was held in the Jos Township Stadium in the centre of the city. There must have been 3,000 people in attendance. A number of good choirs performed, including that of the Boys Brigade. The TV people were there and did their interview for the evening news. The entire event betrayed how interested in and concerned the people were about bribery and corruption. And no wonder, for it touched and still touches everyone from high to low at every turn they take.

THE CHILDREN

Lydia

We all were delighted when Lydia visited us in Jos while we were still living in our temporary quarters on the Mountain View Compound. Cynthia and Wiebe were especially happy when she would carry them on her back or when she showed Cynthia again how to wear Nigerian clothes and carry things on her head. We bought Nigerian food to celebrate her coming, and the children all dived right in as if they had never been away. Lydia stayed for two weeks. Then she went to her parents in Nyankwala for a few days and after that back to WDCSS.

Lydia continued to write letters from school. Here are a few excerpts:

We were supposed to be back from our school holidays on 5 September, but then because of 'Sallah' it was changed to 16th September. I had received notice of the change, so I stayed home. But some students did not get the news in time, so they had to stay at the school compound and wait for the rest of us to come.

We are not using our personal clothes now. We have uniforms for class, for compound duties, for sports and for town leave. Most of the uniforms hardly fit now because we have all grown fatter during the holidays!

We are busy practising our running and other things seriously because some of us girls might be going to Yola next week for sports. Our boys came back last week from Ganye with a very good result. So you know what it means if girls go to Yola and don't do well!

Early 1978, Lydia's parents came to bring Ibrahim, a younger brother, for cleft palate surgery at the hands of Glen Verbrugge. They stayed at our house during Ibrahim's entire hospitalisation. The surgery was successful and Naomi and Iliya took Ibrahim back home to Nyankwala for further recuperation.

During a February trip to Lupwe, Fran went to see Lydia at WDCSS. She was in her last year and hoping to go to university.

Lydia came again for her 1978 Easter vacation. As always, the children were so happy to see her. The first thing they said was, 'Carry me on your back!' She did not mind at all. The children were also eager to show her our new house on Zaria Road, room by room. Fran did all kinds of things with her, social things but also work around the house.

I took Lydia job hunting and had almost immediate success. Both Jos-based Christian broadcasters were interested in her. One was ELWA, an evangelical outfit connected to SIM and ECWA with its broadcasting facility in Monrovia, Liberia. The other, Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG), was connected to the World Lutheran Federation and had a recording studio in Jos but a broadcasting station in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Both advised her to learn typing. They made it seem very likely they would employ her to make radio or TV programmes and that if she did well, they would sponsor her for further training: No firm promises, but bright prospects.

Fran started Lydia immediately on typing lessons. It can be discouraging when you start by slowly pecking away, one letter at a time and you see others typing very fast. Lydia soon did get discouraged. Fran had started typing at age fifteen and was very fast at it. Lydia thought that at seventeen, she might be too old! Fran decided, 'I'll keep pushing her the rest of her Easter vacation. Then, when she starts in earnest in July or so, she will know a few basics already.'

Shortly after spending the school holiday with us in Jos, she realised she'd forgotten something important:

I forgot to give you my fee assessment form along with the grade report. The principal says we must pay our school fees before the middle of the month or we will have to stop attending our lessons. My own fees are now ₦9.75. The principal is very serious and promised us last Wednesday that he will send us home if he has to in order to collect our fees. So please, kindly send me the school fees.

Mid-July, I met again with Dick Mbodwan, the Director of RVOG. He told me he wanted Lydia to start working for them as soon as possible. We were so excited about this opportunity and wrote her a letter im-

mediately. A month later, Lydia arrived and started with them.

After working for some time and enjoying her job, a door opened for her to get a scholarship for a course at Daystar University in Nairobi, Kenya. Daystar was the communications centre of the All Africa Conference of Churches. She would need this training to continue her work at RVOG. The course would last six months. She was somewhat apprehensive about going so far from home, but we encouraged her strongly.

She was entering a new phase of life, with young men showing increasing interest in this very pretty, smart talented, and fun-filled young lady. One young man had come to see her several times at our house. One day she got nine letters, one from 'that' man and from eight others, all old school mates who had not forgotten her. There was no dating system where young people were free to move around together and get to know each other. Everything was more circumscribed, because in this culture, people are more realistic about what free dating can and often does lead to. That's, of course, a major reason church youth organisations were very popular with Christian young people, for they gave them an opportunity to socialise together in groups. That was probably a major reason for Lydia to join, for a time, the large COCIN church where I preached occasionally, for they had a good choir there and an active youth group.

In fact, Lydia became very active in all kinds of youthful activities. She took a course with the Great Commission Movement for evangelism. They would practice by visiting patients at the hospital or visit compounds. Afterwards, they would meet to discuss their experiences. She also attended a Bible study group every Friday evening at her church. She became one busy young lady, being involved in a wide variety of constructive Christian activity.

Whether or not the search for romance was part of the motivation, it did work. During January 1979, there was this young man who would walk her home from church and from Bible studies, quite a distance that Lydia normally would not walk. Then he would often stay a while for a visit. Actually, several fellows were visiting her. Then, one day she pointed out the one whom she described as her

boyfriend. His name was Chris Garba Abaga, who hailed from the Takum area and was baptised as an infant by the CRCN, and as an adult received a believer's baptism by ECWA. He was an evangelist with Campus Crusade. He was a handsome young man with an infectious and boisterous laugh. With Lydia possibly going for that six-month course in Kenya, we thought it would be interesting to see how strong the tie was.

She worked hard to meet RVOG's requirements for her scholarship for the Kenyan course. She continued improving her typing, also at home. She had to write three sample manuscripts that Fran typed up for her.

A week before Christmas 1978, Lydia received notice that she had been accepted for that course in Nairobi. Fran wrote,

She sounds apprehensive about it and will be telling her parents at Christmas time. It will be real news to them since she had not told them before. Naomi, her mother, had not really wanted her to go so far away when she came to Jos, some 480 kilometres from Nyankwala, so I don't know what she'll say about this.

When she left for Nairobi at the end of February 1979, things were still going strong between her and Chris. Fran wrote, 'He is a very nice fellow and we certainly have no objections to the match.' She had also been getting more friends and is much happier than when she first came to Jos. Fran commented how beautiful Lydia looked in a new picture she gave us. 'She has really grown up in the last six months and, I'm sure, during the next six months in that course, she will grow even more.'

Lydia received her permanent employment contract from RVOG in February. Because of the training they were giving her, she had to sign a bond for two years. After that, she would be free to leave.

Towards the end of the month, she, together with another student named Yohanna, was scheduled to fly out to Nairobi via Lagos. The Director had decided to accompany them to Lagos to ensure a smooth transfer there. By now, she had lost her hesitation and was looking forward to the adventure. We were surprised to receive the

first letter from her from Nairobi very soon after she left. Everything had gone well on the trip and classes had started. Chris started coming daily to get news from her and was hoping to receive his own soon.

Kevin

Fran wrote the following about Kevin's early experience in Jos:

He is very happy in grade 3 at Hillcrest. His class list reads like a United Nations' roll call. Out of 23 kids, only five are mission kids; the others are with firms and other agencies with mostly Lebanese, Indian or Pakistani names. His teacher's name happens to be Miss Bohrer, pronounced like "Bohr," much like "Boer," a funny coincidence. He is doing very well. He is in advanced reading and math groups. He is also in a play that practices three times a week after school. So, he is kept very busy.

At school, his first friend was Nabeel, but he was having trouble keeping other friends, for too often people, moved away so that no relationship was steady. One day, Nabeel told Kevin that his Dad had said that if they didn't read the Qur'an at least once a year, they might become Christians. Fran thought he meant that if you are not faithful enough to read the Qur'an regularly, you might as well be a Christian. Kevin asked Nabeel, 'Well, don't you want to be a Christian?' Nabeel was shocked at the question and replied with a firm 'No!' Fran commented, 'Kevin has his theories as to what Muslims are like and Nabeel his about Christians. They are both beginning to realise that both groups are human and can be good friends.'

Our new location on Zaria Road was some four kilometres from Hillcrest. We arranged with an Indian family who drove past our house with their kids to pick Kevin up right at our driveway. That was handy. However, at the end of the day, he would be dropped off across the busy road. Fran told him she would keep her eye out for him and help him cross, but he considered that an insult. In the meantime, he had changed his best friend. His latest was Rusty Verbrugge.

Sunday afternoons would often be bonding times for Kevin and myself, at least when I was home and free. Occasionally, we would

have 'driving practice' out on the flats of Liberty Dam, an artificial lake just out of town, from where the Jos Water Board got its water.

More often, we would take hikes in the hills around Jos. The Jos landscape was a fascinating one with the strangest rock formations, with some balanced on top of each other, seemingly ready to topple at the slightest wind or tremor. We never saw it happen. We would climb or jump from rock to rock, though not quite with the expertise local goats demonstrated.

Cynthia

Cynthia could often be generous. One time, a St. Piran's friend of ours and an elderly judge, Justice Haruna Dandaura, came to our house. Cynthia happened to have some M&Ms at hand and gave him a few. He was so touched by this gesture of a little girl that he never forgot. He would often talk about it with great delight and appreciation, especially when he saw Cynthia, even decades later. Dandaura remained a family friend for decades to come, and when we moved to Mountain View, he was our neighbour across the street. He became a grandfather figure for the children and Cynthia and Wiebe would go often to visit him.

Another time in January 1979, when we were flooded with free grapefruit I had brought home from 'our' trees on our former Wukari compound, Cynthia overheard us saying that we had plenty. We intended to share them with some missionaries who had no access to such fruit. In Fran's words,

So our sociable little lady who knows everybody, went and distributed them while we were away in town. Lydia told her to quit, but she said that Mommy allowed it since we had too many. The next morning, I discovered only twenty were left! What do you do? You want your children to learn to share. I guess she was practising what we preach! I told her not to pass anything out again until I have seen it. That same week she had also given away or "loaned out" her doll bed, her dolls and the clothes! She said that little girl didn't have any, while she herself had more. So, why not? How could we object?

Early January 1979, Cynthia started kindergarten at Plateau Private School, an unofficial feeder school for Hillcrest that, especially non-missionary families, used to get their kids through the Hillcrest entry process. Missionary children did not have to go through Hillcrest testing, for they were guaranteed a place. Cynthia liked kindergarten very much, but it did make her very tired.

Wiebe

Little three-year-old Wiebe had a rough introduction to the wet monsoon on the high Jos plateau. Here's the story from Fran:

Today we had one of those sudden unexpected downpours. Wiebe cried and did not have enough sense to run for shelter, any shelter. Fortunately, his big sister stayed with him until she could persuade him to run back to the house with her. He just stood there and was mad; he expected the rain to go away, the same way as he wanted the snow to go away when he first experienced it in Grand Rapids a short while ago!

At age three-plus, Wiebe was turning to theology for explanations. Early November, he and Kevin were struggling with the flu. Wiebe could not decide whether it was God or Satan that had made him sick. After he had fallen a couple of times, he said, 'God pushed me. God wanted me to fall.' Fran wondered whether this was a case of hyper-predestination. He was aware that we would move into our permanent house soon after Christmas. Ever the theologian, he said, 'After God's birthday, we will move into our new house.' When he saw presents under the Christmas tree in the hostel, he asked, 'Is Jesus coming down to open them?'

When Wiebe had his fourth birthday, fifteen children were invited to the party. As Fran told it:

The rain forced a change of plans to inside the house. Fortunately, John was there for crowd control and to keep them out of the living room. Katie Weeks came to play kid-friendly music on the piano while they played "follow the leader." We had lots of fun. In the end, we piled them all into our van to take them home. It looked so cute, each one with a hat and balloon.

When Cynthia entered Plateau School in January 1979, Wiebe was initially very lonely. He soon got over it. According to Fran:

He likes to colour and to look at books. On Wednesdays, he plays at someone's house while I'm teaching at TCNN. He has three good choices right now. Sometimes he has a hard time deciding which one to go to. Yesterday morning, Ruthie Koops came here to play with him again. For a few weeks, he had learned from Kevin to be anti-girl, and then he didn't want to play with Ruthie, but he seems to have forgotten all about that again because they had such a nice time yesterday.

Late February 1979, Wiebe banged his chin while climbing a tree and got a nasty gash in it. We took him to a nearby private clinic, where they applied bandages. Fran had to take him back several times over a period of nearly two weeks for checkups and antibiotics. A month later, on a day when the other children participated in performances, Kevin at Hillcrest and Cynthia on TV, Wiebe had another freak accident: our dog *Hankali* (Hausa for 'be careful') attacked him and bit him just underneath an eye. A few millimetres higher, and Wiebe would have lost an eye. We could not figure out the reason for the dog's attack but became kind of suspicious of him as unpredictable, something we had not observed before. This time we quickly took him – Wiebe, that is – to the out-patient clinic at Evangel Hospital where he was born. They soon had him sewed up. As Fran reported the scene,

He was so brave about it; he hardly cried and laid very still when the two stitches were put in. John almost fainted and walked out of the room because the doctor did it with what looked like a fish hook. Wiebe thought it was funny that Daddy couldn't take it! Then he had to have a tetanus shot, and he smiled at the nurse who gave it.

This was the seventh scar on Wiebe's face. Fran summarised them all, but I won't bore you with all these details, except to help you realise that he was a pretty battle-scarred little boy!

Our children now found themselves in a cosmopolitan world of many nationalities. Whereas previously, their linguistic experiences

and developments formed the centre of our attention, that aspect of their lives stabilised in the new English environment with an occasional nod to Hausa.

Around this time, Fran began to refer to Cynthia and Wiebe as 'twins.' They were, of course, very close in age, ten months and twenty-nine days to be exact! I sometimes would refer to them as 'hesitant twins.'

Towards the end of August 1978, the school and church programmes were in full swing again. Cynthia and Wiebe went to St. Piran's Sunday School. Cynthia felt the urge to 'take care' of Wiebe during the session, but that would not last long, for in October, classes would be reorganised and the two would be separated.

After Grandma Jennie and Jane's visit about which you can read down below, Fran's mother and oldest sister, she started teaching Cynthia and Wiebe again, something she had eased off on. Mid-September, they surprised her by counting up to 100 with hardly any help. Cynthia was starting to recognise many letters and could tell whether words were 'the same' or 'different.' She loved to work in her workbooks. As to Wiebe, she wrote:

He has his days when he 'refuses' and throws the books, pencils and crayons away, but he soon comes back again for more! I always tell him he doesn't have to listen to Cynthia when she is reading, but he doesn't want to be left out either. The best time for him always is storytime, and they never fail to bring me plenty of books to read to them.

The week before Opa and Oma Boer, my parents, arrived for their visit only a few months later, also reported below, we had a 'kid exchange' day. Cynthia slept over at Bierlings with her friend Sarah. Her Dad, Al, was the math teacher at Hillcrest High School. Wiebe slept at the Evenhouses. Both of them thought the arrangement was 'super special.' In exchange, we had Krister Evenhouse at our house. He and Kevin used to play and fight in Wukari; now they were playing in Jos, but, Fran wrote, they became kind of wild.

During February and March 1979, we had a couple of Dutch chil-

dren stay at our house for ten days, children of Dutch missionaries who had to travel to the Netherlands. The children understood no English, only Dutch. During the same periods, we also had a few other toddlers over from parents who needed to be relieved of them for a day here or there. Wiebe decided there were too many 'babies' around. So he stayed at Michaels' house next door most of the time.

VISIT FROM OUR FAMILIES

Visit from Mother Jennie and Jane

For quite some time, Fran wrote a lot of letters to both sets of parents encouraging them to visit us. It was often advice about necessary documents, vaccinations and medicines, clothes to take, etc. They were often advised to consult with the CRWM administration about procedures and, not to forget, what to bring along for us. Quite a few of her letters ended up with a long wish list of miscellanea we all wanted. They also contained preventive advice and words of encouragement to prevent fear from setting in. After all, Mother Jennie was well into her seventies and she had never before been in any tropical climate or southern culture. Unfortunately, Father Tjalling did not want to come along, largely due to his fear of flying.

Cynthia and Wiebe were very disappointed one day in May 1978. We visited the Bierlings, Hillcrest colleagues of ours living at Mountain View, to greet their grandmother who had come for a visit. Why had their grandmother not yet arrived? They were consoled when Fran assured them that they would come before long and that they would stay longer than the Bierlings' grandmother.

In July, it was finally time for the anticipated visit from Mother Jennie and sister Jane. They arrived in Kano on 26 July, 1978. Jane said she was so happy when she could already see Fran in the distance while they were still on the bus riding to the customs area. Jane commented that 'going through customs was quite an experience. There was a big crowd of people, but I saw no recognisable lines anywhere. It was strange, scary, crazy and funny all at the same time.' Jane continued,

Driving from Kano to Jos was like seeing a live travelogue. People and more people on the sides of the roads, particularly in the villages and towns we passed. People walking, people riding bikes and motorcycles. People carrying things on their heads, people selling things on the side of the road. I have never before seen so many people outside!

After a few days in Jos, we took our visitors 'down bush,' as we now called the rural mission stations where we used to live. We were worried about our seventy-four-year-old mother's health, so we brought enough boiled drinking water with us to ensure we knew what she was drinking.

We stopped at different church compounds, some COCIN and some CRCN. After crossing the Benue River by ferry, we visited Ruth Vander Meulen and Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo in Ibi. Even though we had crossed there many times, it was quite a fearful experience for Mom and Jane. We stopped in Wukari for just a little while and showed them the two houses where we used to live. Then we drove on to Takum and Lupwe where we spent the night. Mom and Jane were very pleased with how hospitable everyone was to them, both Nigerians and missionaries. We were surprised how well they both slept in new places. Jet lag was not an issue because they had already spent a week in our time zone in The Netherlands, on their way to Nigeria.

We stopped in Mararraba to see the Havemans and then travelled on to Baissa where we spent several days. Again Mom and Jane were amazed at how many Nigerians invited us over for meals or brought food to us. Both of them were good sports about trying new foods. After leaving Baissa, we stopped in Rafin Kada to greet Ifraimu Nyajo and his wife and then went back to Wukari to stay for the weekend. Many Nigerians came to the Mission Compound to bring food or just to greet.

A highlight there for Mom and Jane was meeting Pastor David Angye's family and having a meal with them. They knew him well as he had visited them several times during his study time at Reformed Bible College in Grand Rapids.

They finally went to Nyankwala to meet Lydia and her family whom they had heard much about for so many years. Lydia was in her home village for just a short holiday and was getting ready to start working and to come to live with us again in Jos. It was a delightful visit for both families.

I preached in many different churches during Mom and Jane's visit. So that meant they had quite an ecumenical experience, had communion served in new ways and also heard many different languages and translations. We did attend St Piran's with them as well and they were happy that it was all in English and that all the people could speak English.

On 12 August we had a party for Cynthia's 5th birthday. Lots of kids were at the party, but the thing that was the most special for her was that her own grandmother and aunt were there! In the evening, Lydia arrived, unfortunately not quite in time for the birthday party.

Visit from the Boer Parents

My parents decided to visit us as well and not that long after the Prins visit. We wanted them to spend the entire month of October with us and were unhappy that they seemed to have prepared for only two weeks. Why such a short time? We assured them that we were seriously eager for their visit and that we would make time for us to travel together. I would take two weeks of holiday and then we would spend the other two weeks just being together in our house and enjoying each other's company. Our letters to them were also full of info, advice, instructions and, yes, of course, more wish lists!

We were to pick them up from the Kano airport in early October. However, we took a few days to get there. We first drove to Kaduna, quite the other direction, where I had to address a Baptist conference, while Fran and the kids swam in an Olympic-sized hotel swimming pool. The next day we stopped in Zaria to visit the Anglican Archdeacon there. Such visits were important in getting leaders interested in the ICS to support us and to give us space for ministry. By the time we arrived at the airport in Kano, the plane had already

landed. Kevin talked to the officials in Hausa and convinced them into allowing him to look in the customs hall to see if his *Opa* and *Oma* (Dutch for grandfather and grandmother) had arrived. They had. They were not hassled very much as some people are, probably because people in Nigeria have respect for age, but it still took them a while to get through, enough to make my father nervous when he thought of going through that line again when leaving.

As we did not travel to the airport directly, so we did not return home directly. We made it a bit of a sightseeing tour for them, especially the ancient Muslim Kano City with its mosques everywhere and the impressive main mosque near the emir's equally impressive palace. One of the more interesting sights was that of Muslim pilgrims waiting for their planes to Mecca. There were thousands of them camping around the airport, all waiting for their particular planes

When we arrived home in Jos with my parents, they unpacked all the goodies they had brought, much like Grandma Jennie and Jane had done not long before. Just imagine the excitement of the children, all that stuff they had asked for, a veritable *Sinterklaas* Day for them. As for Fran and me, they brought a box with 100 tubes of Dutch salmiac powder that one consumed by pouring out a bit on your hand and then relish it by slowly licking it up. It was strong and pithy. We loved it and it lasted for a couple of years, long enough to lose some of its pungency. What surprised us was that Customs did not confiscate it, for it had all the marks of illegal drugs.

That Sunday in Jos, my parents and the family followed me around as I preached in the Presbyterian Church in the morning and the big COCIN one in the afternoon, all in English. Their first Sunday to see their son in ministry action in Nigeria; it was an impressive day for them.

The following day, we celebrated Canadian Thanksgiving along with our CRC colleagues through a picnic. Since we had both Canadians and Americans in our Mission, we celebrated both. Personally, I was not that much in favour of observing home country celebrations, for Nigeria had enough celebrations of her own, including her own style of thanksgiving celebrations. I didn't always want to make issues

out of such things, for missionaries were just too tied to their home cultures and not enough to the local.

A few days later, we set out for a five-day trip to Wukari and its surroundings. We stayed in the old guesthouse on our compound there. We really enjoyed our time in the Wukari area. We visited CRCN Wukari and took a picture of Pastor Habila and his wife together with *Opa* and *Oma* and our children, all sitting on the steps of the church.

We also visited many of the area pastors and other leaders there, including the two Nyajos – Ifraimu and Pastor Ezekiel. We had a meal with Dan Azumi and his wife. He was a tailor and contractor. He said that if he had been given advance notice of my parents' visit, he would have slaughtered a cow for them!

We spent a Sunday in Lydia's village, Nyankwala, and introduced my parents to Iliya and Naomi and their family. They were fed a Nigerian royal meal cooked by Naomi. It was an unusual experience for Dad to get on the pulpit to greet the people, a common custom here for august visitors – and august he was, being the elderly father of a former pastor of theirs and a foreigner to boot. If I remember correctly, I translated for him into Hausa. Probably others would have had difficulty understanding his 'Dutch-Canadian' English.

When we left the CRCN area to return to Jos, something had gone wrong with the Ibi barge across the Benue River. We had crossed it on our way coming and Dad was not impressed with its primitive and admittedly dangerous operation. When we noticed that our wait might be indefinite, Dad became very impatient and wanted us to take another route that would be 600 kilometres instead of 300! It would still take us across the Benue but now via a fairly new bridge. So we did. On the way, we stopped at our Mission station at Zaki Biam, where there was a Canadian missionary, Andy Horlings from Smithers, BC. Fran wrote, 'The detour took us a good (bad, actually) eleven hours. The road was terrible. We don't ever plan to take it again until it is improved. We could much better have stayed an extra night in Wukari and tried again the next morning. Hindsight is always better than foresight.'

The following week we had a hectic social schedule. We visited TCNN and met some of the teachers there, including the CRC members on staff, Harvey and Thelma Kiecover. They also visited the women's class Fran was teaching. We went to Vom to visit Johanna Veenstra's grave. We visited the Koops, the Evenhouses and the Verbrugges. It was kind of a repeat of Mother Jennie and Jane's visit.

Everywhere they were fed both African and Western. They enjoyed a church dinner that was already scheduled at St. Piran's, though not in their honour! Lydia cooked all kinds of dishes for them, while Fran did her famous 'snow on the mountain.'

Meanwhile, so many of our Jos friends dropped by to greet my parents. My mother would sit there, regally dressed in her big gowns and looking like a queen. People could not believe she had given birth to ten children with all of them still alive. She just did not look worn enough for such heavy work and all ten children being alive was unheard of in Nigeria with its high infant mortality. Nigerian English was difficult for them to understand, as was their Dutch-English for Nigerians, but with goodwill, they all communicated.

END OF JOS FIRST TERM

That was our life during our first term with the ICS in Jos. Both the ICS and Jos represented major breaks in our working and living arrangements. Everyone in the family had experienced lots of changes but had adjusted well to life in Jos. We were all looking forward to spending two months in North America but were also eager to continue our new life in a new place in Nigeria. We were now in modern Nigeria, where I had long felt I belonged and where I wanted to spread the Gospel in a comprehensive holistic way. I wanted to see Nigerian Christians broaden their view and their experience of Christ's salvation here and now. I also wanted to equip them for a better response to the holistic challenge of Islam. I felt I had made a good beginning and that the need for such a ministry was beginning to prove itself.

CHAPTER SIX

JOS II

(1979–1981)

SHORT SUMMER FURLOUGH

We had a short furlough in the summer of 1979 – a month in BC and another in Grand Rapids. These were family months almost exclusively with a visit to II Highland Church along with the usual debriefing sessions at the Mission office. These were two great months but quite routinous like all other such visits.

During our time in British Columbia, our extended family celebrated *Opa* and *Oma*'s 50th wedding anniversary. The one outstanding factor was that *this was the very first time in the entire history of Opa and Oma's family that they were together with all ten children in one place at the same time!*

AN ACADEMIC CROWN – 25 OCTOBER, 1979

Upon our return to Nigeria, we landed in Kano on 10 August and stayed overnight. Once home in Jos, our very first project was to put the finishing editorial touches to my dissertation. On the way over, we had stopped at the Amsterdam publisher, Rodopi. They had all

but the last couple of chapters in perfect order and insisted we have those last ones in their hands ready to go by the end of August. We wasted no time, got it done and gave it to a traveller willing to deliver it. We were done with a seven-year project. This all had to be done *before* we unpacked our suitcases and boxes!

The dissertation may have been completed, but not the preparation for its public defence at the VU. In addition to preparing for the defence of the dissertation itself, the candidate has to prepare some twenty propositions – *stellingen*, as they called them – within the general discipline the candidate has pursued. In my case, this was Theology with a speciality in Missiology, the study of missions. These had to be very carefully crafted, for any professor in the faculty could critique any one of them, and you had to state a convincing case. Fran wrote:

John has been hiding away in his office during the past few weeks, working on his *stellingen*. It turned out to be much more work than he had anticipated. In fact, some traffic officers in town asked me where he had been because they keep seeing me drive the car, not John. We often give them a ride to their posts and so they know us well. This also means that even when we make a mistake, they do not hassle us!

The big day was on 25 October, 1979. I had prepared everything. Twenty *stellingen*, each with a page; including a page and half of explanation and defence. I prepared for each one like a lecture, all written out with highlights and other markings to enable me to speak fluently to the issue without halting along the way. The Failings from ICS headquarters came as agreed to take care of our children so that we felt assured we were leaving them in good hands.

We had arranged to stay with Jerry and Donna Gort in the Netherlands for a few days before the actual defence. Jerry was my classmate at the seminary and now the assistant to Prof. Verkuyl Jerry helped me through all the preparations at the VU, including the reception. We also went to Rodopi, the publisher of the dissertation and were thrilled to see the book in print. It looked nice and scholarly. It was an emotional moment for me.

I was happy to see that my acknowledgement of sister Jane's many efforts on my behalf was in place. She, it reads, '*was always prepared to hunt for materials and take care of the boring tasks of photocopying and mailing materials for a faraway brother-in-law.*' I never referred in the book to her work behind the scenes, but without her helping out in Grand Rapids, the dissertation might not have seen the light of day. Jane later told us she appreciated the public acknowledgement. Of course, others were mentioned as well, especially Fran with her unfailing readiness to type and type and then type still more.

We had prepared invitations to Dutch friends and relatives and mailed them at Schiphol. The invitees included Fran's Tante Foekje, the one from whom she had inherited her original Frisian name.

Jerry and I had a lot of discussions about how the defence would go. I was to choose someone who would be my '*vriendelijke,*' or 'friendly' opponent who would begin the ceremony with the first question. He would tell me his question ahead of time so that I could prepare a response. This was a tradition meant to put the candidate at ease. I chose a Dutch-Canadian from Alberta, who was a Calvin graduate and had become a scholarly fixture at the VU. Jerry warned me about the habit of my '*co-referent,*' or 'co-professor,' who would probably ask a very abstract question expressed in a very obscure way that would be hard to understand. We discussed the best strategy to pursue. He also warned me never to admit I didn't know something, just keep talking even if it made no sense!

On the way to the defence, I was all decked out in a rented tuxedo and totally nervous. I had forgotten to put on my seat belt. Would you believe it? We got stopped by a cop. Jerry successfully pleaded with the man that we were in a hurry because we were on our way to a *promotie*, the Dutch term for the ritual I was about to undergo. The only time in my life I was stopped for lack of seat belt and it had to be that day! The *promotie* called up the officer's awe, and he let us go.

When we filed into the hall where the defence was to take place, I was totally surprised at the number of people in the public gallery. They were more than 100! Many of our relatives in attendance, from

both my and Fran's side. Elderly uncles and aunts who would never think of coming to Amsterdam were there as well as a few cousins. Han de Bruyn, the Dutch fiancé of Joanne, a niece of Fran, was also in the gallery. Also, there were some of our Dutch friends from our time at the VU. And then there was my childhood friend from Lutjegast, Henk Rozema and his wife, Griet. And, of course, there were some I did not recognise, like students and scholars interested in the topic of my dissertation. I was amazed that all these relatives and friends came to attend this event. They all considered it an honour that their relative or friend was about to be 'promoted' and decided to take the trouble of attending to support me. I was humbled and honoured at the same time. But it also made me even a bit more nervous to see all these friends and relatives there. Most of my relatives would not even understand the proceedings since I had chosen to use English, a choice that, I figured, would give me an edge over all these Dutchmen for whom it was a second language, though all of them were very fluent. Besides, at this point in my life, that came easier for me than Dutch, especially under this stressful situation. The other parts of the ceremony were conducted in Dutch.

The entire procedure was to take one hour exactly. My 'friendly opponent' totally startled me, for he had changed the question enough to require an answer different from what I had prepared. I began with an introductory comment on my own brand of Dutch, the dialect of Lutjegast and environment. This linked me immediately to the last of my *stellingen* that declared that my version of Lutjegasters Groninger Dutch was the linguistic equal to the Queen's Dutch, a statement that would have rankled many of these people from the western part of the country. It was a dig I could not resist even though it was a dangerous one, but one I needed to do to clear my grudge against these tribalistic people.

And finally, sure enough, there stood my *co-referent* to ask his feared question. Though I had personally chosen him as *co-referent*, I was aware that he did not like my dissertation because of his colonial and corporate family background. Just as Jerry had predicted, he stated a very abstract question in an abstruse way. I was prepared.

My first technique was to look very thoughtful and wait nearly ten seconds before opening my mouth. Then I very slowly asked him to state his question more clearly. He did. Then I asked him about the meaning of a word in his question, whether he meant this or that. Again, he answered. And then finally, I slowly continued by saying that if he meant this, my response would be that. On the other hand, if he meant that, my response would be this.

The faculty filed out for consultation. The next few minutes were informal and I could walk around the room to shake hands and thank people for coming. After a few moments, an official returned and announced that I had passed the defence and was to be congratulated. At that time, I was handed a large diploma document that was written in Latin and had the wax seal of the university attached to it. Then Verkuyl delivered a ten-minute speech during which he expressed his admiration that I could have done so much of this scholarly work living in the remote rain forests of West Africa. From there on, it was all congratulations and slapping on the back for my success. I cannot possibly tell you the relief I felt at that moment.

After some moments, we all filed out to a reception room nearby that was all set up for the occasion by the VU catering department. It was wine and various interesting finger snacks and, not to forget, cigars! Most of the faculty members were there as well as the relatives and friends that had attended the defence. I was so grateful for their coming. Of course, the VU's bill for the event was a sizable one and fully our responsibility.

Jerry had taken pictures throughout the entire proceedings with our camera. Near the end of it all, the camera was 'full,' meaning that the roll for thirty-six pictures had to be replaced. We were prepared with a spare. We opened up the camera and... it was empty! No film! No pictures! What a fiasco! No pictures of this once-in-a-lifetime event! What a spoiler. Fortunately, someone else had taken a picture and sent it to us.

Well, we inserted the new roll and Jerry took a few pictures, but it was all after the fact. The fault was entirely mine for not having checked the camera. It did not mean there was no record of the pro-

ceedings, for the VU had arranged for a recording of the ceremony and that was very clear.

After the reception, everyone went his way, including my relatives and friends. That evening, as per established protocol, we took Prof. and Mrs Verkuyl, along with the Gorts, for a fine dinner somewhere in the city. When we arrived back at the Gort home, their daughters and boyfriends were there to congratulate us. Fran wrote, 'Poor John was so exhausted, he just fell plunk asleep on the davenport while people were congratulating him!'

Soon afterwards, we received news that the Dutch Government had approved our application for a grant of 9,000 guilders for the expenses of printing the dissertation. About half was an outright grant; the other half was an interest-free loan to be repaid over ten years. Of the 900 copies we were told to print, the VU bought 150. So, we were well on our way to covering expenses.

As they usually do, the dissertation evoked opposite reactions, positive and negative. I remember only one statement of a review in the *Friesch Dagblad*, a Frisian daily: something to the effect that some centuries ago, Lutjegast gave us Abel Tasman, today, it has given us Jan Boer! Lutjegast, of course, was my village of 1100 people. Abel Tasman was a Dutch adventurer during the days of Western exploration of the world and is credited with among other things, having 'discovered' Tasmania. The people of Lutjegast till this day are very proud of their famous son of centuries ago and even have a monument and a street named in his honour. So, I was pretty proud to be placed on his level by the reviewer.

FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE: VIGNETTES

The other highlight of this period was that our daughter, Lydia, got married. In early September 1979, Lydia returned from her course in Kenya. It was not so simple to meet anyone at the Jos airport anymore since the new airport was now some 30 kilometres south of town, while the old one would take only five minutes. Chris Abaga, her boyfriend, came with us along with another friend. We enjoyed a nice welcome-home dinner at our place and were joined by three pastors

from the Hausa course I was teaching at TCNN at the time. Lydia reported in glowing terms the wonderful time she had had in Nairobi.

We have often reported on our children's birthdays but by now Lydia was a young adult of nineteen. She had requested Fran to make her famous 'snow on the mountain' curry dinner along with a cake and candles. Chris came to join us along with mutual friends Manasseh and Victoria. As we were about to eat, a cousin of Lydia dropped by along with her husband and baby. And then Rev. Adamu of NKST came along. Though he did not know Lydia or the visitors, he also stayed to celebrate. That's just the open way of Nigerian social life that we have always enjoyed so much.

The following Sunday, Lydia and Chris sang a duet at ECWA Good News Church. It is a downtown church that attracted a lot of young people. We attended their evening services occasionally. Lydia has a wonderful voice, strong and clear. Fran commented in a letter that she hoped Lydia would pursue her gift of singing. Little did we know then that not only would she become a recording artist but that two of her sons would become world-famous musicians.

Chris was now an evangelist working for Great Commission and was soon transferred to Yola, a six-hour drive from Jos, a very hot and humid place. We thought him a very nice young man and hoped that the relationship between them would mature. He was very much a modern Nigerian who preferred English to Nigerian languages and Western fashion to Nigerian dress. He was also a very good preacher with a most contagious, boisterous and hearty laugh.

As far as her work was concerned, Lydia was now a full-fledged producer of radio programmes at Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG). They would receive requests from other radio stations for programmes on all kinds of subjects and Lydia would have to prepare them. She gave talks on various subjects as well as conducted interviews. One station requested a Hausa programme from her called 'Talk to Women' every day. She had to prepare the content and then deliver it in front of her colleagues, who would help her improve the content as well as correct her Hausa. She also told Bible stories and folk tales. Lydia had a highly responsible position with a wide reach.

RVOG itself did not broadcast but prepared programmes for other stations through much of Africa.

Somewhere along the line, Lydia quit attending COCIN and began worshipping regularly at ECWA Good News Church. While Chris was working in distant Yola, Lydia became involved as a guitar player and singer in a Christian singing group. They were practising to do a recording. She continued to get new friends and frequently was invited out. She did Bible lessons and attended prayer meetings. No time to get bored.

And then the inevitable came: wedding bells started ringing! We do not remember all the details of this episode, but I remember that Chris sought our approval as Lydia's 'parents.' We readily gave it. We felt we could not ask for a better choice. The couple were in a bit of a quandary with Lydia's two sets of parents, the natural and adopted, Nigerian and Western. A young man wooing a girl traditionally had a whole raft of social obligations to her family, including the extended family. There were gifts involved and, most important, a bride price to be negotiated. The latter could be so high that it became prohibitive.

One day, Chris asked me if we were willing to serve the role of his in-laws so that all the traditions would be conducted with us. We declined and insisted that he follow the traditions of Lydia's family. We had several reasons for that. For one thing, we had every confidence that her parents would go easy in their demands. They were just that kind of people and would react as one would expect from serious Christians. The second reason was that Chris might not be regarded as a true son-in-law by many of Lydia's relatives if he did not fulfil his obligations towards them. After all, we were missionaries and would probably one day return to our home country (-ies), while he would always have Lydia's family around.

Really, we felt we could not have asked for a better husband for Lydia. We were happy for her but would certainly miss her when she would join Chris in Yola. Chris was hoping someday to enter the seminary. However, as long as he was working for GCM, after the wedding, Lydia would have to join him, for their policy was that both spouses work for them. Lydia liked her RVOG radio programming position

and would like to go for further training as well. So, their future was full of plans and hopes, but also unclear. The plan was for them to get married in December 1980 in Wukari.

Lydia took her first vacation of two weeks from her job in June. It wasn't at the time she wanted it, but she was given no choice. She was going to Nyankwala, but she feared she would be bored there, since her two secondary school siblings and none of her friends would be home but at boarding school. Her folks figured she would be useless for helping on the farm and so they did not press her. Even when she was at home, that is, at our place, she tried to keep in touch with her birth family, something that made us very happy. You know that her parents visited occasionally, and her siblings also did. Late August 1980, for example, Rhoda, her sister visited for a whole week.

I have occasionally stressed that in Nigeria, it is important to have good relations with people in high positions. Somehow during our time away, both of our drivers' licenses disappeared. We reported it to the police and followed all the legalities required, but then we were instructed to go to Makurdi, where we originally got our licenses. Remember how that went during our Baissa days? Makurdi was nearly 500 kilometres south of Jos along a terrible road. Due to our kids' mingling with those of our neighbour, Maxwell, who was a Commissioner in the State Government, we got to know that family quickly. So we went to see him about this problem. He promptly wrote a letter to a friend who was the Vehicle Inspection Officer. That worked magic. Within a few days, we had new licenses! Thank you, Mr Maxwell. My lost license was found much later in the bushes along the road to Hill Station Hotel and returned to us by the police; Fran's never showed up again.

You've read about the difficulties of communications with our parents. Letters came very irregularly and sometimes not at all. Almost every letter Fran wrote to our parents began with a summary of outgoing and incoming mails as well as those on the way. In September, we received a parcel from my brother Jim and Wilma, with a lot of comics for Kevin. Though it looked none the worse for wear, the parcel had been on the way for over two years! It did not always

go that slow with parcels, for later in the month, we received a shipment of books sent by surface mail from Ontario that took only three weeks.

An early September Sunday afternoon, we took the kids out to Liberty Dam, where they enjoyed playing in the overflow water. We would often spend Sunday afternoons in that area. While there, we met a very interesting Iraqi engineer with his British wife. He was a committed Christian; she, nominal. We took them to St. Piran's the next Sunday and went to their house that evening. I relate their story because they were 'typical' of the 'untypical' kinds of people that entered our lives. As Fran told it:

Though he met his British wife while pursuing a PhD in engineering at the University of Sheffield, they were married in an Iraqi village. They showed us their wedding slides. It was really fascinating to see how many customs that are similar to Nigerian customs. He went to the UK on an Iraqi government scholarship; they paid his tuition, room, and board, plus 250 pounds a month as pocket money. He said he was better off financially than most of his instructors! On his return to Iraq, he entered into a contract with the government but broke it within a year, for they gave him a useless job and he felt they were spying on him, probably because he was a Christian. With his PhD, he was eager to work as a real engineer. He fled the country and now could never return home, for they would imprison him immediately. He does correspond with his family and thus hears from them. He was now teaching at UniJos.

During our time on study leave in Amsterdam, there had been some testy disagreements between Fran and Mother Jennie about Dutch citizenship. In April 1980, Fran found the behaviour of the US in Iran 'incredible and hardly possible for my adopted country, or should I say my assigned country?' That kind of disagreement again showed up in political feelings at the time of President Reagan. Let me quote a Fran paragraph from a letter to my Canadian parents:

You ask for my comments on Reagan. I'm afraid that on this score I'm in complete disagreement with my family, so it's probably safer

to just be quiet! But, I must say that one of the children said that “at least Grandma is happy now” and another said that according to World Book, a president elected in a year that ends in a “0” has always either died in office, or been assassinated and then asked me, “Shall I pray for that, Mom?” I worry about the future when a US president says that “he admires the spunk of the Afrikaaner in South Africa” and makes not one comment about the rest of the continent of Africa in all his campaign speeches; does he realise there is more to the world than the US?

In July 1980, we took another vacation trip on the Toyota bus. It took us to many places in the north-east of the country like Maiduguri, Numan and Yola. We saw many things and met many people. We also visited some of the church and mission institutions as well as leaders. In Yola, we stayed with Lydia’s fiancé, Chris Abaga.

Somewhere along the road, there was a young Muslim advertising some kind of berry. Curious, I stopped to ask him about them, including their name. He answered they were called ‘*jinin arna!*’ – ‘blood of pagans!’ When squashed they did indeed look like blood. We burst out laughing at that funny if not ridiculous name.

Somewhere else during the journey, fairly close to Maiduguri, we stopped in a small town. I was barely out of the vehicle when a man came up greeting me profusely, ‘*Barka da zuwa Likita John Buwa!*’ ‘Welcome, Dr John Boer!’ The children were amazed that someone knew me on the street so far from home!

Early December 1980, NEPA, the national provider of electricity, went on strike for fifty hours. Now power interruptions were part of daily life, but fifty hours is a bit long for which we were not prepared. After forty-six hours, our little freezer started leaking water. So, time for decisive action. Fran wrote, ‘The kids thought it would be nice to play *Sinterklaas* and bring meat to the neighbours. That’s what they did, but when they returned from the neighbours, the power was back on again – for a while. The rest of the meat was thus saved. But what a mess it was.’

While on the subject of electricity or lack thereof, here’s a paragraph from Fran that pretty well described a typical situation that

changed only in that things kept getting increasingly sporadic.

Our electricity has been terrible in the last few weeks. They call it “load shedding.” There’s not enough power for the whole country, so they send partial supplies to different areas, each of which then rations as they see fit. No published schedules. They turn it off at any time for any length of time. Ours was off for twenty-six hours, then on for twenty-two hours, then off for eight hours. Then this morning it was on for seven hours, but now it’s off again till who knows when. You can’t plan anything.

Of course, preparing meals became something else. You might be right in the middle of cooking but then you would have to change in ‘midflight’. A lot of people started having two stoves: electric and gas. But gas stoves were very expensive as well as cooking gas, if it were even available. If you still had money left after all that, you might buy a small generator as a second backup. By then, you had established yourself as a rich person. We had long ago settled on a two-burner kerosene stove as backup. Having described the situation, Fran described herself as ‘angry’ and ‘frustrated.’ Unfortunately, the power situation in Nigeria has only gotten worse over the subsequent forty years. Our youngest son Wiebe Boer is now at the forefront of working to address the problem, running an investment fund called All On that Shell set up to invest in companies providing off-grid clean energy solutions to Nigerian consumers.

As the time for Lydia’s wedding approached, excitement mounted steadily and all kinds of arrangements were in progress. By August, Lydia bought the material for her bridesmaids’ dresses and for the flower girls, of which Cynthia would be one. She was so excited to be chosen for this honour. Lydia planned to borrow her dress from a friend, while she would make her own veil. Mid-October, Fran took Lydia to Vom, a few miles south of Jos, to meet the girl who offered to lend her a wedding gown. It was a bit long, but otherwise, it was a good fit.

When Cynthia tried her new dress on a couple of weeks later, Fran said that she looked so cute. But sibling jealousy intruded. Wiebe’s function was to pass out candy from a tray, but he would not

get a new outfit. Fran wrote, 'First he acted really tough and said he would throw mud and candy at the people, but Lydia didn't pay any attention.'

We celebrated Lydia's 20th birthday with some friends over, including Chris, who was in town at the time. Her request for a birthday menu: mashed potatoes, hamburger, corn, bacon hot dish and ice cream for dessert. She was moving away from Nigerian dishes, but no one objected, for we all loved her choice. When we had a party, we would usually choose Nigerian food, but when Lydia had one, she would choose Western cuisine!

At the end of November 1980, Lydia worked her last day at RVOG and started packing her things in preparation for moving out. She was getting ready for her big day but first had to fulfil some traditional duties towards her birth family as well as to the Nyankwala CRCN. She still needed formal permission from the church to get married. She also had to greet her relatives and do further preparations for the wedding itself. She went home with a suitcase and three heavy boxes; all the presents she'd already gotten in Jos as well as things she had bought. She needed to show them to relatives. She also left some things for us to take along when we came to the wedding. They planned to go to Miango for a short honeymoon and then stay around Jos till after Christmas, when they would move to Yola, where Chris was living. They planned to be back in Jos from February to May for Lydia to attend a training course in preparation for working with Campus Crusade. Then in June, it would be Yola more permanently. Our little girl was grown up and leaving us! Fran wrote, *'We are very happy with Lydia's choice of Chris and the way things have worked out over the years, but the parting is still hard!'*

As far as further customs went, Lydia would not be 'given away,' for that custom had not been established in Nigeria. For months ahead, Chris had been 'bargaining' for approval from all Lydia's relatives to marry her. When that was all over and done with, then they, as an extended family, had agreed to 'give her away.' They had been a bit merciful to Chris financially, but we felt they still exacted quite a lot. However, it was not really a 'bride price' as you may have heard

of it. The custom is rather an assurance that Chris was serious and that he could support a family. Most of the money is used for buying gifts for the new couple. Perhaps it could be considered a Nigerian version of a bridal shower. In the end, they receive a lot more back from everyone than what he had to ‘advance.’

The day after school let out in December, we headed to Wukari for the big wedding. When we arrived at the Benue River, there was such a long lineup for the barge that we decided to leave the car in Sarkin Kudu, a village just a couple of miles from the river. There was a CRCN church there that knew us. We parked the car, thereafter we unloaded our goods at the river. We then crossed by private canoe. The loading and unloading was quite a hassle but preferable to a wait of uncertain duration. The kids loved the half hour it took to cross the river. We then took a taxi to our old Wukari compound, some 40 kms, where the Nelsons now lived. We spent the rest of the day there making cakes – the wedding cake and then a number of smaller ones. A number of missionaries had contributed to this enterprise, especially Margaret Seinen, whose husband Dick had been Lydia’s teacher.

Here’s Fran’s story of the wedding itself:

The wedding went off quite nicely, even though no one had practised the ceremony part. It was a total surprise to everyone! Then the pastor, Rev Philip Aboki, a native of Nyankwala, surprised them by doing the entire service in Hausa, even though his English was good. He explained that this is a Hausa-speaking country. So, anyone who hadn’t taken the trouble to learn Hausa should just be patient if he could not understand the service – and he should try to learn soon! We got a kick out of that because Chris was not very fluent in Hausa and preferred English, but he said his vows acceptably in Hausa, though a little haltingly. After all, they had not counted on this. Apparently, the language issue had not been discussed previously.

After the service, the entire crowd took to the street and slowly danced their way to the reception venue. Father Iliya was present but did not join in the church service. According to contemporary custom, church weddings were part of youth culture in which elders did

not participate. I was a bit embarrassed at my sudden recruitment to walk Lydia partway down the aisle, for I was not dressed for that eventuality. I was accustomed to wearing robes at any public function, while all I had with me was a pair of dress pants and a blazer. I felt badly underdressed.

We attended the reception for a while, but such receptions are for the youth, not for more senior people. So after we had shown our faces and had taken some food, we left for the same reason Iliya did not participate in the ceremony.

The next day, Sunday, our wedding party completely took over the Nelson residence, with an untold number of greeters for the new couple as well as for our family. This was not really planned by anyone, though it should have been expected. We apologised to the Nelsons, who were not accustomed to such crowds or such an overwhelming explosion of Nigerian culture in their house.

The harmattan was so thick on their wedding day that the mission plane was not able to fly. That meant some of the expected Campus Crusade guests were stranded in Jos. However, two days later, Lydia and Chris were able to fly to Miango for their honeymoon. The Nelsons brought us along with all the 'wedding loot' to the river. The new couple never actually opened their presents until after Christmas.

On the Boer side of things, becoming parents and grandparents early was a pattern, but then you can't take seven years for your first as we did. Nevertheless, in mid-April, Fran wrote, 'If all goes well, it looks like I'll be grandmother before forty. Lydia and Chris came to tell us they are expecting in October 1981. The children are really excited. In fact, Wiebe thought they already had the baby. He said, 'So, I'll be an uncle when I'm seven!' We waited eagerly for the baby-in-process and prayed continually for mother and child.

Fran was looking forward to the new school year, with Kevin and Cynthia now at Hillcrest and Wiebe at Plateau School. It would be so much easier and certainly a change. Change indeed. She was going to supervise a Hausa course from early August to early December. She would have to be there every morning at first but later figured she could leave it at three mornings a week, with Malam Garba, a

Hausa Christian and former Muslim, in charge of the remaining two days. The problem was that he knew his Hausa well, for it was his language, but he knew nothing about grammar so that he could not explain the rules that governed the language. But Garba was a likeable man easy to work with. Everyone liked him. Though Fran was very busy with all of her different projects in addition to the family, she found herself ‘amazed’ at how much she actually enjoyed teaching in such situations. Early October, a student couple from a previous class dropped by to tell her how much they were using their Hausa and to thank us for our efforts. Fran commented, ‘That is always a good feeling and makes it worth pushing on again with this class.’

Offers of jobs and requests for Fran’s services kept coming. By August 1980, when Hillcrest would open, she would have no children at home during the daytime as both Cynthia and Wiebe would be going to school. She was wondering what she should be doing. The Mennonite Teachers for Africa (TAP) asked her to coordinate a three-week cultural orientation/ language programme in August. They also had a four-month course, and, after that, most likely, would need a full-time cultural coordinator. Then she was approached to teach English at the high school level to a class of students who were trying to gain admission into UniJos. It would be five hours a week of employment by the university at \$20 per hour. The problem was that its promises were cheap: to collect the check would take a lot of chasing around and create frustration. In November, KLM offered her a part-time job as a travel agent!

At the end of 1980, she decided that, even though the children were at school during the day, it was hard to hold a demanding job if you also want to meet the needs of the family. In 1981, she would concentrate on family and ICS while resisting outside functions.

But guess what? Before the end of January, she started teaching Hausa to Hillcrest staff one hour a week! By the end of January, she substituted in Kevin’s class. By the start of February, she substituted again. Did someone say no outside jobs?

Fran later discontinued the weekly Hausa course with Hillcrest teachers. She wrote:

My Hausa class came to an untimely end. The teachers weren't doing their homework. So I said we might as well 'bury' the class honourably rather than struggle along with different students each week. It was an experience for me; I was disappointed to have my suspicion confirmed that Hillcrest teachers are more interested in sports, weekendng, etc., than in doing a cultural study of what is going on around them through a free language course.

Her resolution was short-lived. The teacher in her continued to entice her into the classroom. She was asked to teach Wiebe's Grade 1 section for a week in April to substitute for the teacher who was assigned to interview new applicants. Wiebe liked the idea because he expected his mother to be extra kind to him. Well, yes, after almost an entire school year under the tough Scottish teacher Miss Rose, Fran would seem like a pushover! After she was done, Wiebe was proud of his Mom and wished she would continue. 'That's the best compliment I could ask for,' Fran observed.

Fran then made herself available for a half-time paid teaching position at Hillcrest for the next academic year. The Lutheran Mission offered her a contract for Grade 8 Language Arts. It wasn't her first choice, but she did consider it a challenge. She would think it over. She was thinking about it with 'fear and trepidation,' but the entire family encouraged her. The principal also encouraged her and said the middle school students needed a somewhat older 'motherly' figure; most of the teachers were young and just out of college. Being somewhat 'older' at thirty-nine years of age, she finally accepted the challenge and began her preparations.

JOHN'S MINISTRY AT ICS

Relations with ICS Headquarters

Upon our return from Home Service in August 1979, we were informed that Adegbola was no longer our director. We were aware of the politicking within the CCN and its institutions, but this move shocked us. We had so much respect for him. Apparently, he had for us as well, judging from the first letter of the new director, Miss Daisy

Obi. Things were never the same again, certainly not as dynamic.

Miss Daisy Obi visited us right after our return from our VU visit, during which I spent much of the next week showing her around, introducing her to local leaders and explaining the various phases of our ministry. Miss Daisy Obi had a very different management style and approach to executing the vision for the ICS.

In March 1981, Daisy revisited Jos again and spent time once again visiting church dignitaries. This visit landed us, including Fran, a couple of very nice dinner invitations, one at the Anglican bishop's house and another at the Unijos Chaplain's house. I have to credit her with getting around and with having gotten to know a lot of people in a short time.

NETWORKING AND ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

In October 1979, I attended a thanksgiving service in Wase, Plateau State. The occasion was the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the first SUM missionaries at Wase in October 1904. It was my idea to have a TEKAN-wide celebration instead of just COCIN and the SUM British branch. To be sure, the centre of the celebration would first of all focus on these two, since they were the original denomination and branch there, but because the SUM developed into more branches and then into TEKAN, Wase became everyone's celebration.

It was a great celebration, but it was held outside. There was a small church in Wase, but it had been destroyed by local Muslims who are in the majority in the area. It was conducted mostly in Hausa with a smattering of English here and there. It was long – four and a half hours, but that's nothing new in Nigeria. We were just happy that we had farmed the kids out for the day. Dorothy Sytsma from our Wukari days attended, as did Case Van Wyk from Baissa days.

However, Wase was not the first SUM-TEKAN congregation that was organised. That distinction belonged to the Donga CRCN. When that congregation became seventy-five years old, I advocated another TEKAN-wide celebration. Unfortunately, by then, the unity of the TEKAN churches was fracturing and the economy had become tough. Nobody offered finances towards it, not even our own Mission

within whose area Donga was located. I felt that our missionaries lacked a sense of history and drama.

Ministry to/with other Denominations

ICS was a ministry of the CCN, and as such, I had fairly easy access to its member denominations. Though the parent church of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC), the Southern Baptist Church in the US, is not known for its ecumenical spirit, its Nigerian offspring is more ecumenical in its relationships. At any rate, right after the Wase celebration, I was off to Kaduna to have a five-day course with about 250 Baptist pastors. Though I was told it would be conducted in English, I soon noticed that most pastors handled Hausa better. I negotiated with the leaders and agreed it could be done in Hausa with someone translating into English. That's how we started, but the translation was too time-consuming, so that I soon dropped it and proceeded only in Hausa.

As always, my emphasis was on the holistic worldview of the Bible, Christ for all of life, not just for parts of it here and there. Though no Baptist would overtly reject that perspective, their tradition did not emphasise this, which greatly weakened their communal impact and gave an impoverished impression of the Kingdom of God. I did not fly the Reformed flag and did not critique their tradition except by implication. They were excited at my Biblical teachings and argued with none of it. That had become my experience in other places as well. It is, I believe because my holistic emphasis feeds into the traditional African holistic worldview that has been undermined by missionaries. Now they found it back in a Biblical way. It excited them and led many of them to ask me why they had not heard this emphasis before. I did not wish to say, 'Because you are Baptists,' but answered simply, 'You better ask your leaders or your missionaries.' I had a wonderful week with them.

In August 1980, I was invited to address Mennonite Central Committee missionaries on 'Christianity in Northern Nigeria: Origins and Problems.' I explained the capitalist and soft-secular heritage of most missionaries in Nigeria and how they tended to basically support

colonialism, apart from certain obvious immoral and anti-Christian policies. They did not have a comprehensive Gospel with which they would address all of culture and life. The result was a church whose members tended to behave very secularly in the context of their work and occupations, including businessmen, academics, medical people and politicians. Muslims noticed it and berated Christianity as a Sunday religion over against theirs as a complete way of life.

Yes, God had used these missions with all their shortcomings to create a vibrant church but with many weaknesses and that did not have the theological and philosophical tools to stand up to the holistic challenge of Islam. I ended the lecture as follows:

It is my conviction that if the Nigerian Christian community is going to be viable in the future and make a contribution to Nigeria's history and development, it must break out of its secularism and seek to apply the Gospel to all the areas of life. It must become holistic if it truly wishes to meet the challenge of competing with other holistic religions: Islam, Animism and secularism. It must not ignore the questions and problems these other philosophies have, but it must provide Christian alternatives across the board. The Christian religion is, I submit, meant to be a total way of life and only as such can it hope to gain the ears of businessmen, politicians, and the educated and be considered a real alternative.

And we as missionaries? We had better know what we are doing. We had better learn to integrate our work; otherwise, we contribute to the secularisation of Nigeria.

Towards the end of January 1980, the annual Ecumenical World Day of Prayer was observed in Jos. Every denomination participated. As in the previous year, they sang simultaneously, everyone in their own tongue, of which there are some 400 in the country! Our neighbour, Catholic Bishop Ganaka was there, a sure sign he would deliver the main message. Plateau State Governor Solomon Lar and his family were present. He, too, delivered a short address. There was a crowd of several thousand people at this open-air prayer meeting.

During the first few months of 1980, I was making a real breakthrough at various fronts. Yemi Ladipo, my friend, director of GCM

and vicar of St. Piran's, tended to preach sermons that in their totality could legitimately be described as pietistic. As a member of the congregation, I was persistent on the need for a more comprehensive and practical thrust from the pulpit. The congregation began to press for more sermons on social responsibility and wanted to hear more from me. I could get people excited about how extremely practical the Bible really is on our daily affairs. I was invited to preach there every Sunday in March 1980, and through that series was able to influence many of the most elite members of Jos community.

Then closer to Easter, the Fellowship of Christian Nurses (FCN) invited me to speak at their annual convention in Bauchi State. As I did in most of my speeches, so here I tried, first of all, to break through the dualism that prevented these nurses from considering their profession a spiritual service to both God and patient.

All these opportunities within such a short time span! Yes, things had opened up. It was really quite amazing that I received so many invitations. Well, I was the new man on the block with a profoundly Scriptural message combined with professional concerns, a typical Kuyperian emphasis. The message was gaining attention. The uniqueness and practicality of Biblical and Reformed wholism were getting noticed all over the place and in different cultural sectors. As Fran put it, 'He's really getting into the thing he has wanted to do for years.'

This frenzied pace continued through most of the year, but I will refrain from reporting on every lecture, class and conference. In September, I addressed a YMCA conference in Kaduna city. From there, I went on to Zaria to discuss a conference scheduled at the ABU for December.

Early December 1980, I went to Bauchi to address a group of Germans, also YMCA workers, who had come to Nigeria to observe the YMCA here. It was strange to speak to a group that understood neither English nor Hausa. I spoke in English, which was then translated into German.

My speech was to interpret Nigeria for this group of mainly Lutherans. My topic was 'Missions and Colonialism,' the subject of my

dissertation. I defined colonialism for them and then answered three questions:

- (1) Why did missions support colonialism?
- (2) What was the effect of this support in Nigeria?
- (3) What can be learned from all this?

For the theologians among you readers, I assure you I took the opportunity to show them the negative consequences of the Lutheran ‘two-Kingdom’ theory! I pressed upon them that the Bible is needed for a Christian engagement in society, not only common sense and reason.

Importation and Distribution of Reformed Literature

We were still in the book distribution business we had started in our Wukari/ Baissa days as well, perhaps, according to Fran, too much. We personally had several thousand dollars invested in them, but they sold quickly. We received a big shipment from Eerdmans in Grand Rapids in early September 1979. When we returned from our VU venture, there were forty boxes from Paideia awaiting us. Unpacking and inventorying them was a big job, of course, as was the actual selling. Within a few days, we had several dealers come and purchase. They found their way into Modern Bookshop, the largest one in town patronised by all kinds of people, including Muslims.

Fran wrote, ‘It’s a lot of work, but I’m really proud to sell such top-notch Christian literature at such reasonable prices.’ Indeed they were top-notch and an important corrective to much of the fundamentalistic literature that especially Challenge Bookshop was peddling as well as the many small independent Christian booksellers around town. Though we sold them at reasonable prices, we did make a profit on them that was used to pay for the books we donated to the libraries of UniJos and TCNN.

In January 1980, Henny Kranendonk, the wife of the Business Manager of Paideia, paid us a visit. She had come to Nigeria to visit a friend and her husband had asked her to drop in on us to see our book business. She apparently was suitably impressed, for Paideia did not withdraw their deep discount policy. She really made Cynthia

happy with the gift of a doll. She told Cynthia she had brought it in order to give it to a girl friendly to her. Cynthia fit the bill and received it.

More and more of our personal funds were invested in this book business, more than was good for us. Van Tol, our Africa Secretary in Grand Rapids at the time, was aware of our financial overload and kindly proposed that we apply for a grant from the Mission in order to expand this ministry even further. Though Paideia gave us a hefty discount, \$1000 still did not go far, let alone with the marginal discounts received from some other publishers. So we were grateful for the help CRWM offered us.

At the end of August, Fran wrote:

It's incredible how fast those books move and what an interest there is in good literature. We still have to laugh when we hesitantly started placing orders of thirty to forty dollars. Now we have orders for several hundred dollars from different companies, while we've already placed three orders of over \$1000 each. John has convinced me that it's a good use of our money to invest in literature. It took him a while to talk me into it.

By early 1981, we were beginning to outgrow our facility. Fran wrote, 'It's really getting to be big business now....' Suddenly, a possibility sprung up unexpectedly of becoming really big. An American Christian millionaire called Sam Welker, a close associate with Billy Graham, in charge of IBM Nigeria, recognised the dire need for Christian literature in the country. He planned to flood the nation by importing books by container and opening outlets in each state. With his association with Graham, one might expect a kind of evangelical literature that would not solve the Nigerian Christian dualism problem, but since I was to serve as an advisor and he seemed to approve of our genre of literature, we felt we could persuade him to import holistic literature.

We could be his agents in Plateau State and, possibly, in some surrounding states where we were already working as ICS. He came zipping in and out of the country with great energy, sure of himself as

he was trying to work out arrangements with Nigerian Customs and other Government agencies. He managed to import a few containers, but eventually, he was defeated by the nation's corruption. It was so rampant at every turn and there was so much opposition to his saintly plans that he finally threw up his hands in holy desperation. It took more time, energy and money than even he could afford. Probably a serious mistake of his was to go it alone instead of working with a Nigerian partner.

His was not the only entrepreneurial effort that stranded on corruption; we know several foreigners who had everything in place for a flourishing business that would contribute seriously to the Nigerian economy and job market. Alas, Nigeria cheated herself time and again. We lost a chance for an effective literature ministry and a source of income to fund other ministries. Our initial enthusiasm turned into sad disappointment.

Business Ethics Course

I continued teaching a business ethics course at TCNN. Dr Roels from the World Home Bible League (WHBL) came for a visit. He was very impressed with the quality of materials for the class. That created respect enough for him to suggest that perhaps WHBL could print the materials I had produced for the course into small booklets for international distribution by them. We would have to re-edit and shorten the notes somewhat, but that would be a small price to pay. Having it in booklet form would make it so much more useful and attractive, not to speak of international distribution at no cost to us.

In the meantime, the notes came to the attention of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, another ICS! They wanted to re-work it into a nicer format and distribute it to their constituency. We were happy to see this wider recognition as well as wider distribution all over North America. However, they never got around to printing that nicer format, though they continued to distribute the material in stencilled form. Thirty years later, in 2012, someone showed me a copy in Grand Rapids MI.

I later edited and expanded the above notes on business ethics

by myself and finally managed to publish them in an eighty-two-page book called *Living in God's World: Biblical Quotations* (1980). This was followed up by a Hausa translation entitled *Kai da Dukiyarka* (1982). The book consisted of collections of Bible passages organised around various topics related to the nature of the Kingdom of God and its wisdom, the place of work, wealth and property in that Kingdom as well as various economic relations and practices. The strong Biblical emphasis on justice was a prominent feature as well as the relationship between our earthly lives and our hopes for the life to come.

In a paper I wrote at the end of this term in May, 1981, entitled 'The Whole Gospel for Modern Nigeria,' I described the above book as follows:

It is a compilation of Bible passages that directly or indirectly have a bearing on economic behaviour. Provided with short introductions to each chapter, it is intended to be used for private reflection and group discussion to encourage Christians to work out the teachings of the Bible in their economic and related activities. We have used a preliminary version in many conferences and refresher courses and the reaction is always one of open amazement. All this is in the Bible? Is the Bible that concrete and practical? We add that this publication is useful for Christians anywhere, also in Canada and the US.

ICS Development

November 1980 was an important month for me in that I hired a clerk to assist me. His name was Anthony Ochumana, recommended to me by the local Methodist bishop. I started by teaching him to operate my filing system. I was collecting materials on any subject that the ICS or I personally might someday be involved in. I read a couple of daily papers as well as some news magazines, with a pen at hand. Any subject of interest would be marked by a number. Anthony would cut it out, mark its source by name and date and then place it in the file corresponding to the number I had written on the document. It became a very rich archive for the pre-digital era and in a context

where such materials would almost be impossible to find in libraries.

One of the reasons for hiring Anthony was to relieve Fran from her overload of typing projects. Anthony was a slow typist but quite accurate. He would just keep plugging away, not even taking any break. Half a year later, I began to recruit a member of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). In Nigeria, all university graduates have to 'give' one year to the nation after graduation. I believe the principle of the plan is a great one, for it exposes people who are almost total strangers to each other as well as an opportunity to learn more about their own country. I had gotten approval from both my board and from the NYSC directorate to recruit someone of my choice. Students from UniJos would not be eligible, for students were sent to areas they were not familiar with. So I went to confer with the Christian student leadership at ABU for a suitable candidate for the next academic year.

VISITORS

Our intention in this section is not to list the names of everyone that visited us but to note some of the most special ones we had. Below follows a sampling of such visitors that graced our doors from the end of 1979 throughout 1980. Ivan Eikenberry, a senior missionary of the Church of the Brethren and an activist in the world of Christian education in Northern Nigeria under the umbrella of the Northern Educational Advisory Council (NEAC), noted the constant traffic flow in our yard, office and house and suggested that we set up a control tower! He was not far off. Commenting on one October Sunday, Fran wrote, 'The rest of the day after the morning service was people, people, people, all unplanned.'

Shortly before Christmas of 1979, Pastor Iliya Abowa from Baissa CRCN came to stay with us while getting treatment at Evangel Hospital, next door to us. You may remember him as the pastor called by CRCN Baissa, a saint of a man.

About that same time, Charles and Margaret Kraft paid us a visit. They had served as our Hausa teacher and 'mission advisor' at Michigan State University back in 1965. By this time, they had moved to

California, where he taught at Fuller School of World Missions and she was at Biola University. We saw them seldom, but when we did, it was always a joyous reunion. He was still the same blunder buster he always was, though a scholar at the same time. Margaret was equally radical but expressed herself much more carefully. A year later, during July 1980, the Krafts were back again and spent an evening with us. They tended to come almost annually. They were working in their spare time on a Hausa translation of *The Living Bible*.

In March, we had two of our special CRCN friends visit us, with both of them staying overnight. Lydia's Dad, Iliya Lena, came for some discussions with Lydia about her upcoming wedding later in the year. The other was Pastor David Ange. When we left Wukari, he was pastor of the Bege congregation at Sondi. Now he was a principal of a government school for Christian Religious Knowledge teachers, far away in the north east of the country. He was very busy teaching Bible in the school and preaching in the local churches. I told you long ago that he was a popular preacher everywhere he went.

We were so grateful for his visit because, as I also told you, during our Wukari days, due to tension between CRCN and the Mission, CRCN pastors, including Pastor David, for a while avoided contact with us. It was a painful gesture, but I fully understood and appreciated their attitude. Therefore, we were very happy with his visit. After all, we had done a lot of things together both in the CRCN area and in the US.

His reason for working in a government institution was a better salary. A pastor's salary was simply inadequate, which was the reason that we personally subsidised some pastors during our CRCN days. However, he could not deny his deep pastoral heart and so taught the Bible and preached with his usual enthusiasm. I had learned a lot about preaching from listening to him.

It was not easy for him to keep up his Christian standards as a civil servant. The civil service at all levels was hopelessly corrupt and anyone bucking it would be treated as a fool and enemy who was working against everybody's interest. It meant his normal routine requests to the Education Department would be ignored, sidelined,

'lost' in the shuffle of files, etc. etc. In fact, the very existence of his school was often threatened by Muslim officials who wanted to close it down. Basically, David had a constant war on his hands. I admired him for his courage and insistence and could well appreciate the bitterness towards life that he sometimes betrayed. He felt cheated by all the parties important to him, church, mission and government, for the way he was treated.

Another interesting visitor in early April was the American Consul General from Kaduna. He was looking for Bishop Ganaka's place and stopped to ask us for directions. He was close: right behind us! His request for directions turned into a visit in which we held wide-ranging discussions. We discussed the nature of our work. He was fascinated by both the work and my dissertation. He borrowed it for that evening and announced his intention to buy a copy as soon as it was available again. However, I slowly got the uncomfortable feeling that the man was not interested so much in our missionary work as in gaining unusual information to which, in my position, I had access. He was, after all, the American Consul, always looking for information of interest to the US. I began to clam up. I was not interested in being sucked for information that a western imperialist nation might find useful.

Remember: I did write a dissertation on colonialism, a project that had a lasting effect on my views of the West. I had become so radicalised that I came to advise my close Nigerian elite friends that Nigeria should deal more with other Third World countries and downgrade her economic relations with the West. Of course, many of these elite friends stood to personally gain from Nigeria's connections to the West and would not likely sever them. It was part of my anti-imperialist witness that I later continued in other publications and conferences. I sought to promote Christian freedom at every level and in every sphere. My anti-imperialism was part of that. That attitude remains with me to this day without apologies.

THE CHILDREN TOGETHER

Another one of the first things needing attention at the beginning of our new term was getting the kids shuttled back and forth between our Zaria Road house and Hillcrest. We were fortunate that Plateau School was across from Hillcrest so that one ride each way would do the trick provided the timing was right. Since we had this large Toyota van, we started carrying ten children, our own and neighbourhood kids. An Indian neighbour from St. Louis College would bring our kids home in the afternoon. The only problem was the time for Wiebe to come home. For a while, he was riding with Maxwell's driver, but when the Maxwells moved, that no longer worked.

It had become a custom for us to start giving the kids a small allowance of 20 kobo/cents a week when they turned six. If they had a good report card from school, they would also receive some money for good effort. I don't believe any of them ever lost out on that one. It was a way for them to earn some money.

A major change since our previous term was the huge increase in the price of electricity – 100 per cent! So, in order to teach the kids to use power sparingly, we made a game out of it, a weekly contest. If we used less than 150 units, the kids would each get a bottle of soda on Saturday mornings. They would remind each other to turn off unnecessary lights. It worked. A bottle of soda may not sound like a big thing, but in an environment where they drank mostly lemon Kool-Aid, soda was something special.

Wiebe did not yet qualify for an allowance in March 1980, but Fran predicted that he would be 'wiser' with his money than Cynthia was. Cynthia 'was overly generous and wants to spend what she has.' Fran's prediction was based on the above 'soda game.' Kevin had managed to save up to seven bottles by this time; Wiebe five, but Cynthia only two.

In October 1979, the Hillcrest tenth grade class organised their annual 'Carnival,' a fundraiser for them and fun for the kids. Our kids went wild, according to Fran. They would buy a ticket for N1 (one naira) and then have it punched for every event in which they participated. They soon learned the ropes. We decided that next year

we would just bring them down there and pick them up again at 10 p.m.!

Earlier in the year, Cynthia and Wiebe finally got to set up the business they had long talked about: a lemonade stand on our driveway near the road. There they sat, the two of them, at their little table with some pictures of Kool-Aid and a pitcher of iced lemonade. Quite a few pedestrians traditionally passed our place and a number of them stopped out of curiosity to chat and, sometimes, buy. It was so cute to watch them. This lemonade was a favourite of our Nigerian guests. It was a cold drink of choice for us to serve them. The kids made 87 kobo 'profit.' Now they wanted to go into business seriously and do it again the next day, Sunday, but we settled on doing it once a week on Saturdays. Another condition was that from there on, they would have to pay for the sugar and the lemonade. They would find their profits diminish considerably. That did not dampen their interest, at least not for that day! Actually, they operated their stand three times, but then we made them quit.

When the summer holiday was over in August 1980, the children were all ready for school again with Wiebe now also at Hillcrest. At the end of day one, they all came home with glowing reports about their new class and teachers. However, after only two days of school, they had two days off due to the end of the Muslim fasting month (Ramadan). All three were disappointed at having another holiday period so soon, even Wiebe.

The report card story was the same every term. Mid-December they again came home with 'excellent report cards.' The reports for Cynthia and Wiebe consisted of comments instead of letters, but they were excellent. Kevin's letter grades were all A's except a B in art. Fortunately for him, they didn't give grades for penmanship anymore in 6th grade.

Beginning of February 1981, we welcomed a part-time guest into our family. A Canadian friend of ours, Derek Fawcett, taught at a Christian secondary school 50 km away. I had been the main speaker at its opening sometime earlier, belonging as it did to the United Gospel Tabernacle Church that had taken a liking to me. He had a son of

Kevin's age and in his class, named Timothy. To save his father that long daily commute along bad roads, we agreed to have him three nights a week. Timothy was a likeable chap who fit in easily. He had come to visit his dad for only a few months. Normally, he was living with his mother in Canada.

Kevin

There is nothing like football in Nigeria in terms of popularity. It is the one thing that unites the nation and overcomes all divisions, according to Wiebe in his Yale dissertation years later. We surely experienced that. Like the boys the world over, there is hardly any way to make Nigerian boys happier than by providing them with a football to play with. And Kevin in all this? Busy as he was with school, running and piano, he relished having twenty or more boys meet him after school for a game of football.

But the piano still took much of his attention. Its practice required discipline, but Kevin applied himself well. He knew we insisted; so he kept at it. He was now actually spending time playing a variety of music that was not part of his lessons. He was practising hard for another recital at Hillcrest. He did two pieces and also accompanied his friend Happy Bagga who played the violin. Next year he would again be doing recitals. He said he wanted to get as good as some of the present high school students. Some of those kids were really excellent. So, Kevin was setting high goals for himself.

Running was also a part of Kevin's life. In early February, he became part of a Hillcrest jogging club and had signed up to run 300 km for the semester. He would even jog home from school. That would add close to a daily five kilometres to his total. By the end of March, he was doing ten kilometres a day without any trouble around the Hillcrest track during recess and lunch hour with his friends. He had almost completed the 300 when he decided to set his sights on 500 for the semester to get a medal. By April 13, he had clocked 430 and was confident he would finish within a week.

He did not always jog to school. In May, some days he took his bike, but one day he fell. That was dangerous, for traffic on Zaria Road is heavy and the road itself does not have much of a shoulder. He was both shook up and 'banged up,' in Fran's words. His knees and elbows were all bruised, but the worst was on his chin. The school nurse bandaged him up somewhat, but he really needed stitches, which he got at the hospital. In contrast to Wiebe, who had become a pro as a stitch consumer, this was the first time ever for Kevin. A week later, the stitches were removed. Perhaps riding a bike along Zaria Road was not recommended. Needless to say, he completed his 500 km.

The Hillcrest school year ended in late May. At the closing assembly, Kevin received three awards: one for running his 500, one for general physical education and one for participating in a marching band. Two were in the physical aspect of the school; none in the academic. I would not have been surprised if he had won academic prizes, in fact, I had expected that. But for physical education? How unlike his father, more like his mother. Fran had been good in various sports during her youth particularly softball and at this time was fairly adept at tennis, though hardly as a jogger. He wanted us to attend this assembly to witness him receiving his awards. We did our utmost to be there.

But he was disappointed as well. As Fran told the story:

Kevin was quite proud of himself and so were we. About ten boys in Grade 5 had run the 500 and they all talked about bronze, silver and gold medals. They had visions of real gold and were really disappointed with just a blue ribbon, but they soon got over that. The two athletic awards were badges that I sewed onto his spring jacket. So, now he looks like a real sportsman.

Cynthia

While Kevin was in his soccer phase, Cynthia was into biking. However, the road past our house was busy and dangerous. Thus she could only ride on our driveway, which was basically a round-about.

So around and around and around, she would go.

She had recently turned six and was really proud of it, especially because she would now be getting a small weekly allowance of 20 kobo (cents) just like Kevin. Fran did not expect her to be frugal as Kevin was, for she was already making plans for all the things she could buy.

Fran had a little notebook in which she recorded reminders of things to write home about. Though she had already started a list, Cynthia wrote *above* the list 'Cynthia's tooth.' Fran wrote:

Yes, she wanted me to tell you that her first tooth came out and she is so pleased. The tooth fairy brought her twenty kobo. Now Cynthia is trying to pull out the next wiggly one already, even though it's a bit too early. She didn't want the money credited to her account – we have an extensive bookkeeping service here! –, but wanted the cash in her own billfold, so she could spend it easier, she said.

Though her first-grade year at Hillcrest was difficult at first, by February, Cynthia seemed much happier at school. Things were getting a bit easier for her. It seemed she was becoming more confident. The infamous Scottish first-grade teacher, Miss Rose, who was in her 24th year at Hillcrest, said that Cynthia was doing fine and that she was now in the average reading group. Cynthia even offered to read to Fran occasionally, a sharp contrast to the time we had to beg or even force her. Miss Rose assigned them to write stories, which she then would correct for them, after which they would copy them into their writing books. Her early March report card clearly showed great improvement.

Fran organised the typical Fran-style party for Cynthia's seventh birthday in August. She had kids over from her class, and she brought treats to school. All very nice for everyone, except that I, her Daddy, had to drive nearly two hours to get them all home again since they lived on opposite sides of the city! Not sure it did anything to improve Cynthia's picture of me!

She was very happy with her second-grade teacher and was now performing well in her class. She was also eager 'to show her work to

both of us, and really enjoys the art projects, games and sharing time. She likes to suggest songs and lead in prayer. She's such an outgoing, sociable little girl.'

Wiebe

While Kevin was into soccer, Cynthia into biking, Wiebe was into 'triking.' He loved to ride his tricycle.

On November 12, 1979, Wiebe actually wrote his first letter on record:

Dear Grandma and Grandpa and Auntie Jane,

Hello. Are you all fine? I love all three of you.

(Signed)Wiebe Karl

He was initially very happy in kindergarten at Plateau School. When he heard that Christmas vacation was near, he was disappointed and said, 'I'll be so bored, staying home all day!' Fran visited his room several times and concluded that he was a very good boy at school. He was doing all kinds of arithmetic and, unlike Kevin, wrote neatly.

February 1980 saw Wiebe engrossed in playing Monopoly. Fran wrote, 'It's really cute to see him give correct change and read the cards.' Nanfa, Michael's younger brother, often came to play with him. They were developing their own rules about getting interest by keeping some money in the bank. He figured out things very quickly, just in his head, including the change he might have coming in the game. It was through playing such games that Wiebe became familiar with arithmetical processes very early and without any serious effort.

One day in early May, Wiebe came home from Plateau School and was 'demanding attention!' He announced he was getting very bored with this 'baby school' and was eager to start Hillcrest in August. His kindergarten would continue through June, but we decided to let him quit at the end of May, the same time Kevin and Cynthia were finishing their school year.

During the 1980 summer vacation, the two younger Maxwell boys were over a lot to play games with Wiebe and to read our books.

Wiebe was getting a bit bored and was ready for the end of the vacation. He didn't like playing outside very much, while the neighbour kids did not always relish playing Monopoly with him.

Wiebe came home from his first day of grade one at Hillcrest saying, 'It was so nice!' And that was Miss Rose, that tough teacher Cynthia had disliked so much and who had built up quite a reputation after twenty-five years of teaching grade one at Hillcrest. During the Ramadan holiday, we met Miss Rose somewhere and Wiebe told her he wished he could go to school tomorrow. 'You can imagine,' Fran wrote, 'how pleased we were to hear him say that.'

Early September, Fran wrote to Opa Boer:

Opa Wiebe, you can be proud of your namesake. His teacher said he was doing so well in both reading and math, she could easily push him ahead into much harder work, but she felt he needed to stay with his own group for the social experience. He is happy at school and isn't 'tough' and aggressive like he is sometimes at home.

In early February 1981, Wiebe again needed stitches in his head! Fran wrote that 'a door got in his way at the Maxwell house next door and he crashed his head with his forehead split open a bit.' While getting the stitches in the emergency room at Evangel Hospital, 'he just laid very quietly and let the nurse sew him up.'

One evening, about the same time, we had the Machungas and some other friends over for dinner. Rev Machunga, you may remember, was chairman of my Board as well as general secretary to TEKAN. Since some of the guests did not speak Hausa, our conversation was mostly in English, which Mrs Machunga did not understand. She ended up playing games with Wiebe. They played a Nigerian marble or bean game called '*dara*' that Wiebe always won, but this time he met his match. He was surprised that this elderly Nigerian lady beat him! She was a sweetheart of a lady whom our children loved to visit. Shortly after, he played the same game with a 30-year-old Nigerian librarian and beat her.

Wholistic Health Care (WHC)

Many of the projects or ministries I started for the ICS had their roots largely in my CRCN experiences. The same held true for our WHC project. Earlier, I drew attention to serious problems in the Mission's medical department. The problem was the almost exclusive focus on the medical aspect of healthcare. Healthcare involves much more than just the body. You may remember that in discussions I held in those CRCN years with our staff at Takum Christian Hospital, they responded that they were trained to concentrate on fixing the body, while other aspects were ignored. That's all they knew. In the meantime, patients dismissed from the hospital would resort to traditional medicine men or priests to find out the 'real' cause of their ailment and how to prevent a recurrence.

As I had already begun during our CRCN years, I again engaged medical people – doctors, nurses, dispensary attendants, pharmacists – in discussions and tried to gauge their interest in exploring wider angles of healthcare. Some were satisfied with the status quo; others wanted to engage in further exploration.

After some months of that, I reported my research and concerns to the ICS Board and they decided this was an area in need of exploration. They also urged me to establish contact with the Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN) to gauge their interest. We called the project 'Wholistic Health Care' (WHC). Over the next few years, I hosted many seminars or was invited to those organised by others.

From Zaria Road to Mountain View

Tenants often live with a degree of uncertainty about the end of their lease. Can they stay? Must they move? We had the same uncertainty and realised that as soon as the Mission had a vacancy in one of her own houses, they would want us to move and quit paying rent. Well, it happened early in this term. A house at Mountain View became vacant. We were reluctant to move, for people had become used to our Zaria Road location and we drew many visitors to the ICS office, to the bookshop, and into our home. So we proposed that the Mission

rent out their vacant house and apply the rent to ours. We were most grateful they understood our reasons and consented. We were safe for another year, at least.

Towards the end of the term, the landlord again increased the rent of our house, this time substantially from 5,000 to 12,000 naira per year, claiming they needed the house for a senior manager. This time we had no choice but to agree to the mission's decision to move us to a house on the Mountain View compound that would soon be vacant. Actually, that manager never moved in and the house stood vacant for an entire decade, believe it or not! After that decade, the house became a school for French language immersion. Today the beautiful stone house is a bakery.

A Security Visit

Somewhere along the line, two dark-suited gentlemen showed up in my office one morning. They identified themselves as local Christians who were interested in hearing more about the ICS. They had heard much about my ministry and wanted to be updated. Their appearance and their behaviour immediately told me they were government security people, whether state or federal, but I did not let on to my suspicion. Since I had nothing to hide, I was totally open to them and answered all their questions. They also took a look at our bookshop. They were polite throughout and friendly, but they were not who they said they were. I never heard from or about them again. To this day, I have no doubt that they were security agents.

Their visit did not surprise me. After all, though perfectly legal, I was dealing with some pretty sensitive and volatile issues and that as an expatriate. I do remember feeling relieved when I received a visa for the next term. I recognised the possibility of visa denial, which would spell an effective end to my ministry in Nigeria.

CLOSING COMMENTS

And with that, we completed another chapter in our Jos ministry – and in these memoirs. It had been an exciting time with many memorable experiences and accomplishments: our daughter's wedding, the two

younger children entering school, Fran back in formal employment, and ministry, with an extremely busy time with many conferences and seminars, many sermons, many papers written, typed and duplicated, many books ordered and distributed, many classes taught. Above all, we thanked God for the wonderful opportunities He gave us for this life and ministry in a wonderful city and in a country where religion was recognised as a legitimate and influential force. As a missionary, I had the opportunity to address the major issues of the day, not a marginalised and churchified segment of culture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

JOS III

(JUNE 1981–JANUARY 1984)

TRANSITION TRAVAILS

In June-July 1981, we had two months of Home Service, with August tacked on as our annual vacation. It was a normal summer with some church deputation and a lot of family stuff both in Michigan and in British Columbia.

Well, not everything was 'normal.' One important difference was the way we shipped our supplies this time. A few boxes were mailed from the US directly to Nigeria by surface mail, but most of our boxes we took with us were checked in luggages. Baggage allowance at the time had become very generous, two 'checks-ins' per person and one carry-on, each one up to seventy pounds! For a family of five, that meant ten check-ins and five carry-ons without extra charge! A total of 1050 pounds! We were very fortunate and glad that we were charged with no customs duties.

We packed everything in Chiquita banana boxes! They looked kind of crude, but they were strong and exactly the maximum size allowed by airlines. There was no hassle at the Grand Rapids Air-

port, for they were accustomed to all these unusual missionary shipments. From there, we flew to Vancouver to continue our visiting. We planned to store the boxes in my parents' basement. However, when Vancouver Customs saw all these boxes, they got upset. What were we going to do with all these? Where were we going? Why such crazy packaging? Expecting this scenario, I calmly explained who we were and where we were going. They understood, but that did not mean they could let all those through. I gave them permission to rummage through every box. That was too much. Then they told me to open two random boxes that they selected. When they noted I was prepared to follow their instructions, they stopped me and reluctantly allowed us through. Dad was there with a pickup on which it was all loaded and driven to Abbotsford.

A month later, we reappeared at the airport with the same boxes; ten to be checked in as accompanying luggage and five units as carry-ons in the bins above the passengers. The flight attendants sternly demanded that we take them out and check them in with the others. I argued that these boxes were within the allowable limits in terms of both size and number and that they had no right to make such demands. They threatened that the plane would not take off unless we met their demand. I calmly stated that then it would be a long time to take off. Eventually, they relented, and off we flew.

Though I had 'won' those two Vancouver battles, I did not relish going through it all again in Toronto, where we had to transfer along with these five boxes. So I took them to the ticket counter and explained the issue to them, pleading with them to just check them in with the others and save me from a further battle with their colleagues. They agreed, and we were now at peace with fifteen crude banana boxes checked in free of charge!

In Kano, we were met by our friend Graham Weeks with a large enough vehicle to carry all the luggage and boxes to our guest house. The next morning we knew we were back in Nigeria. Fran's first letter home described the situation as follows:

The back window of our car had been stolen while parked in Kano, so John spent some time right away to get that replaced. We were stopped by policemen so often on the way to Jos that we didn't get there till 4 p.m. Several of the stops were by customs officials who were suspicious because we had so many boxes in the car. Most of them were quite friendly, though, when it was obvious we had just come from leave and let us through. There has been so much smuggling going on, that these roadblocks have become quite common.

One of the checks was a 'particulars' check; everything was expired: our drivers' licenses, car registration, car insurance, and road-worthiness test! The policeman was very friendly, and laughed that he had 'caught' a white man with that many 'offences.' We assured him that we would get everything taken care of as soon as we got to Jos. I spent a lot of time the first few days back in Jos getting all those things up to date again.

Our New Neighbourhood

You may remember that we were scheduled to move from Zaria Road back to the Mountain View compound, this time, permanently. With Fran and the children immediately starting school, it was left up to Kiliyobas and me to set up the new house on the Mountain View compound. If you've ever moved from one house to another, you know it's a hard job. Getting things somewhat in place is one thing; getting everything exactly as you or your wife want is another.

There was a row of three missionary residences along the driveway to the hostel and the guest house with a duplex added later. We moved into the Evenhouse house, the first one nearest the gate. We were happy with that location, for it allowed us to develop our yard in our own way without sticking out like a sore thumb if we lived more in the middle of people who tried to keep up their yards as if living in North American suburbs. We did not want to water lawns and flowers when water was so scarce, especially not when we had a huge yard and we were often offended by those who watered their lawns with water the Mission had trucked in at considerable expense. We were not sure what to do with the yard at first, but we did keep the

grass cut at a reasonable length from the house to give the children room for play and to discourage snakes from coming too close. But watering? Very minimally. We recycled used water on the few flowers around the house. As to the tall grasses, that soon became a playing asset for the children. After a while, Nigerians used to say that the line between Nigeria and America on our compound was between us and the next house; we were living in Nigeria. I took that as a compliment.

In our annual January newsletter covering 1981, I described our situation thus: 'Whereas we have always lived amongst Nigerians, we now live in exclusively missionary surroundings. Though we have very good neighbours, we are unhappy at being cut off from the Nigerian community residentially.' However, our residential isolation from Nigerians was paradoxically in a very busy place. We were now living on the main artery into Jos from the south with a constant flow of heavy traffic, including trucks grinding their way on the long incline, day and night.

MOST OF THE FAMILY AT HILLCREST

In the last chapter, you read about Fran receiving a contract to teach part-time at Hillcrest. So, as of August 1981, she was now officially working for a Lutheran mission eighteen hours per week. She would have preferred to work for CRC, but they had no paid part-time positions available. This meant that with Lydia now married and out of the house, the daily lives of four of the five of us revolved very much around Hillcrest School. Even though my office had moved to the outskirts of the school campus, it did mean that I often felt quite left out.

Though trained as an elementary school teacher, Fran found herself in Grade 8, that is, Middle School. She was to teach language arts, which meant various courses dealing with the English language, that is, grammar, reading and spelling. She was 'terrified' initially and was almost trembling in front of her class. Some of her students were a foot taller than her and twice her weight.

After a couple of weeks' experience, she found herself more re-

laxed in front of the students. She was rather busy, but discipline wise, things were going better than expected. The kids behaved quite well and she could control them. However, many of them were totally uninterested in the subjects she was teaching. She wrote:

I gave my first major test in English today. Suddenly all the students got "interested in improving their grades." I'm amazed at how scatter-brained and inattentive eighth graders can be. I can't understand how they'll be ready for high school next year. They are like second-graders in forgetting assignments, pencils, notebooks, texts, etc. They have such a wide range of ability in speaking and writing English that it's hard to coordinate things, but I'm trying hard!

Fran was also Secretary to the Hillcrest PTA – Parent Teachers Association. She and her committee had been very active and raised \$5,000 for Hillcrest projects. However, early May 1982, there was an election for new officers. Fran was asked to continue, but she bowed out and 'campaigned' for someone else to replace her. She was successful and was happy to hand over.

Early June 1982, she jubilated at the start of the Hillcrest summer vacation. She had various tasks to perform: record her grades, take inventory of textbooks and re-arrange her cupboards. The Hillcrest policy is that teachers who are not away on Home Service have to be at school half days during the holidays.

In the fall of 1982, she was assigned to teach in both middle school and high school, ten and five hours a week, respectively. Another challenge: now, Kevin was one of her middle school students! The earlier agreed-upon prohibition of calling him 'honey' in front of the class continued. She passed that test. This new assignment meant, among other things, that she now had two different monthly staff meetings to attend.

Her high school class was a Hausa course with eleven students from Grades 10-12. The school had appointed a Nigerian native Hausa speaker to assist her. Fran discovered that these highschool students weren't 'as bad as I had feared; they are actually all quite interested.' It was an elective and that made all the difference. It

was a course in both oral and written Hausa. Most students in the course were southern Nigerians. Hausa is a northern language that most southerners do not speak unless they have lived in the North. So, here was this expatriate woman teaching a Nigerian language to Nigerians.

As in the previous year, in March 1983, Fran had the class interview her on her 41st birthday. Each student then had to write up an essay. One girl wrote such a nice introduction:

“The girls have won,” cried little Henrietta as she raced into a small room of the tiny farmhouse of the Prins family. Trena just laughed. This beautiful day, 11 March, 1942, had just welcomed a small baby into the village of Hantumhuizen in Friesland. Tjalling and Jennie Prins had three boys and then three girls and now the deciding one! A girl named Frances. “Oh, *mem, mem*, thank you!” chorused three little girls. And that’s how the life of my present English teacher, Mrs Boer, began.

JOHN’S MINISTRY

This was going to be quite a different term for both of us. Our work was now very separated, with Fran teaching at Hillcrest and I working in my new office, away from home for the first time since coming to Nigeria. After a few months, she wrote, ‘I hardly know what’s going on at his end and vice versa!’ Amen to that. I was surely going to miss her for all her skills in preparing documents for publication or in our bookshop business. To be sure, I now had Anthony Ochumana, the clerk with whom I was very pleased, but he was a far cry from Fran’s speed and efficiency.

Relocation to Third ICS Office

While our family was moving into another house, I also was moving into a new office on the Pineview compound, next to Hillcrest. During our Home Service, the powers that be at Pineview changed their minds and allotted me a building only five feet away from the original one. It was not as nice, but it had better access from the road. Visitors to my office would not have to go through the Pineview compound

to reach me. I accepted the change, though it took much more time before I could move in due to necessary renovations and internal restructuring. It meant an irritatingly long time of being unsettled and delay in resuming the ministry seriously.

Actually, the new building had more rooms than I needed to begin with. So I advertised two office rooms for rent and soon had more applicants than needed. For a while then, I had two subtenants, small Christian organisations, who helped pay the rent bill.

Though a new office, I was running the same ministries as before. At the end of 1981, I summarised it thus:

We continue to stimulate people to put the Gospel into practice in their professions and occupations. Our present emphases are on Christian self-awareness building among the oppressed rural poor, on the medical community and on business people. They all need to know how the Gospel relates to their daily concerns. So, of course, do other communities, but one cannot do everything at the same time. We also have several publications in the works that deal with the same subjects at different levels.

Funds were always short for the Jos ICS. I cannot even tell you much about how we funded it at its beginning, apart from putting our own money where our mouth was. I forgot most of the details and have no records at hand. After a while, we got some contributions from the CRC and grants from ICS headquarters, but it was always short. Of course, the book business brought in some money as well.

Development of ICS and Relationships with CCN

I already had Anthony, my clerk, from last term. You may remember that before we left, I went to ABU to shop around for a corps member. He soon arrived after our return. He was a member of the Church of the Brethren, a kind of sober but trustworthy person. He lived in one of the rooms of the new ICS facility. So, we were gradually expanding. We were now three. He was assigned especially to take care of our library and bookshop in the new facility. Both Anthony and the corps member returned from their Christmas break much later than

agreed upon. Anthony claimed there was a death in his family. That may or may not have been true, but I told him that his pay would have to be docked since the ICS could not afford such unplanned leaves.

Within a short time of our return, I was called to the ICS headquarters in Ibadan. I was to attend a conference as well as sit with Director Daisy to determine the direction of our ministries. She wanted me to come at least twice a year. I was gone for a full but successful week, except that some of the roads were very bad at the end of the rainy season. At one time, I tried to take a short cut, but we got stuck in the mud a couple of times.

The next major event was the annual meeting of the CCN, the parent body of the ICS, in Miango, near Jos. Being the only local staff, it was up to me to organise everything, including transportation from the airport, a distance of some 30 kilometres, part of it along rough roads. I had arranged for a few other local CCN members to help with transportation. Most CCN members were from the south; the majority came by air and thus needed help. Here is Fran's summary of how complicated it had been to make the conference a success:

Some coming by car but most by air; John and the others took turns all day Monday to check who had arrived and either bring or guide them to their places of lodging. He ended up driving to Miango three times on Monday and twice on Tuesday. All week there was an extreme fuel shortage that created chaos with hundreds of cars in line and people with motorcycles cutting in line and others with jerry cans cutting into the motorcycle lines! A fire at one of the stations killed seven people. Then the police took over and they are still patrolling all the stations. Everything now seems orderly again, with no more cutting in by anyone. But this chaos surely spoiled the CCN meeting, though somehow they managed to hold the conference.

I was not impressed by the CCN. The attendees were mostly bishops from the Anglican and Methodist communions. They attended in all their full regalia and expected to be addressed and treated as bishops were treated in their own denominations. The representatives of denominations without such hierarchies, in true Nigerian fashion, kow-towed to the bishops. It was a high middle class and a higher group.

Their interests reflected their social status.

The CCN was on a downward spiral from which it never recovered. One reason was the upper-class attitudes of the leadership, which disconnected them from the Nigerian masses. Another was that the general secretary, a retired civil servant, ran it along civil service lines, that is, bureaucratic – and corrupt. With CAN as the new voice representing most major Christian traditions, Protestant and Roman Catholic, the CCN was being submerged into CAN without actually disbanding itself. So, it continued having its annual meetings without having anything of relevance on the agenda. According to a former CCN staff member, eventually, the general secretary privately sold the CCN office in Lagos and stuck the money in his own pocket! No one challenged him. Apart from its ICS and Daystar Press branches, it in effect ceased functioning.

This brings the question of why I wanted to associate myself with such an organisation. It was purely pragmatic. It gave me an umbrella and a well-known name under which I operated. It gave me standing in the country as working not for an expat mission but for a respected indigenous organisation. It provided clout and would open doors for me. In the meantime, I challenged various members to pick up the courage to challenge the direction CCN was taking.

St. Piran's Anglican Church

I do want to tell the story of one sermon at St. Piran's Anglican, the church where we were members. The reason for singling out this one is the serious challenge I hurled at the congregation. This particular Sunday was one week before Robert Runcie, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the most senior individual in the global Anglican hierarchy other than the Queen herself, was scheduled to visit Jos. The preparations in both city and state, in general, made it look like a royal visit. So I attempted to instil a bit of a critical attitude in the minds of the congregation towards high brow church stuff, towards which the Anglican Church in general as well as in Nigeria is very prone. Once they pull out the stops, there is not much left of a Gospel or a church for the poor and marginalised. It is all glamour, glitter and

gold. So I preached about Jesus' simple lifestyle and His embrace of the poor and the cause of justice.

Like Fran, I was involved in St. Piran's in various ways, apart from preaching. I was a member of the Council for one term, but that ended with the next election during a Home Service period. Though attending its meetings was useful in that I got a peek behind the curtain and, I believe, made useful contributions to the discussions, I was happy when it was over. I was quite often called upon to help give Communion, sometimes on the spot so that I first would have to run home to get my pastor's robe, something that for Anglicans seems to be part of the essence of Communion. I also led a class for the major part of a year in which I taught the book of Revelations. It was a good experience for me, for it forced me to study a book I had so far only read superficially. The problem was that I did not have the time to really dig into the book. I went beyond superficial reading to studying it, but still kind of a superficial study. One of my favourite ways to serve was to read the Bible during the service.

CRCN Relations

Throughout this period, I made frequent visits to the CRCN area, sometimes private visits with the family, at other times connected to ICS ministry there and sometimes as a CRC missionary. The CRCN had not forgotten me. In June 1982, they invited me to speak at the graduation ceremony of the new Smith Bible College at Baissa. It was another opportunity for me to hammer away at the holistic Gospel they had heard so much about from me during my time of residence there. I also took the opportunity to visit some of the congregations I had worked with previously. I visited the village where I promised to tear my robe the next time I visited them if there still were no local Christians. I was spared the sad demonstration since by now, there were a handful of Christians there. I was glad at having had a hand in starting the dynamic towards Christ.

I mentioned the situation with aged pioneer Pastor Habila. Finally, in 1983, CRCN Wukari decided to retire him and his wife with generous provisions. They built him a house on a property he already

owned. They provided him with a fridge and furniture and a regular stipend. He could now finally rest from his heroic ministry and relax. I was so happy with this development. His official retirement celebration was about 4 June, 1983. Fran and I decided to go for that weekend and bring Shirya, a young lady from Wukari who was staying with us, along – so she could visit her family there. Kevin stayed home alone under Kiloybas' care; Cynthia went to stay with Lydia; Wiebe stayed with a Nigerian friend.

We were again invited to Wukari for the installation of the new pastor they had called. This took place on 18 September, three months after Habila's retirement. Ishaya Bako, the new pastor, was a former student of ours in Wukari CLTC, where he came in 1967 as a new Christian, seriously persecuted by the people of his village for espousing Christ. He had just graduated from TCNN. This was our third trip to the CRCN area within a month: once for a Community Development course, once for a committee meeting and now for this ordination/installation. Our CRCN relationship was staying firm.

Fran and I both attended the ordination. Fran wrote about the event itself as follows:

The church had made excellent arrangements for all the out-of-town guests. It was nice to taste Wukari-cooked food again! The ordination service was very nice and long! By 9 am (the time it was supposed to start) the church was already full, but the pastors, etc., didn't come in until 10:15.

There were loads of choirs, each one with special songs for the occasion. There are new songs being written all the time but, unfortunately, no one yet sees the need for getting them written in permanent form. The Spirit leads people to put words and music together for a song and then the song is forgotten again. The written songbook, *Littafin Wakoki*, which was revised again two years ago, still has 460 songs all translated from Europe and North America. The tunes don't fit with African rhythm, but those are always used during the church service. Someday, hopefully soon, there will be a movement toward getting a Nigerian hymn book.

The service didn't end till 2:30p.m and then they served food to all the guests. There were 2,700 people present on the grounds; probably about 1,500 of those were packed in a church built for 800.

Another CRCN contact we actively maintained was with military Chaplain, Major Bitrus Angyunwe. He would drop by together with his orderly, both of them in army uniform. They would stay overnight and would often play games with the children during the evening.

Wholistic Health Care

Now that I was involved in WHC, CHAN often called on me to help them out in various ways. Early February 1982, CHAN sponsored a national conference in Jos that I was asked to participate in, both in organising as well as in the conference itself. The notion of WHC was not understood very well and often met with suspicion and resistance. Christian hospitals were a major part of the CHAN establishment and some of their leaders were highly sceptical. They heard us talk of traditional medicine, something they had long ago abandoned as strictly primitive and pretended it did not exist, even though many medics would personally, privately and secretly resort to traditional medicine and its practitioners when they themselves were sick. They also heard us talk of 'spiritual' healing and were equally suspicious of that. The internal politics of CHAN forced me to proceed slowly and carefully to avoid dissension, not to say the outright rejection of WHC.

My WHC work spread out beyond CHAN circles. In August 1982, I was involved in a conference of the Christian Medical Students. Usually, involvement in such events included giving lectures and participating in discussions as well as in unofficial discussions during off time. I always jumped at such opportunities, for these students, not having joined the medical establishment yet, were more open to questioning the monopoly of the medical approach to healing and to probe the real and basic cause of any sickness rather than treat patients only as malfunctioning machines.

These students reminded me of their counterparts in the Wukari CLTC many years earlier. They were sceptical of the authoritarian ways of pastors and vowed never to adopt such attitudes, only to find that ten or twenty years later, they had become what they rejected as students. I expected much the same of these medical students and

told them so in no uncertain terms. I also warned them I would publicly remind them if I caught them at it later.

Community Development

In August 1982, I was invited to participate in a conference of the Christian Rural Fellowship. This was the kind of forum I really needed to penetrate with our programme. It was not that difficult since most of them had already heard me lecture in other contexts and most of them were sympathetic to my approach of changing the worldview of the people whose communities we hoped to build up. Many of them went home with multiple copies of my *Living in God's World* and its Hausa twin *Kai da Dukiyarka* after I demonstrated to them how to use these publications effectively. In a letter, Fran commented that I got to speak at a lot of conferences to a wide variety of audiences and that I usually felt 'really good' about the response of my audiences, especially this particular one. Indeed, so I did. In these events, my main point was to make them aware that as Christians, oppressed peasants and other poor have rights that are often denied them by government agencies. They should not be so fatalistic and submissive but seek their rights and justice in the name of the Lord who came to overthrow the mighty and lift up those of low degree. God is interested in their lot. True religion and true piety give them the right to challenge their oppressors.

A month later, I went to Ibadan to attend a Ford Foundation meeting on rural development. The venue was the ICS but the sponsor was Adegbola's new institute. This was strictly for non-government people and agencies (NGOs) interested in this subject.

From that Ibadan conference, I went on to see the General Secretary (GS) of the CCN in Lagos. I had been negotiating with the Ford Foundation about a \$10,000 grant for our Community Development Programme. However, since we were a department of the CCN, the GS was the official negotiator. He had to push this matter through the Federal Govt as well. Being a highly placed career civil servant all his working years, he was expected to know the ropes to get it all accomplished. However, on the basis of what knowledgeable Nigerians

advised, I got a strong feeling that the GS himself was part of the obstruction. He not only knew the prescribed protocols to channel our application, but he was also adept at obstructing for personal gain. He allegedly wanted the promise of a personal cut. Another hope dashed by corruption, this time not in government but in the church! That was not a fruitful trip.

Politics

One of the issues that I have not written much about but that was always on my mind as well as that of most Nigerians, namely that of politics. Ever since the first Constituent Assembly, politics had been heating up and remained at boiling point for decades. The politics of religion was among the hot button issues, i.e., relations between Christians and Muslims, including the role of Sharia and secularism. These were all issues of deep interest to me. In fact, this was one of the main reasons I started the Northern ICS. This was also why I spent nearly a decade during our retirement to write and publish my series on Christian-Muslim relations.

One of the problems was that most Christians had no particular Christian perspective on politics. They were rightly concerned with the aggressive forward march of Muslims, but, as I already wrote in this book, they were more concerned with ‘real politics’ or so-called ‘practical’ politics than with underlying Christian principles. There were, of course, principles at work, but they were espoused largely unconsciously as part of the dualistic soft secular worldview they had inherited from their missionaries. I considered it my task to expose that heritage and to provide a more holistic alternative to enable them to face the Muslim challenge more responsibly and to find ways for dialogue and cooperation to save the nation from disintegration—and in the process, raise the banner of Christ through it all.

Among other ways, I often invited Muslims to participate in our conferences. The idea behind this was to encourage dialogue on different fronts. They would hear each other present papers in our conferences and discuss the issues. The approach was not always appreciated. Some Christians accused me of betraying them by giv-

ing Muslims this opportunity, but they forgot that it was also giving *Christians* an opportunity. But such perspectives are not appreciated by minds beset by hostility and anger, as understandable as such feelings were under the circumstances.

I organised a conference on Christians in Politics in July 1983, in Jos. It was not well attended, but those who did included academics, church leaders and a couple of missionaries, including my neighbour Lee Baas. Since my records of such events are no longer available, I cannot tell you much about how the conference went, except to say that I presented two papers. One was 'The Politico-Colonial Context of Missions in Northern Nigeria.' The introduction to this paper constituted an explanation about the reason for this conference:

The other paper I presented was entitled 'John Calvin's Approach to Politics and Government.' Here I presented 22 propositions on Calvin's basic ideas about politics and government and indicated the contrasts between his perspective and that of many Christians in Nigeria. Proposition 5 read as follows:

Basic to Calvin's views on our subject is his rejection of the medieval synthesis known as Scholasticism with its nature/*grace* scheme. That scheme basically relegated the use of Scripture to the so-called religious or spiritual area of life, while in other areas' man's reason sufficed to provide him with the wisdom necessary to run his affairs. Here Calvin differed not only from Rome but also from Luther. Calvin appreciated the intellectual heritage that had come to him through Greek and Latin pagan thinkers. However, he insisted that reason, like all other aspects of human life, was corrupted by sin, so that it stood in the service of a selfish heart or commitment and was therefore not free. Hence, all our rational activity requires the light of Scripture to counter or correct the effects of sin. Thus the Bible's teachings played a much more consciously prominent part in Calvin's thinking on government and politics than is true of some other traditions. I believe this to be crucial. Even if we as 20th century Christians cannot accept all his ideas, *Calvin's greatest gift to us is the conscious and insistent use of the Bible for all areas of culture, including the political, without despising the results of reason and tradition.* Throughout my doctoral dissertation, I have demonstrated

the havoc Christians cause when they fail to consciously use the Bible for their socio-political affairs.

Relationship with the CRC Mission

Although the CRC Mission had seconded me to the ICS, I was still a member of its staff and participated fully in the life of the Mission, as did Fran. We both attended its many meetings and served on many committees over the years, some of which is reflected in these pages. As Mission staff, we were both subject to the normal routines of evaluation both in Jos and in Grand Rapids. At the end of every contract, we would have extensive meetings with Grand Rapids administration to decide whether or not to renew our contract. That was not a given.

For some time, I was the secretary for the SUM Nigeria affairs. The organisation at one time was a conglomeration of missionary bodies before the churches that emerged from them existed. As the churches emerged and became fully independent, the functions of the SUM shrunk. By the 1980s, it consisted of an international board based in the UK, where it had been incorporated since the beginning of the 20th century. In Nigeria, it was still taking care of legal issues like visas and missionary quotas for the branches that had not yet been merged with their respective churches. Though I was officially in charge of these matters, it was the CRC business manager who was familiar with all the details, along with a Nigerian by the name of Inuwa Jamaika, who conducted the actual business by serving as our government contact agent. Inuwa knew more than anyone else. He travelled to Lagos and later to Abuja for visa and quota matters. However, the buck stopped with me and I had to sign all the documents and, thus, approve any measure taken. Occasionally, if we had to negotiate some new relationship or policy, Inuwa and I would visit government offices together, but Inuwa would be doing most of the talking.

In November 1982, in the above capacity, I drove Jeff Dearsley, the General Secretary at SUM Headquarters in London, all around the various SUM branches and the churches they had fostered. It was an interesting trip in which we had plenty of time to discuss the dif-

ferences between Evangelical and Reformed thinking. He was hardly aware of these, except that he was offended that the Reformed, at least, the CRC variety, did not oppose smoking and drinking but insisted instead on responsible moderation.

A touching moment was our visit to the grave of a toddler son of the Maxwells, who were among the original SUM party of four and served in Wukari. There, this toddler died and was buried in the Christian cemetery behind the Catholic Church. It was hard to find, hidden as it was under generations of grasses. We both shed a few tears as we together meditated on how that small beginning had grown into a mighty community of millions of TEKAN Christians.

Dearsley was a polite British man. He had a meal with our family after the return from our long trip together. He told someone that he found our children very 'lively' and 'boisterous' around the supper table. But in our guest book, he thanked us for 'sharing our children with him.'

At the end of every Hillcrest school year, there is a sizable migration of missionaries back to their home countries. It is always kind of a sad time for all of us. It is also a time when the question of our own continuation would come up as well. In July 1983, Fran mused:

Somehow, when so many of our folks are moving away, it starts to make you think about leaving as well. But so far, we don't really feel the Lord is telling us to pack up. The kind of work that John is doing takes a long time to build up. He's now getting speaking invitations from all corners of the country and getting a good hearing for the Kuyperian worldview. This kind of trust doesn't come right away when you are a foreigner.

It wasn't always people leaving or strangers coming. Now and then, former missionaries or 'MKs' (missionary kids) whom we knew from before would return. Fran's musing above took place at the beginning of the 1983 summer break, but two months or so later, at the beginning of the new school year, two former Nigerian missionaries were returning, both families who made us happy, namely Harold and Joanne De Jong and Bill and Nelle Evenhouse.

Literature Production and Distribution

We continued with the importation of books from North America. The postal services also continued with sporadic delivery. A book order arrived that had been on the way for two years! We had given up on it, but there it was. We were grateful for small favours. It was not the last time we had given up on a shipment, only for it to surface way beyond any reasonable time for us to even still expect it.

Tafarkin Salama

As you may remember, I had been working on various short publications dealing with different aspects of ethics and oppression, addressing various target groups. The Theological Education by Extension Association of Nigeria (TEEAN) had requested me already quite some time ago to write a Hausa workbook on Biblical social ethics. I intended it to encompass the materials in all these other publications and thus more extensive than any of them. The format was to be like that of Theological Education by Extension (TEE), consisting of Bible readings, some explanation and then mostly questions for reflection with answers to be written down. The main target audience consisted of pastors and evangelists already in the field, while other Christian leaders were also encouraged to study it.

The work went slowly, very slowly. By the end of 1981, I had, however, made some progress on this project. By August 1982, I was still working on it, trying to do one chapter or lesson a day. That, at least, was the plan. Alas! Early October 1983, I was still on it – ‘almost finished,’ according to a Fran letter, with only one lesson to go. ‘The project has been on John’s mind way too long.’ By then I was pushing hard. I would go to the ICS office just for one hour a day and then work on it at home to get away from the inevitable interruptions. It would be some time before its final publication, for it would still need to be edited and then tested in some schools. TEEAN would be the publisher and finance the entire project, apart from my time, which was donated by the Mission.

The title of the English translation became ‘Justice and Peace: Biblical Social Ethics.’ The emphasis on peace was meant to drive

home the fact that submission to God's laws in both special and general revelation, that is, in both the Bible and in nature, brings peace to the world. The Hausa version was published in 1985 and reprinted in 1994; the English one in 1995. It was translated by Gail Ruston under the auspices of TEEAN. I have never met her and have no idea who she is.

Kai da Dukiyarka

You may remember the above booklet. It was the Hausa translation of *Living in God's Word*, the book we used in our Christian awareness-building classes, including the Community Development Programme. The first printing of 5000 copies was done by the Pratt Publishing Company in Indianapolis. Pratt tried to apply Christian principles to his business. Even after paying the shipping costs, the price was still only one-third of the local cost right here in Jos. And that in spite of high wages in the US. We used to feel that we should support local printers, but when even President Shagari had his book printed in London, we decided we were free to print anywhere.

By the end of May 1982, the first twenty copies arrived by air-mail; the rest would take longer, since they were sent by 'M-bag' an inexpensive US surface postal rate for books only. Such a collection of verses organised on various practical Biblical subjects had a very powerful effect on people who somehow had gained the impression the Word of God is interested only in 'religious' or 'spiritual' issues. I was eagerly awaiting the arrival of the entire shipment so that we could give these courses in Hausa unencumbered with having to look up the verses in the Hausa Bible, a process that took so long for a people not well versed in the Bible. I forgot how I met this Pratt, but a couple of years later, I visited him for a weekend when I picked up the 5,000 copies of *Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ* that he also printed, mistakes and all.

CRWM Support for the Literature Effort

You may also remember from the previous chapter that the Grand Rapids office had considered a donation towards our literature work.

In October 1981, it promised the sum of US \$10,000 for the work of literature. I was so grateful, even though it could not be used for the private projects I was working on, like the dissertation summary or the book on multinationals. Neither would it be used for the TEE workbook since the publishers would take care of it. But there were plenty of other efforts within the parameters recognised by CRWM for which this money could be used. I often felt that I was not getting the moral support of CRWM that I longed for so much, but this donation gave a tremendous boost to my morale. I deeply appreciated it.

PRIVATE WRITING PROJECTS

Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?

I continued to write. I had been working on and off on a popular and much shorter edition of my dissertation. Like the dissertation itself, this was a private project, but I used both as tools in our holistic ministry. Both demonstrate that the reason for missionary support of colonialism was that same old devil of dualism, that same worldview I was fighting in all my different projects, writing and otherwise. That worldview also made the Christian community impotent *vis a vis* Traditional and Muslim wholism.

By November 1981, I had completed the final draft of the summary and given it the provocative title, *Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?* I did not overtly answer the question in the summary but left it up to the readers to do so on the basis of what they read in the book. Whereas previously, Fran would have typed it out, now that fell to Anthony, the clerk. I still had to find a publisher for it and wondered how it would be financed. I simply proceeded with this project with the prayer that God would somehow, provide as He had so often done in the past. It would still take a couple of years before that bill needed to be paid somehow and, as it turned out, it would take another additional two years for it to become available to the public.

In early November 1982, an Irishman named Paddy Murphy dropped by. He represented a Christian literature distribution firm that was interested in promoting this summary. Apparently, it was already making a name for itself even before it reached its final format!

Now that was an encouragement! It was just too bad we could not supply them, not yet anyway.

Christians and Transnationals

After my '*promotie*' at the VU in 1979, I continued thinking seriously about writing a small book about Christians and their investment practices. Actually, the gestation period for this project went way back to the Nigerian Civil War, almost a decade earlier. During that war, the Nigerian media were constantly complaining about the alleged dubious behaviour of Shell Oil in the Niger Delta region in the South-East of the country. They were accused of all kinds of treacherous shenanigans. At the time, we had a small investment in a mutual fund that included Shell. That meant we had a double presence in Nigeria, both as missionaries and as an infinitesimally small part of a multinational corporation. We were neither in a position to monitor the correctness of the accusations nor to effect any changes. We decided to withdraw our funds, for we had come to realise that our investment, minimal as it was, made us co-responsible for Shell's alleged behaviour. We might be involved in a project we would be ashamed of if our Nigerian friends knew.

This situation led to a lot of reflection on my part about the role and responsibility of a Christian investor. I had learned that if you invest, you share in the responsibility for the effect of your investment. I also realised that many Christians were involved in such ambiguous situations without thinking about their responsibility. After some years of thought, I decided I should write a book on the issue to make Christians conscious of their unintended duplicity. At first, it was to be a small book, but then the plan grew into a full-blown book, as a private venture in terms of both time and funds, though not sure how we could swing the finance. Below follows a statement about the project in my newsletter of February 1983.

Since the CRC has officially declared issues of justice, investments, etc., important for our lifestyle, I have started a research project in these matters as they relate to the CRC and her missionary work.

Our mission obligation to the world includes our financial dealings. To the extent that we are unaware of these issues, to that extent, we run the risk of destroying with one hand what we build up with the other. I have already made considerable headway in this research during my spare time, and I hope to spend a major share of our 1984 furlough writing about it.

My son Wiebe tells me that my book was decades ahead of its time. Today, there is an entire asset class of ethical or responsible investment as well as impact investment that takes these issues very seriously in the way capital is deployed. It has actually come full circle as Wiebe himself works for a now very different Shell company that is playing an active role in the global energy transition and has provided significant funding towards All On, the impact fund Wiebe runs in Lagos that invests in companies providing clean off-grid energy solutions to low-income Nigerian households and small businesses.

Jos Life Continued

Without going into details, Fran devoted almost half a letter in August 1982 to the subject of poor electricity supply. She said her work at home, whether cleaning, cooking or baking, was always ‘a race against the unknown,’ for it would go off anytime and for any length of time. Though we missionaries at first baulked at it as an unnecessary luxury, the Mission decided to supply both Jos compounds with large generators. As things became worse, we came around and accepted it as almost a necessity, certainly more urgent than a luxury!

Nigerians were also getting into generators more and more, but they were not always considerate about how the noise or exhaust would affect their neighbours. So, Colonel Walbe (Retired), the former *Aide de Camp* to General Yakubu Gowon, and our next-door neighbour, installed a huge one with the noise and exhaust aimed directly at our bedroom! He was a millionaire who imported all his furniture from the US, while ours was made by local carpenters. As in our Zaria Road neighbourhood, so here at Mountain View, missionaries were definitely the ‘poor man on the block.’

Poor or not, that same month, we joined the two-car family crowd

by buying a used 1978 VW Beetle with brand new tyres that were declared in perfect shape by our knowledgeable colleague Jerry Cremer, the housefather at our hostel. It made things so much easier for both of us, since we no longer had to try to accommodate our very different and irregular schedules. As such things go, we soon wondered how we could have done without two cars for so long! Fran was happy she no longer had to do the dangerous-traffic walk to school, especially after she was given a split-shift schedule in September.

We celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary on Saturday 5th June, by going with others to a nice restaurant. Unfortunately, the next morning I was sick. It seemed like food poisoning, but no one else had that problem. I was supposed to preach at UniJos and got missionary Lee Baas to pitch in for me. I asked Fran to find a doctor. So she went to St. Piran's and found one in the parking lot. Whatever it was he gave me, by late afternoon, I was all chipper again. In the meantime, Fran had called off her Sunday School to attend to me. The rumour went around that I was seriously ill and, true Nigerians as they were, quite a number of church members came by to greet in the afternoon, only to be welcomed by a healthy me! It's a part of Nigerian social life that I have always loved

Early February 1983, we enjoyed a lengthy visit by Dr Gerald Anderson, a Methodist theologian in charge of the Overseas Ministries Study Centre, located in New Jersey, but today in New Haven, CT. He was also editor of the prominent missiological journal *International Bulletin of Mission Studies*. He had already printed a notice of my dissertation in his journal and planned to publish a full scholarly review later in the year. A lot of reviews had appeared in European journals and magazines, but so far few in North America, Eugene Rubingh's was an exception. One evening, during this visit, I invited Dr Yusufu Turaki, the Jos Evangelical Theological Seminary Principal and graduate of Boston University, who, like me, had written a dissertation about colonialism, concentrating on its history among his people in Kaduna State. Mrs Turaki came along as well. She was a trained veterinarian.

We spent most of our 1983 Easter holidays on the road. We start-

ed in Wukari and then, via various mission centres, ended up in Yankari Game Reserve in Bauchi State, from where we returned home. We decided we would never again do an Easter holiday in Wukari, for it is usually in the middle of the muggy season and so hot in Wukari, you hardly know where to crawl. The same was true for Yankari. We felt greatly relieved at being back in the cooler climate of Jos.

The most enjoyable part of that whole Wukari-Yankari trip was visiting old friends and students in the Wukari area. Fran's report went as follows:

Lots of the church workers out that way were our students during our first years in Nigeria. It's very encouraging to see some of them and the work they are now involved in and to realise we might have had some small influence in their lives. Others have really disappointed us; one student who was at the top of his class now has a dreadful drinking problem and another one has left his wife, etc. etc. Same as all over the world. But it still hurts when you know how great their potential was for the Lord's service.

The Beginning of Family Technology

In October 1982, I joined a Middle School computer class at Hillcrest taught by Corny Korhorn of whom you've heard before. Imagine a 44-year-old PhD holder of reasonable intelligence sitting at a Middle School desk taking an elementary computer course. Well, I wanted to get some sort of feeling of what computers were all about if they were going to be part of our future.

Prior to taking this step, Fran and I had been discussing the issue. I am not a Luddite philosophically, but I *am* a technophobe in practice. The few technical things I try my hand at work. So, should we get involved in computers, knowing that learning it would cause me endless pain and frustration? On the other hand, as a writer, should I consign myself to the technical level of the Middle Ages? We decided to go for it no matter what and to bite the apple, an expression that unknowingly turned out to be a pun. I knew nothing about the 'Apple' or any other brand. When during the next furlough, we saw large billboards featuring a big apple with a bite taken out, it took us some time

before we learnt this was promoting the Apple Computer. Learning about computing was indeed a genuine and bitter pain for me, but I persisted and am glad I did. It changed my life totally in that my later life of almost full-time writing became so much easier, efficient and more pleasant. Today, I cannot imagine what life would have been for us had we surrendered to the technophobe in me.

Through the help of a British engineer, Mr Nowson, we ordered a computer from the UK, an Osborne with a 6-inch screen, the first portable computer in the industry weighing some 22 pounds. We eagerly awaited its arrival. Our order included a 'side screen,' whatever that was, and a printer for the total grand price of \$3,000! It was supposed to have arrived in November, but that became January. Kevin was very excited and had already many plans to use it for his homework. We expected it to take us much time to learn how to operate it. Kevin and I both spent every spare moment we had to figure it all out. The irregular delivery of power was not helpful in this respect. I would sometimes get up in the middle of the night, work on the computer for a few hours and go back to bed.

The computer gave us constant troubles. We first assumed it was us rather than the computer. By mid-March, we concluded it was the computer, not us. That was worrying because the broken computer had to be taken back to the UK from where we got it. Nowson, who had purchased it for us in the UK, offered to take it back there for repairs. Fran wrote, 'We've always been hesitant with respect to a complicated technology. I feel that the computer is way beyond us, but seeing it definitely is the wave of the future, John felt its time had come. Maybe in a few more years, they'll be able to simplify them and have the bugs sorted out.'

At the beginning of the 1983 school year, Kevin had become desperate for the computer to return. He had really hoped to work on it a lot during the holidays, but it was not to be. A friend offered that Kevin could come to his house to use his computer. That was very kind, but it was not quite the same.

The computer was finally returned to us by the end of August. Nowson checked it out for a whole week to make sure it was in good

shape. He delivered it to us and showed me everything I needed to know to begin with and it worked as it should. Nowson went home and Kevin booted up the machine, only to find that one of the two hard drives was not working! Nowson promised to check it out again. We were all disappointed but not ready to give up – yet. Kevin was able to ‘do quite a few things’ with the one working drive. Our initiation into the new world of computers was a bumpy one, to say the least. It was more than nine months since we first ordered and paid for it and we still were not able to use it to the full. By early September, the computer was up and working. We considered ourselves very fortunate to have such a computer expert as a friend.

Lydia and Chris

The Children Together

The children all started school again on 9 September, 1981. Cynthia and Wiebe were very happy with their new teachers. Kevin was trying to adjust to the Middle School system that involved many teachers. He had a hard time initially, even figuring out who his homeroom teacher was!

Our three months absence and our move led to Kiliyobas starting to work as a gardener at the State Secretariat, while he worked for us only on Saturdays. His wife, Lydia, worked for us several hours a week. The rest of the work was shared by the family. The children all made their beds and cleaned their rooms while also responsible for doing dishes. The arrangement was working out fine. A week later, the children were all pretty busy; Kevin with his school work, sports, piano and jobs around the house; Cynthia and Wiebe were doing better in their share of the work, not always willingly, but they were improving. We kept adjusting Kiliyobas’ and Lydia’s schedules as well as that of the kids to suit our changing circumstances so that by early November Fran felt that ‘help wise we were quite fortunate. We didn’t want anyone full time anymore and now the children are getting much better with daily jobs.’ Fran wrote, ‘We keep reminding them that when they are grown up, they will be so grateful that they learnt to work when they were little. They don’t understand or ap-

preciate that line of reasoning at this point.'

The kids were enjoying life at Mountain View; it wasn't all work for them. There was a mission hostel with nineteen kids to play with, many of them in Grades 1-3. Sometimes a hostel kid would stay overnight at our house in the hope that one of ours would be invited overnight in the hostel. They still had many Nigerian friends from 'the outside' as well.

A couple of times, their soccer friends from Zaria Road came *en masse* to play ball. They walked six kilometres one way! Our kids took them to the large grass triangle just in front of the hostel. It was a hostel area, not residential. Uncle Jerry, the housefather, a good friend and a very kind and sympathetic man, allowed it to happen the first time without comments. When they came a second time, he allowed them to finish but then made it clear to us that this could not continue, for it interfered too much with the play of the hostel kids. It was very hard for him to say this to us, for we might have taken this as a form of racism. After all, there were no rules in the hostel book that prevented residential kids from bringing their friends to play or to restrict their number! We recognised the awkwardness of the situation and promised it would not happen again, though we regretted this development. It meant their relationship with a more spontaneous and indigenous part of Nigerian society was largely broken, as were friendships. But, yes, a hostel is not a public place. For better or for worse, we were now living in a more cocooned world.

During the 1982 summer break, we worked hard at keeping the children occupied. Kevin had some outside jobs. At home, he had to keep up the lawn (or is 'keep down' more appropriate?), keep the car clean and hang laundry. He also spent about 30 minutes a day on typing and piano playing. So, plenty of things for him to do. Within a few weeks, he was up to 33 words per minute. He and we were very satisfied with his progress.

The summer of 1982 was the first time we were able to follow the FIFA World Cup on television, though none of the four countries we were affiliated with had qualified. For Wiebe's 1982 birthday dinner, he wanted baked chicken, baked potatoes and brownies for

dessert. He chose to invite only a few friends. Everybody had a good time. We watched the World Cup third-place match between Poland and France, while the next evening we had a great time cheering for each goal of the finals between Italy and West Germany together with Chris, Lydia, and baby Jude, no matter whose goal it was. Since it was such a historic occasion as far as Kevin was concerned, he took notes on the entire game. Wiebe remains a crazed football fan to this day, having attended the 1994, 2010, and 2018 World Cups, for the latter, taking his entire family to Russia and meeting most of the Nigerian players. He also wrote his Yale doctoral dissertation on the social history of how football became such a unifying force in Nigeria. This was published in a popular version in 2018 with the title *A Story of Heroes and Epics: The History of Football in Nigeria*. Jude, Lydia's son, the musician, has also grown up to be a good football player and an obsessed fan of the game, one of the many ways he now bonds with Wiebe's children in Lagos.

Shortly after, in April of 1983, a girl named Shirya came to stay with us. We knew her when she was a little girl at Wukari. Her parents were our students at the CLTC. She was a friend of Lydia, and we even have a picture of her at Kevin's third birthday party. Shirya's father was killed in a motorbike accident two years ago. In a letter, Fran wrote:

She is halfway through a secretarial course here in Jos and, for some reason, couldn't stay any longer with the family where she had been living. When we were in Wukari together at Easter time, we heard of her problem and discussed it together. The overwhelming majority (I was the only one not 100% sure!) was in favour of taking her in till our Home Service time. Cynthia just loves having a big sister to share a room with again. Wiebe has now moved into the room with Kevin.

Shirya is a very nice girl and is adjusting very well. She is really alert and extremely helpful around the house. I am going to give her some extra typing instructions and hope to work at her English too. So far, she speaks only Hausa to John and me, but the kids joke with her in English.

A man by the name of Ibrahim Lafe entered our life in early 1983. He was from the Mambila Plateau near the Cameroonian border, a convert from Islam since about a year ago and a policeman. He was still a weak Christian and, understandably, rather fearful. Fran wrote:

His two wives left him, and he sent his children to stay with his Pagan mother for fear that his wives will run off with the kids to Kano. He is extremely discouraged and finds that he's not getting much Christian fellowship and support. We keep inviting him over and he comes, but he hesitates because he says he's afraid of making a nuisance of himself. The kids really like him, especially Kevin, because Ibrahim is a private detective and carries a pistol when on police duty. He said maybe he'll let Kevin come with him someday on an easy case! Please pray for him. His Muslim friends are really putting pressure on him to revert to Islam.

His first wife, Ladi, eventually converted. But unease and fear of Muslim retaliation never left him. His family has remained close to ours to this day. His eldest son Bello attends the same church as Wiebe and his family in Lagos.

Lydia and Chris had their baby, Jude, on 4 October, 1981. We were now grandparents 'by proxy' and before age forty as Fran had predicted earlier. Lydia went home after twelve hours in the hospital. We visited them several times and everything seemed to be fine. Cynthia and Wiebe were so proud of little Jude and enjoyed holding him. Even Kevin enjoyed talking to Jude and cuddling him. So we kept regular touch with each other by visits back and forth.

Just before Christmas 1981, they stopped by on their way for a three-week visit to both Nyankwala and Chris' village Pyeri near Takum. Baby Jude was growing nicely by this time. Fran wrote, 'This will be Lydia's first visit to Chris' village; she had not yet met most of his relatives. Even if they didn't like her, they would accept her because she has borne them a son. Not that she was worried they wouldn't accept her.'

We spent an April afternoon at Lydia's house. Fran wrote:

Little Jude is really growing nicely; he's beginning to enjoy picture books and calls everything a 'ball.' He is happy most of the time, so Lydia is lucky to have an easy son! We were just reminding each other that when Wiebe was born, Lydia was almost fourteen, the same age as Kevin is now. When I was in the hospital for five days, Lydia took care of Kevin (5) and Cynthia (11 months). She changed diapers, bathed Cynthia, kept the guest house room clean and cooked food. John was around, but he said Lydia was grown up enough to manage very well. Kevin said he wouldn't like to have to do any such thing!

It was such a nice experience for us to have Lydia, Chris and Jude living close by to visit in their home or host them in ours. Cynthia would occasionally stay with them for a day or so. A half-year later, Fran wrote, we were seeing quite a lot of each other and that Jude was such a 'healthy and happy little guy, really different from Kevin at that stage as Lydia and we all remember so well.'

By 1983, Chris had entered JETS, the Jos ECWA Theological Seminary, and was getting excellent grades. Lydia was working on getting her full high school accreditation. Though she had completed secondary school, the system required students to pass an additional national examination for the General Certificate of Education. This was required for university admission. It was a slow process with little Jude around.

Jude had become such a healthy and delightful little fellow. He was walking for some time and getting into everything. Lydia's cousin was helping her with Jude in the afternoon. Fran wrote that Cynthia could have had the honour, but we weren't ready to let her go. Besides, it would be too far from Hillcrest. It would have been a nice reciprocal arrangement since Lydia had frequently taken care of Cynthia and even carried her on her back.

In July 1983, Lydia got her driver's license. It was a natural step, since they had gotten themselves a Volkswagen while Chris was a seminary student. For a while, she was a bit hesitant and picked her driving time carefully. We were happy about it, for it enabled her to visit us more freely.

END OF THE TERM

Early January 1984, Fran and the children left for Grand Rapids to start their Home Service period. I stayed behind for about three more weeks to tie up some urgent ICS matters.

Among the things to be done was to consult with Director Daisy in Ibadan. I would drive a Volkswagen back from there for the use of Rev Dorothy McKinnon, an ordained female preacher in one of the American Presbyterian denominations, who was to replace me during my absence.

You've already read about Fran's attitude towards it all. It had also been a time of long days and much travel on my part. Fran's attitude? 'I don't really mind how many hours John puts in or how much he travels, as long as he is feeling satisfaction in his work and contentment with doing the Lord's will.'

And with this, we have come to the end of another chapter. The ICS ministry would continue more or less as was with Dorothy on the ground, though, of course, she would also contribute from her own arsenal of ideas. I was curious to see what the ICS would look like on our return.

CHAPTER EIGHT

JOS IV

(JANUARY 1984–JUNE 1987)

Fran and the children left for Grand Rapids right after New Year 1984. Initially, we thought their travel might be delayed as the military struck on 31 December 1983, to end the four years of civilian rule and return Nigeria to military dictatorship. The new military Head of State was Major General Muhammadu Buhari, a no-nonsense strongman who promised to wipe out corruption in the country. The children were annoyed that the coup happened when they were already on school holiday, as normally coups were a reason for a few extra days off school. The new regime settled in quickly and the family travelled out as planned. I stayed back until the end of January to prepare the house for the Evenhouses who were returning to Nigeria and would stay in the house – where they used to live – while we were away. In addition, I had a lot of ICS affairs to finish off. Fran and the children left earlier to have some extra time with the Prinses since we would soon have to move on to Vancouver to put the children in school there for a semester.

I met the family in Michigan in late January, and then we all travelled together to Vancouver where we would spend several months and the children would attend a semester of school – the first time in their lives they schooled outside Nigeria. I spent a lot of time preaching and visiting churches and Christian schools as well as writing during the time in Canada. Kevin went to Vancouver Christian High School and Cynthia and Wiebe attended the elementary school equivalent. The children went to school and back via the public bus system, something that one could not imagine allowing today. We all really enjoyed the time in Canada – for the children, their only extended stay in Canada in their lives to date. The most lasting highlight was that Wiebe’s long-distance running talent was discovered while at Vancouver Christian Elementary School. He continued as a competitive long-distance runner all the way through university twelve years later, making it as far as NCAA Division III Nationals in cross country.

After the semester of school in Vancouver, we spent much of the summer based in Grand Rapids. Frans father, Tjalling Prins was eighty-two years old and had only recently retired from working with his sons in the Prins Brothers construction company. During the summer in Grand Rapids, his health deteriorated, and he was in the hospital when we left for Nigeria. He died three weeks after our return to Nigeria, but Fran could not attend the funeral, one of the sacrifices one makes when on the mission field.

Back in Nigeria

It wasn’t long after our return to Nigeria that Grandpa Prins passed away. On the day of his funeral, Hillcrest held a memorial service for Duanne Hendrickson, a Lutheran teacher who had died from cerebral malaria while on furlough in the US. Fran wrote to Mother, ‘During that service, I could very well picture all of you at the funeral service for Dad.’

Three weeks after his death, Fran wrote in a letter to my parents that had she known he would go so soon, she ‘probably would have stayed behind in order to be with my family.’ However, she ‘thought

Dad still looked good. My Dad has always been so strong and a fighter, that I can't quite believe he really just gave up.'

Of Telephones and Goodies

Soon after our return to Jos, a new international telephone service was introduced right across the road from us. Theoretically, that was an amazing improvement from having to drive to Kaduna for a call abroad, some 280 kilometres from Jos! We never made use of that one, but we did try this new arrangement at the end of August 1984. The place had booths in which telephones had been placed, a half dozen or so in a row. But it was pathetic, for all the booths were always occupied, with every occupant yelling at the top of his lungs, each in his own language. If you were successful in establishing contact, the voice from abroad would be so badly distorted and then overpowered by your yelling neighbours. It hardly ever resulted in even a half-way satisfactory call. Yet, we always hoped and occasionally succeeded. Our first attempt was to call Grandma after Grandpa passed away. Fran wrote, 'I could hear very little of Mom and Jane when I phoned.' Even to this day, when the children call each other, they speak louder than they normally would on the phone.

The first-ever phone call we received from North America on our home phone after twenty years was in April 1986 from nephew Rob Prins, son of brother Ray. That call was a complete surprise. Fran picked up the phone and heard, 'Hi, this is Rob, your brother's son' as if he called regularly! The connection was as clear as a bell. Thanks, Rob. You made history! It's hard to imagine that today Nigeria has over 150 million mobile lines and calls can even be made to my old friend Elder Ifraimu in Rafin Kada!

In the meantime, the political and economic situations kept changing. I wrote 'There is a real scarcity of basic foodstuffs and other items, like soap.' We could not understand how the average Nigerian could possibly make it. Though the people had welcomed the coup at the end of 1983, they were not so sure anymore – exactly the same reaction as with all previous and subsequent coups. The new regime



John speaking in a celebration at Reformed Theological College, Mkar, 1996



John lecturing at Overseas Missionary Studies Center, New Haven, USA, 2011



John lecturing at Adegbola Memorial Lecture, Ibadan, Nigeria, 2011



Audience at Adegbola Memorial Lecture, Ibadan, Nigeria, 2011



John, Lydia, and Fran, Seattle, USA, 2019



John and Fran's visit
to Hantumhuizen,
2016



John and Fran at the Adegbola Memorial Lecture Ibadan, 2011.



The Boer Family – Vancouver, 2019



Fran's birthplace –
Hantumhuizen,
The Netherlands



Jan/John Boer's birth home – Lutjegast, The Netherlands



Pastor and Mrs Iliya Abowa, Abong
(at the Nigerian border with Cameroon)



Rev Dr Caleb Ahima, President of CRCN and Vice-President of CAN



Wukari Mission House



Weekend housing when visiting churches



Hillcrest School, Jos



Fran's sister and mother with Cynthia, Wiebe & Kevin at St. Piran's Church



Dr Danny and Mary McCain, Professors at Unijos



John and Fran playing tennis



Produce seller at Jos market



Yam market just outside Jos



John in his home office



Rev Dr Iortyom Achineku an NKST scholar with John in our back yard.



Pastor Ed and Nelle Smith, First General Secretary of TEKAN

inherited a real mess and then added their own mistakes to make it even more difficult for the people.

The Family

'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh'. While August ended with Grandpa's death, it had begun with Lydia and Chris having a new baby boy named Jesse Galeya Abaga. Fran wrote,

He is a really nice looking baby and they are all doing well. Jude will be three in October and seems quite happy with his baby brother. At the end of the month, Cynthia plans to spend the weekend with them so she can play with her nephews. Because we've been away for some months, Jude hardly remembers us and is even a bit afraid of us.

As time went on, their boys were both doing well. Jude had become an active and talkative three-year-old, while little Jesse was sleeping through the night and 'growing nicely.' Chris was enjoying the challenges of his third year in seminary.

We were not back very long when Fran started a new daily exercise regime of walking for half an hour with Mary Cremer. Though she loved tennis and hoped to get back to it in due time, for the time being, this routine worked better for her work schedule and she was content with it.

Fran taught five mornings a week at Hillcrest. The afternoons were her own or the family's. She had helpers three afternoons a week for cleaning and laundry. Everything was going well for her.

By October, our traditionally 'mad' hosting regime was in full swing again. I won't go into all the details as to who and why, but it was once again a list of 'who's who' in our world. Sunday, 14 October 1984, saw five guests at the lunch table and another five at supper. One was Sue Porter, who was going to teach at the Wukari CLTC to do the same thing Dorothy Sytsma used to do in the 60s! Of course, she would not be the principal; that position had long been Nigerianized.

Sometimes, Fran did show cracks in her hosting energies. Two boys from the Berends family, CRC missionaries from New Zealand,

would occasionally spend a weekend with us away from their hostel at Kent Academy, the SIM boarding school for missionary children an hour outside Jos, on the same compound as the popular Miango Rest Home. They were nice and appreciative boys, but, she wrote, 'I don't know how long we'll be able to keep it up, because it does make it busier. I find it hard to say 'No' to people.' Right after that weekend, Kevin's Indian friend, Samit Choudhuri, came to stay for three weeks, for his mother had to receive medical treatment in London.

It was during that time that Fran went 'on strike' permanently about preparing the children's school lunches. She had been preparing five sandwiches for the kids' lunches, but now that would mean doing at least eight sandwiches every morning. She felt it was time that each one prepared his/her own lunch.

Christmas 1984 was our second Christmas holidays spent with the Berends family, but this time in the harsher environment of Kontagora, Niger State, where the SUM-CRC mission was opening up a new outreach. The visit was a troubled one. We had serious car troubles as well as a shortage of petrol. Then there was such a water problem at their house so that we spent a couple of days helping the Berends haul water. As Fran described it, 'We spent one day bringing drums to a reservoir and hauling them back. Then we would transfer the water pail by pail into other drums and into the bathtub inside the house. The next day the town water returned, but it was too dirty to drink.' In spite of all this, the visit was enjoyable and invigorating. They were awaiting a signal from the Grand Rapids office to proceed fully with their mission plans for the area. That was the beginning. By 2010, less than thirty years later, a full-fledged new church existed in that area that has chosen to join CRCN. Willem and his family have long since moved back to 'down under.'

Since Fran would soon be teaching more hours at Hillcrest, she decided she needed a part-time cook. We had let it be known and before long, someone applied. Fran would give her the ingredients for a Nigerian type meal and let her fry/fry. If it worked out, Fran would teach her how to make chips, how to bake and how to make 'American' dishes – not sure where Canadian or Dutch cuisine fit in. She

would come three afternoons a week. She would also be doing the market shopping, since some basic items were becoming increasingly difficult to find. Her name was Asabe Samuel, and she eventually became our full-time housekeeper when Fran went to full-time teaching at Hillcrest. She became a family friend and even named her daughter after Cynthia. She was a leader in a local Baptist Church. Asabe and her children remain close to our family to this day; her youngest son, Derrick, did his national service at Chocolate City Music in Lagos, a company Jude co-founded.

ICS PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

Upon our return from Home Service, one of the first things to be done was to drive the Volkswagen belonging to Dorothy, my ICS furlough replacement, back to Ibadan. I was accompanied by my new staff, Peter Magaji, as well as a person who needed a ride to Ibadan. The car was not in the best of shape, but we made it without any problems. It was nice spending relaxed travel time with Peter, for it gave us a chance to get to know each other. We drove through the East and passed by Enugu. Neither Peter nor our guest had ever been in this more modern part of the country. Our guest was most impressed with the long rows of apartment buildings and expressed disappointment that Jos was not blessed with such modern developments.

Upon arrival, I discovered that Director Daisy was planning to come to Jos the following week to attend our Jos Board meeting. She had not informed me of her plan! It meant that our trip could have been avoided. Peter could have driven her back and thus get the VW to its destination. We flew back on Saturday. It was one of the few times that I was home early from an Ibadan trip, almost a whole week. A first and only, I believe.

I continued with the same type of programmes and activities as in previous terms. Fran's letters are full of references to trips I was making all over the country in connection with our various programmes, but especially for WHC. Most of them do not specify the reasons for these trips and I forgot the details of many of them.

There were often two problems with trips to Ibadan or anywhere else to the southern part of the country. If I flew Nigeria Airways one or both ways, that always introduced uncertainty. Flights would often be delayed or simply cancelled. Then I would have to find alternative ground transportation and Fran would never have any idea where I was or when I would come home. The related problem was that of communication while away. Telephones just did not work most of the time. One particular Ibadan trip in November 1985 was really delightful from those points of view. I drove a new Peugeot, a great experience compared to most previous trips. And then, the wonder of wonders, I was able to get through on the telephone a few times so that Fran had a pretty good idea where I was at any time. That made my absence more tolerable for both of us. A number of people I had planned to call upon along the way were not home. Thus I arrived home early once again. In addition, I came home with a car full of yams and two sacks of oranges. These items were more easily available in the south and thus cheaper. It was always nice to come home with such goodies to share with family and compound workers, of whom there were several in our large Mountain View compound.

The nature of my work became increasingly complicated as the ICS developed in different directions. There was little routine in my work, except that I was routinely interrupted by people coming and going. That was the case ever since the ICS became somewhat established and was the result of my initial public relations efforts as well as the many lectures I delivered all over the place. At the beginning of this new term, Fran wrote, 'He has so many people dropping in at his office all the time that he gets very little accomplished in a day. When he has something he really needs to get done, he stays for a few hours and then works at home. People don't look for him there during working hours.'

Early December, Fran made similar observations:

John stays too busy because he has too many interests and projects going all the time. At least, he never complains of boredom. This year's NYSC member in the ICS is a very active Christian and a forceful witness to everyone. He is also the best book salesman John

ever had and has sold almost all the books available. There certainly is a real ministry in Christian literature.

During September 1986, Fran summarised the rhythm of my work as:

John preached twice last Sunday, but he doesn't preach every Sunday anymore. He really shouldn't work on Sunday because his week is so packed that he really needs one day off. The problem is that he enjoys preaching too much to decline when he is asked. He has his fingers in so many projects and now has a crew of six at the ICS office to supervise. So many people come to see him with their problems that he hardly has time for his staff and programmes. Right now, he's on several mission committees, too, so that often takes an evening. He's almost finished with his term in church council at St. Piran's and says he won't run for election again.

If you compare this quote with earlier descriptions of a couple of years ago, it was not all that different, except that by this time, I had a staff of six to supervise in the ICS.

Market Evangelism

Another new element to the ICS programme was market evangelism. Governor Solomon Lar had built a huge new modern market with thousands of stalls in the centre of Jos. We rented two adjacent stalls and fixed them up as a place to read, relax, pray, discuss and anything else that would draw people in. You may remember Ibrahim Lafe, a convert from Islam and a former policeman. He was a natural and eager evangelist whom we hired to run this place. We persuaded St. Piran's Church to pay his salary. Ibrahim counselled people and organised regular prayer meetings. We had a small revolving library as well as a few books for sale. The programme also included literacy classes for both men and women but separate from each other. We hired a lady to do the women's class. Ibrahim, on his own, added an evangelism programme at Plateau Hospital to it.

My motivation for this ministry was that I felt there was a need for the Church of Christ to be visibly and actively represented in this

central economic and social institution in this very religious city. Furthermore, from the practical point of view, a large market like this was a natural socialising centre for the entire population, where people would easily be coaxed into relaxed chatting situations.

Finances were a problem. St. Piran's was helping and so was the sale of soft drinks. After all, it was a market place. We opened the two stalls with N1300 in our pocket, not even enough to pay the annual rent of N1500. We would need about N30,000 for the year's programme. This would need to be raised somehow through donations. Raising funds had never been my forte. So, we proceeded in faith and prayer – and somehow made it through a few years. I do remember that a number of missionaries donated towards this ministry.

As Ibrahim settled into this ministry, he began reporting frequently on new converts from Islam. Having come from among them, he had good instincts for reaching them. The claim of many that it is next to impossible to lead Muslims to Christ certainly does not hold in Nigeria, where there were and are thousands of converts. In fact, Judge Haruna Dandaura, a Hausa Christian himself, claimed there were up to ten million of them! I reported as follows in a newsletter of February 1987:

We are now working on a plan to give a more systematic follow-up to these new converts. It is difficult for them to be integrated into the local churches, with centuries of animosity and suspicion between Muslims and the other people in this country. The Muslims used to be their slave raiders, an occupation that has left a legacy of hostility.

Literature Ministry

You may remember that I had been working for some time on another private book, a summary of my dissertation, *Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?* I did finally get it published during the course of the year. Arthur Pratt, the Christian printer in Indianapolis, printed 5000 copies. I drove a rented van to spend a weekend with him and pick up the books. Then I mailed them to Jos from Grand Rapids, keeping a few hundred copies back for distribution in North America.

You may also remember that I was writing a Hausa-language workbook on Biblical social ethics in the format of TEE. The title was *Tafarkin Salama* or *The Way of Peace*. The title of the English version became *Justice and Peace: Biblical Social Ethics*. The Hausa version was published in 1985 and reprinted in 1994; the English one, in 1995. The book was used especially throughout COCIN, but also in most other churches in the North that ran continued education courses for their leaders.

The main theme of the book was the Kingdom of God. Under that theme, it covered a wide range of topics: its creation, its extent, its principles or pillars, man's place in it before and after the fall. Still, all under the Kingdom, I discussed topics like the purpose and meaning of work and of wealth, bribery, purposes of commerce and the place of profit, stewardship issues, politics and governments, human rights and oppression.

Like the other projects and ministries, that of the bookshop and literature distribution kept going full steam as well. Not only did we distribute a wide range of Christian books targeting professionals and graduates, but we also produced and distributed our own literature connected with some of our programmes and, of course, my own publications.

In April, there was a huge Baptist convention in town that I attended off and on, but where we had a permanent table manned by our NYSC person. For a couple of days in a row, he sold over a N1,000 worth per day. Fran commented: 'There is a definite need and hunger for good Christian literature. It's getting increasingly difficult to get books into the country, but somehow a steady supply keeps coming in through different channels.'

We had started corresponding with the World Home Bible League (WHBL) about distributing Bibles in Nigeria. They asked us to serve as their official representative in Nigeria for distribution. Right around August 1985, a large shipment of 2,500 NIV Bibles arrived from them. I do not remember the exact agreement we had with them, but the sale of these Bibles, though at a low price, gave the ICS cash flow, the positive boost we needed so badly. Some eight

months later, we received a shipment of 5,000 Bibles. Fran wrote: 'Bibles are in such great demand here. John will be able to sell them for \$4 each, still quite affordable for Nigerians, while it means a nice income for the ICS.'

The numbers kept going up. Early August 1986, I received 11,000 copies! They were popular, especially in secondary schools and would be sold there for \$5 each.

N1 at the time was equal to \$1, but currency devaluation was in the air. It was going to happen, but no one knew when or how much. Everyone was in suspense. If we had done like many Nigerian businesses, we would have closed our bookshop and not sell anything till after devaluation and then sell at the new rate. That might have yielded us four times as much – but it might also have stopped the sales due to the new price being too high. I consulted Nuhu Bature, the owner of the largest bookshop in town and a Christian customer of ours on what was the best course to follow. We discussed it from the ethical, mission and the business perspectives and agreed we should sell now at the current rate. So we did.

Hausa Literature Committee

In early August 1985, I ran a one week Hausa Christian Writers' Course under the auspices of TEKAN's Hausa Literature Committee. This was a cooperative venture between that TEKAN committee, ICS and the CRC's World Literature Committee (WLC) in Grand Rapids. It was the latter that funded the event. It was nice for once to organise properly without the usual bootstrapping. The workshop covered different types of writing: Bible commentaries and studies, the original and still main purpose of that TEKAN committee, but also news journalism for newspapers and magazines, drama, fiction, etc. All of this was with the cooperation of Nigerian professionals who were brought in to teach these courses. I myself did the course on Bible commentaries and other Bible studies. The aim was to encourage the production of a greater variety of Christian literature in the Hausa language to appeal to both Christians and Muslims.

This was not our first or only cooperative venture with WLC. In fact, under their auspices and with their funds, we established the Hausa Literature Committee (HLC). It was kind of a floating endeavour with no clear relationships to either the ICS or our Mission, though we reported to both. Our chairman was Pastor David Angye; treasurer, Andy Horlings, a CRC missionary who ran the CRCN's publication arm, *Haske da Gaskiya*, but later became the Hillcrest Business Manager; I, the secretary, on whom most of the administrative work depended. We soon hired a translator by the name of Matthew Arins Adams, a member of COCIN, a graduate of TCNN and close friend to Peter Magaji, our CRWRC staff. Matthew went on to become a politician and was elected the local government chairman for Jos South Local Government Area.

The first project we embarked upon was a series on Christianity and Islam written by John Gillchrist. The series consisted of nine booklets that Matthew translated and published under the Hausa title *Kiristanci da Musulunci*. That project brought us into the next year.

Then Matthew began the translation of the first of a two-volume work originally written in Dutch under the title *Verbondsgeschiedenis*. It was translated into English by Prof. Evan Runner and entitled *Promise and Deliverance*. Its claim to fame was its strong emphasis on the covenant as the key to the Scriptures. This was a big job that took Adams a long time to translate and then bring it up to final publication standard. Due to its size, Volume 1 was itself published in two parts and called *Cikar Alkawarin Allah ga Jama'arsa*, literally meaning 'The Fulfilment of God's Promise to His People,' parts I and II. This project produced the most voluminous Hausa-language publication in Phoenician script that I am aware of, apart from the two dictionaries by Bargery and Abraham – and, of course, the *Littafi Mai Tsarki*, the Hausa Bible. There may have been larger ones in *Ajami* script by classical authors like Usman Danfodio, the spiritual, temporal and philosophical father of Northern Nigerian Islam.

My major role was to supervise Matthew, help him out with difficult passages and sometimes to correct passages he had not quite understood. Often, when I travelled by car, Matthew would accom-

pany me to sell the books HLC produced as well as others, including my own. Of course we had our semi-annual committee meetings that Matthew also attended.

Slowly a rift developed between HLC and our parent committee. The latter was unhappy with the low sales volume. We argued long and hard that though sales might be few, this literature had a big influence, for it was used in almost every Hausa-language Bible and Pastors Training Institution. WLC was not convinced but allowed us to continue – for a while.

League for Action against Bribery

This programme has been described in previous chapters. We had published a booklet in English and distributed it far and wide at a low price. We also translated and distributed it in Hausa. Then the Anglican Bishop Ebo of Jos translated it into Igbo after he assured us it would be very popular among the Igbos in the North. We printed 10,000 copies. Subsequently, NKST translated it into their Tiv language. At this point in 1985, we were moving towards doing a Yoruba translation.

In April 1985, Fran and I travelled to Lagos in the far South-West part of the country. The trip took us through Igbo land. Bishop Ebo was now down there in the South. We visited him and pressed his responsibility for the sale of our Igbo anti-bribery booklet among his people. He received us very graciously and even fed us sumptuously. He also assured us he would take his responsibility seriously and he would be sure to remit the income from the sales. His strategy would be to distribute them to other Anglican bishops.

Relations with Other Agencies and Individuals

In mid-July 1986, a pastor-teacher dropped by our house unexpectedly. He was greatly interested in journalism and wanted to start a national Christian magazine along the line of American *Christianity Today*. He was planning a big organisational meeting in Abuja, Nigeria's new capital city, and wanted addresses, names and advice

from me. It was quite typical of how I had become an unofficial advisor and consultant about the Nigerian Christian scene to Nigerians, missionaries and representatives of NGOs. Fran wrote, 'You meet so many interesting people every day, all with different visions for God's Kingdom.'

February 1987 found me in Numan, some six hours drive north of Jos. The occasion was the installation of an acquaintance of mine, David Windibiziri, as Lutheran bishop. This Lutheran church had been started by missionaries of the Danish Lutheran SUM. Several thousand people attended the event, with invited non-Lutherans treated as special guests. We were all put up in a hotel. I had two air-conditioned rooms to myself. I had actually counted on sleeping outside somewhere on my trek bed, but that would have been impossible, given the multitude of mosquitoes in this river town.

As the era of independence moved on since 1960, there were fewer and fewer expatriates in government positions. So I felt honoured, not to say 'flattered,' when the Plateau State Government appointed me to sit on a committee to adjudicate property challenges to the Anglican St. John's Secondary School. It was a recognition of my standing in the community. I was to serve as an 'objective outsider' to the proceedings. It sounded like an interesting assignment, for I was not only a member of the Anglican Communion, but also had close relations with some of the school staff. Not sure I could really qualify as an 'objective outsider,' but apparently, the Government did not know of these relationships of mine and they probably had not done due diligence on the matter. However, after the first two lengthy sittings, I realised this could take me a full month. Since I could not justify spending my time that way before the CRC supporting constituency, I regretfully resigned. The ICS might have profited greatly from my participation since such positions were always well compensated by the Government.

CHAN: Wholistic Health Care (WHC)

CHAN did eventually adopt the WHC Taskforce and named it the Wholistic Health Care Project (WHCP) with me as its part-time vol-

unteer coordinator, but that did not happen without some struggle and much persuasive argument. So, now I had two public hats, ICS and CHAN. Still, further down the line, CHAN successfully appealed for funds and a car for the project from her European partners.

After WHC was handed over to CHAN, it could no longer be classified under ICS. It would be more correct to classify it under 'other agencies.'

During the same year of 1984, we ran two workshops on hospital chaplaincy and training for it. I also published a stencilled report entitled 'WHC and Hospital Chaplaincy.' At first, the pre-CHAN Taskforce resisted attempts to include chaplaincy concerns in its programme, for we felt that the problems we were dealing with resided in biomedicine mainly and that's where we should concentrate. It was only after the Taskforce agreed to include chaplaincy issues that CHAN's resistance to WHC began to crumble. The CHAN community tended to identify religion and spirituality with chaplains. So, if we were going to go holistic and include religion in healing programmes, then, according to this reasoning, chaplaincy was to be part of it. Thus the Taskforce agreed to include chaplaincy as a concession to CHAN to be accepted. However, as we began to incorporate the subject, it did not take long for the Taskforce to recognise that the problem of WHC also covered chaplaincy and that it should be incorporated. And so we actually ran two workshops on chaplaincy issues from the perspective of WHC. From then on, chaplaincy and WHC chaplaincy training became a major effort of CHAN's WHC.

In April 1985, I had to travel to Lagos in the far South-West of the country. The official reason for the trip was to deliver a car to the CHAN office on behalf of Ruud Dekker, our Dutch friend and a CHAN official. I volunteered to do this for him, for that would give me an opportunity to visit many church officials and institutions in the South to inform them of our Northern ICS not only but to get them aboard for our national programmes such as the anti-bribery campaign as well as WHC. We decided to go with the two of us. So Fran arranged for a substitute teacher while we made arrangement for the kids. In Enugu, we 'accidentally' ran into an acquaintance who took

us into his home and provided food and lodging free of charge. It was a 'coincidence' for which we thanked God enthusiastically.

From Enugu to Umuahia to Ogbomosho to Ibadan and Lagos, this trip was a perfect example of 'holistic' travelling. Officially, I travelled on behalf of CHAN and did much to promote WHC along the way. But I also promoted ICS programmes along the way. The ICS, with its limited budget and facilities profited greatly from my association with CHAN.

Need for a Nigerian Co-ordinator

The ICS was becoming increasingly diversified, with more programmes being added in time. Some of them were owned and operated by the ICS; others were partnerships with various organisations. A strict structural diagram of all the programmes in which other staff or I was involved might have been difficult to draw and purists might have objected to the unclear lines of responsibility, but my attitude always was that it was more important to get the work done than worry too much about such niceties.

From the beginning, I was aware that my position should be Nigerianized as soon as possible. Hence in an early 1987 newsletter, I requested prayer from the readers that we might be successful in recruiting the right Nigerian to take over this sensitive position in church and society. I recognised some very suitable people, but their churches would not release them nor were they themselves always ready to head an organisation as financially shaky as the ICS. Eventually, I was able to persuade the Mission to fund the salary of a Nigerian replacement on a gradually reducing scale, but the time for it had not yet come. Throughout the remaining months of the term, I kept my eyes open for suitable candidates.

Missionary Furlough Replacement

I have not mentioned any of this, but for months now, we had been working on the next Home Service arrangement, which was to run from mid-June 1987 till the end of the year. Now that we had several

staff members and a more complicated financial picture, I had to make more solid arrangements for the duration of my Home Service. So, via CRWM in Grand Rapids, we searched for a volunteer who would take charge of the administration – in distinction from the programmes and projects –, including the finances of the place. I supplemented CRWM's efforts by sending volunteer information to that other ICS, the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. It was there that Kathy Vanderkloet learned of the opening, applied and came to occupy that temporary position. She was the daughter of a former official of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, a Kuyperian labour union, and thus well acquainted with the Kuyperian perspective.

Ever since, Kathy has been a very helpful friend of the family. Kathy stayed on after our return and has now outlasted our 30 years. She finally retired from her role as the Mission's Business Manager, in 2020.

Soon after Kathy arrived, we travelled to Ibadan together. This gave her a chance to acquaint herself with the ICS as a whole. When we returned, she moved into the Mt. View Guesthouse within our large compound, waiting for the time she could move into our house during our furlough.

During this term of service, our ministry had become more varied and our finances complex. However, busy as I was with running the programmes and projects and with lecturing and writing etc., I had been sloppy with the accounting and Fran was too busy with Hillcrest, family and hosting to continue with her help along this line. It was not my forte, to begin with. I did what I could but had scads of receipts, invoices and other financial documents piled up in drawers without having recorded them adequately. So, Kathy inherited a messy backlog from me. She waded through it all and within a month declared she had it all organised not only, but everything was in order! You can hardly imagine my relief at her announcement. What a huge load off my back! It was a good note on which to hand over the books to her.

Flirtation with the Reformed Ecumenical Council

I had long been a friend to Dr Paul Schrottenboer, the general secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and a stalwart Kuyperian. The REC was one of several ecumenical world councils that, in distinction from WCC, were oriented to a specific Christian tradition, this one being Reformed or Calvinistic. Every furlough in Grand Rapids, we would visit each other. He also visited us twice in Nigeria. In 1986, the REC was searching for a replacement since Schrottenboer was about to retire. I decided to apply, for I recognised it as an opportunity to give my ministry a global dimension. Eugene Rubingh also applied but withdrew. That left only two applicants. I was invited to an interview in Amsterdam.

That's when the family began to strongly object. The children did not want to leave Jos and Hillcrest. They were having conniptions about the possibility of enrolling in Grand Rapids Christian High, a place known at the time among missionaries, rightly or wrongly, as a bunch of class conscious, cliquish, racist and rich snobs. Fran sided with the children. Besides, she foresaw that I would be away from home even more than I was already. This was not the time for such adventures or to leave her with the family alone. I caved in and withdrew my application. I believe I knew deep down that especially Fran was right, but I *did* very much want that job. It took me some time to overcome the resentment this incident created within me. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that would never return. It was only years later that the children realised and appreciated the sacrifice I made not to further pursue this opportunity.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE CRC

Nigeria Mission

We participated fully in various Mission meetings, especially within the so-called Jos Local Conference. This body held meetings upon meeting at times, especially when the Grand Rapids CRWM administration foiled around with new administrative changes and missionaries everywhere had to figure out how they should be applied to their local situations. We also had to decide on housing matters, guards and

other local matters. Fran wrote about one meeting in August 1985 when ‘people try to argue that a single person needs a bigger house than a family with one child!’ When that happens, she commented, ‘you get meetings that never end. The matter was temporarily settled to everyone’s satisfaction, but the same problem will come up again in December when we are expecting a new family with two kids!’ Yes, missionaries can be that way! Everyone had a chance to think and pray about it till the next meeting. By that time, all disagreement had dissipated and we came to a settlement reasonable to all.

Helping our Missionary Colleagues

Though in previous chapters you have noticed that I was not always comfortable with our Mission in Nigeria, we did always cooperate in many ways. For example, we were always happy to supervise the students in the hostel when Jerry and Mary Cremer, the house parents, needed an evening out with their own children. It was not a difficult task, for the Cremers had the place organised so well and the children were so happy that it was easy to supervise the twenty kids for a few hours. Later on in the year, the Cremers requested one weekend off per month, which meant we all had to take turns relieving them for full weekends. We gladly participated in that programme as well. No one could refuse the Cremers anything, for they were the most helpful and cooperative couple ever, while he was exceedingly good with maintenance issues for everyone. The Cremers remained dear family friends for decades – and Jerry in particular, became closer than an uncle to our children when they were in Grand Rapids for college. Jerry died of cancer in the early 2000s, but up to the end, his heart was on service. One day when Wiebe was pushing his baby, Jehan, in a stroller past Jerry’s house in Grand Rapids, he came out to apply oil to the wheels because he felt they were squeaking too much. That was Jerry, a saint to the very end.

As to cooperating with the rest of the missionary community, you will remember from previous chapters the many times we took in kids from families in turmoil or who needed to travel. In May 1985, Willem Berends suddenly became seriously ill. He was driven from

distant Kantagora in Niger State, where we had spent the previous Christmas, to Evangel Hospital, where Glen Verbrugge was still the anchor doctor. Willem's condition was so serious that he needed someone to stay with him overnight. I volunteered and spent the night struggling to prevent him from running all over the hospital, not an easy task given his size and strength. The next morning he was flown to Kano by mission plane and from there by KLM to a tropical medical institution in Amsterdam. Willem never noticed any of this; by that time he was in a coma.

His two boys had been hurriedly picked up from Kent Academy to see their sick Daddy. They saw him brought to the airport and carried into the plane. They were fascinated by all this excitement of being taken out of school and rushed to the airport. After the plane had taken off, one of them said, 'This is the best day of my life because I was allowed to leave school!'

Willem regained consciousness in the Amsterdam hospital and was totally surprised at his new surroundings. He did recognise his wife, Henny, and noticed she was wearing someone else's clothing. Medical guesses as to his ailment included hepatitis or possibly poisoning. Nigerians with whom we talked about Willem thought that intentional poisoning was quite possible, given the Animist community in which he worked, lived and ate.

Being close family friends, we volunteered to take responsibility for the children. Their three-year-old daughter Ana stayed with us; she spent daytime with another missionary family while Fran was teaching. We also promised to take the boys over the weekend(s) for as long as necessary. Within a week, Ana seemed to have temporarily forgotten her parents and accepted our family as hers. She was so cheerful and loving. She said her Daddy was still flying in the airplane and her Mommy was buying her birthday chocolate. With the boys over for the first weekend, it was once again a busy one. When the 1985 school break started, the boys moved in with us for two weeks. Plans were to have them flown to The Netherlands, where the family would stay for a while for Willem to recuperate under medical supervision. Indeed, after two weeks, they were flown to Amsterdam to

meet up with their parents and Fran now found some time to relax. A few weeks later, the Mission's Business Manager, Bill Termorshuizen, returned from an Amsterdam trip and reported that Willem was doing much better. The family was temporarily living in a farmhouse near Eindhoven.

The Berends returned on 6 September, 1985. It was our turn for hostel relief that day. So we went to meet the Berends at the airport with all the hostel kids, a nice and joyous welcome party for them. The next day, they returned to their station at Kantagora.

Secretary SUM-Nigeria

I have already informed you that I served for a while as secretary to the SUM-Nigeria Committee. This meant, among other things, responsibility for all immigration matters and other legal issues. I was definitely not the expert in these issues, but the buck or signature stopped with me. We needed information about new immigration regulations. Did the SUM require a Federal quota for the number of missionaries in the country? There was much confusion, with missionaries from some countries being allowed in, while some from other countries were denied visas, but nothing was constant or consistent. I went to offices accompanied by Inuwa Jamaika, the SUM's immigration and quota point man, as well as Rev. Jabani Mambula, a former Bornu State Commissioner, the new General Secretary of TEKAN and the new Chairman of my ICS Board. In such matters, it was always good to have influential Nigerian leaders along, for their word weighed more heavily than that of foreigners. Once in Lagos, we tried to contact our Wukari friend, Mallam Ibrahim Usman Sangari, who had occupied high federal positions and knew the right people to contact. We did get to see a number of influential officers and received at least some clear answers as to official policy. The problem is that due to corruption and inefficiency, these policies are not always adhered to.

CRWM Grand Rapids

In November 1984, we again had visitors from the Grand Rapids office. They were Bill Van Tol and Rev. Neal Punt. Van Tol was our

former colleague here in Nigeria who then became Africa Secretary. As with our Nigeria Mission, I sometimes had my problems with the Grand Rapids administration, but even in the context of disagreements, I always appreciated Van Tol in his leadership capacity. Fran wrote, 'It's always good to see Bill again. We really appreciate him in his work and hope he'll stay in that post for a long time.'

Actually, Bill did not stay as Africa secretary for long. In early 1986, Rubingh resigned as general secretary and Bill took his place. When Rubingh was appointed to this position, he had vowed to do this work for ten years and then go back into missionary work. He did resign after ten years, but never got back into CRC missionary work. Instead, he started working for the United Bible Society and became involved in the international distribution of Bibles. It was that organisation that, thanks to Rubingh, sponsored the ICS Bible correspondence courses by supplying both funds and the courses themselves.

Until recently, our one and only supporting church had been II Highland CRC. However, they wanted to diversify and support more missionaries, especially some of their own members. For one thing, they were not all that enamoured with my ICS ministry, but they did understand and appreciate Fran's Hillcrest ministry. Mine just did not seem like real mission work to them, no direct saving of souls. They espoused an evangelical kind of Reformed that was not equipped to understand or have sympathy for my holistic thrust. They also were under the impression that I was no longer working under CRWM but for some other organisation. I was not aware of these feelings at first. Thirdly, some of their own young people were becoming interested in mission work, and they wanted to support them also.

At about the same time, CRWM was also encouraging missionaries to develop support relations with more CRC congregations and individuals, preferably in their 'own' areas or classes. Me being from BC, they wanted us to develop such relationships with churches in Western Canada so that our Home Service travel expenses would be less.

With traditional mission giving reducing in the CRC, CRWM was trying to move towards the so-called 'faith mission' model, where

each missionary was responsible for raising their own funds, while those in administration would be covered by the traditional 'quota' system. CRC Nigeria missions did not object to doing more to raise funds, but they rejected that new model, for they saw how missionaries in 'faith missions' were spending too much time and energy drumming up support. Furthermore, the CRC system regarded missions as the work of the church that sends out missionaries, not as private entrepreneurs doing their own thing.

We personally had little or no contact with well-heeled congregations or individuals. Fran had grown up in East Paris CRC and we got married there, but most of her family had moved over to other churches as she herself did after we married. By 1986 that bond had pretty well melted. We had no other real bond with any other church in Michigan or anywhere else in the Mid-West. My contact was with the church in Port Alberni; they had agreed to be a prayer partner, but we could not expect much financial support. And no tangible ties with any other in Canada, for I left Port Alberni and Canada nearly 30 years before. So we informed CRWM we could not participate in the programme since we had no base anywhere.

CRWM then organised things for us with the result that Highland's support was reduced, while five Alberta churches agreed to come aboard, three in Edmonton and one each in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. This meant that we would spend considerable time in Alberta during our furloughs. Surrey CRC in Metro Vancouver also pitched in, but more as a prayer partner than a donor. Also, a couple of individual donors joined us, one of whom lived in Kamloops, BC's interior, and the other in Burnaby. All of these churches and individuals would have to be visited occasionally.

I am grateful for the support CRWM has given me over the years about my holistic emphasis. I probably did not always express my appreciation that clearly, and I apologise for that. They supported my work at the ICS in so many ways. They bent over backwards to find the finances for some projects. CRWRC also played an important role in Community Development. These comments did not mean that my critique of CRWM and the Jos Mission were misdirected or even

wrong. There was a good reason for my critique, but there were also supportive moments and finances to which I may not always have given adequate recognition.

Problems with CRWM

I continued to be critical of the hierarchical corporate style of administration they foisted on us missionaries. This was not initiated by CRWM so much as by 'higher' levels of denominational administration to which CRWM was forced to submit by Synod. Synod had allowed the denominational boards to be pushed into a single hierarchical structure by a couple of strong-willed individuals but without full awareness of its practical effect on the troops in the field. They allowed themselves to be guided by secular market considerations in terms of salaries. They needed to pay market-level salaries for the executives, for otherwise, they would not get good ones. Of course, missionaries had the lowest salaries, for the secular market does not value missionary service, even though it is rife with 'mission statements.' One principle for determining salary was the number of people for whom a staff member was responsible, but the principle was not applied to me. For a while, I had twenty people directly under me. In WHC, I had responsibility towards the entire nation, but especially the CHAN constituency. I did not need a higher salary and did not request any, but I was highly insulted at the criteria as it applied to missionaries. In addition, I was insulted that important missionary decisions were sometimes made by people without proper mission training and would balk at such decisions.

In the meantime, the people behind these changes were very careful not to touch the congregational structure, for then they would definitely get in trouble with the entire church. So, we ended up with two systems within one organisation: the traditional egalitarian non-hierarchical structure among and within the congregations, but a hierarchical 'market' structure for the world of denominational boards. I could not stomach the latter, for I grew up in the traditional one, was taught its superiority in seminary and worked under that system till the new one was imposed on us. Once, when I happened

to be in Grand Rapids during a CRWM Board meeting, I was called in and strongly warned about my 'rebellious' attitude.

NIGERIAN POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

As interested as I was in politics, I have not spent much time on the subject in these memoirs. However, it is good to know that we started this chapter with General Muhammadu Buhari in control. He had gained power through a coup but similarly lost it in August 1985 to Major-General Babangida, who ruled till 1993, when he resigned.

By 1985, Nigerians had become so efficient at coups that only a few people died in this one. While airports and all means of communication were shut down early Tuesday morning, by Wednesday evening, they were all restored. A strange efficiency when everything else tended to be thoroughly inefficient! Of course, there was at least one good reason for early restoration, for 20,000 returning Mecca pilgrims were about to descend on Nigeria's airports.

I have earlier mentioned the pending devaluation of the naira. This was a measure imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in order to 'help' Nigeria restructure its chaotic economy. It represented a serious threat to the ICS economy. In August 1986, I wrote:

Next month, Nigeria's economy will undergo a fundamental change by the initiation of the so-called second tier. I cannot explain what it all means; in fact, no one seems to know. However, it will mean massive devaluation – probably some 50% over the next year. What this will mean for the poor is especially a terrible worry. It is also a real question of what it will mean for our book importation business. It looks as if our Bibles which now sell for \$5 will climb up to \$8 or more. Whether we will then still be able to sell remains to be seen. If not, then the economic base of our entire ministry with the ICS will be in danger. Please remember Nigeria in prayer, as well as the work of ICS.

As I wrote earlier in this chapter, this pending devaluation held up a lot of things, for merchants were stockpiling, not selling, while waiting for the devaluation, for they could then charge prices double or

more. I had ordered a pickup for the ICS's development programme, and by September 1986, I had already waited six months for its delivery. The dealer told me to be patient, for it should 'arrive tomorrow.' But, we know, tomorrow never arrives. They claimed that the price had doubled during the wait.

Sometime in September, the blow came. Fran described the naira slide in general and how it might affect our Mission and the ICS:

Last year the naira was supposed to sell for US \$1.60. Six months ago, it went for \$1.00; last month, it was worth 75 cents, and today it's pegged at 21 cents. That means disaster for budgets, etc. So far, no prices have changed in the food areas, but no one knows what will happen. I don't know what the Home Board will do; they usually adjust the exchange rate every quarter. If that is what they will do (go by official exchange rates), it will really be havoc for John's book ministry. He was selling World Home Bible League Bibles for five naira. In order for him to pay his bills, he'll now have to sell them for at least twelve naira and no one has that kind of money. There has been a desperate shortage of Bibles and WHBL in Chicago asked John to be their representative in Nigeria to get Bibles out to the people at an affordable price. Please pray for this whole situation, especially as it affects the ICS. Hillcrest also has to pay for textbooks etc. in US funds, so this will probably mean a real raise in tuition again.

The blow came and, immediately afterwards, the pickup. Wonder of wonders! Here's Fran's story of another muddle, intrigue and 'coincidences':

There are not enough cars available, and they get sold "under the table" and the prices keep changing. The car dealer had John's cheque for months already and even got additional money, but always the same excuse: "Come back tomorrow." Then this past week news came from Lagos that they had some pickups, so John got the money together (₦29,000) to send to someone there. He had put the money in our safe and, of all things, this morning that safe lock was jammed and we couldn't get at the money. Two other people were going to Lagos too (by plane) so they went anyway, and we said that our man would go as soon as we got the money loose! Later in

the morning, a serviceman wiggled the lock loose and got the safe open. About a half-hour later, someone from another Christian organisation just 'happened' to drop in and said that he'd heard John was looking for a pickup. They had previously ordered one but didn't need it now, so did John want to go get it? So he took the money and went and actually came back with a brand new truck! Now the one who had promised him a car for the last six months will either refund the money or still deliver eventually and then he'll sell that pickup again. John so often gets involved in these time-consuming deals that have nothing to do with his basic work, but such is life!

Christmas Vacation 1985

We began planning for our Christmas 1985 schedule so early that by the beginning of November, it was all in place. We planned to spend Christmas itself in Jos; thus, a 'staycation,' stay at home. Right after, we would visit the Berends in their new home in the village of Momo, where they were going to begin their new ministry. Then we would travel to Togo, a small sliver of a nation two countries to the west of Nigeria. After that, we would have twelve days of rest at home before school was to start. Didn't that sound like a perfect Christmas holiday? That is pretty well how it all worked out as well.

Here's Fran's description of the Jos December 1985 weather:

Our winter has come! Monday, the weather turned cold and it was 60 degrees (F) in the living room this morning. I got out all the extra blankets and we are happy that we have plenty of firewood left from last year. Our windows and doors don't really close well, so we have a real draft in some places in the house. The harmattan dust has covered everything and is hiding the sun. It happens every year, but it is always hard to take! We shouldn't complain because we have warm clothing, but this is a very difficult time for the poor.

Kambari People

Mid-January 1986, Kevin wrote a lengthy letter about the vacation we had planned. At sixteen, he had become a good writer. He quoted me saying that the Kambari people, among whom the Berends were starting to work, were the most primitive I had ever seen. Actually, I had seen people as primitive in the mountains and jungles behind

Baissa, but never more primitive.

Kevin wrote:

They have very few comforts or conveniences. The only things in their huts are usually just grass mats. For carrying water, the women carry calabashes on their heads. One of their main forms of transportation is camel. Their newer forms of entertainment revolve around beer drinking. A common practice and one on which much money is spent is wife stealing. Wives are often stolen from the husbands they have been promised right on the night of their marriage!

A major difference between those Baissa ethnic groups and the Kambari is that the former had been free to live their own lives as well as they could. They seemed content with their way of life and were not clamouring for major changes. The Kambari people, on the other hand, were also Traditionalists, but they were oppressed by the Muslims who surrounded them. They were ready for change, but they did not trust other Nigerians who approached them. The only experience they had with non-Kambari people was with Muslims and they assumed that other Nigerians visiting them would be similarly oppressive. That was the reason our Mission sent expatriate missionaries to them to break that spirit of mistrust towards others. They were open to foreigners and soon began to respond to the Gospel. Once there were a few small congregations and trust had been established, our foreign missionaries introduced them to the CRCN as our friends and partners. Eventually, the Kambari Church joined the CRCN as a separate classis or district.

Lome, Togo

From Momo, we travelled via the ICS at Ibadan, where we spent a night, to the Lagos Airport to fly on to Togo, a KLM flight of only twenty-five minutes. It was the first the children had ever been to Nigeria's then capital city. It took off only two hours late.

Togo is a former French colony and so French was the official language. Kevin was quite surprised at how much French he could

speak and understand. English being hardly understood, Kevin was our mouthpiece. Though it had been a half year since his last French course, he could handle himself quite well. There is a little story; however, that has become part of family lore. We needed an extra mattress in our hotel room. So Kevin requested one. The attendant came with a bucket of water. We never did figure out whose French was at fault here!

Lome, the capital city, looked very much like European cities with tall buildings, beautiful lawns, clean and orderly streets, etc. The people in the city were very courteous and respectful. They had impressive buildings, including Roman Catholic churches. There was a ramp that had been used for a papal visit some years earlier. A canoe was on public display that Mother Mary had allegedly used one time. There were sculptures of all kinds. We have a picture of a statue of two old village men sitting on their stools chatting with each other. Very beautifully sculptured. We also have a picture of a *juju* statue in the middle of the city.

We came with US dollars and needed to exchange them for Francophone francs. While this was all strictly controlled in Nigeria, it was a free-for-all in Togo, where you could freely exchange on the street at much better than bank rates. As a result, prices for us were very low. We could enjoy some topnotch restaurants for very low prices. Dutch cheese was cheaper in Togo than in The Netherlands! Most of their foodstuffs were imported from France. Political colonialism may have been done away with, but economic or neo-colonialism was still going strong.

Family Back Home Again

In early 1986, soon after our return from our trip to Togo, Wiebe was climbing the large tree behind our house with his classmate and neighbour, Brenten Seinen. A branch broke, and Wiebe fell to the ground some twenty feet below, badly fracturing the wrist and dislocating his elbow of his right arm in the process. We rushed him to Evangel Hospital yet again for treatment where the doctors did the best they could to repair the damage. Wiebe had to learn to write with

his left hand for six weeks during the recovery. Wiebe's right arm is still not straight to this day.

In early March, we spent a weekend under the stars at a family campout a few miles from Jos. Fran wrote, 'It was fun sleeping under the stars; the sky was so clear and bright; the moon, as bright as a car light! The kids each brought a friend. We all had a great time together.'

Mid-May, Kevin had his Junior-Senior Banquet. Fran was involved head over heels as a parent. She was drafted to make her famous potato chips. Thirty pounds of potatoes were delivered to our door. Asabe, our housekeeper, peeled them; Kevin sliced them with our little slicing gadget; Fran fried them in five pans a shot. Quite a production. In the afternoon, two girls came and helped her bake 200 cookies as part of the dessert. Fran commented:

These banquets have become real productions here! Their theme was Tropical Paradise and they had an actual pig roasting all day at one of the hostels and then some men carved it at the banquet. They had girls in Hawaiian skirts meeting everyone at the door with leis to hang around their necks. It seems that each class (or maybe the mothers?) tries to outdo the previous year. Good thing a class has to prepare for a banquet only once; the next year, they are the guests!

European Vacation 1986

From 30 May to 11 July, 1986, we wrote no letters to our parents, for we were on a vacation trip in Western Europe. 'We' here means the family minus Lydia and Kevin. We had been thinking of making such a trip, but with six or five people everything would have been difficult and expensive. We would have to rent a bigger car and more hotel space. Lydia was already married and out of the house. However, after Kevin decided to travel to the US to spend the summer working on a farm owned by a member of II Highland Church, and we were down to four people, it became more possible. So we arranged for our tickets. The rest of the arrangements were made as we travelled. The four of us spent a month travelling across Europe, including two

weeks in Switzerland, where Cynthia and Wiebe stayed with Frans's eldest niece Joanne and her husband Han De Bruyn, who was an expatriate working in Zurich. We also took the children to Czechoslovakia and East Germany so they could experience life behind the Iron Curtain. It was hard to imagine then that less than five years later, the Berlin Wall would be taken down and the Cold War would be over.

While Cynthia and Wiebe were in Zurich with their cousins, Fran and I travelled to Geneva, something of a spiritual home to us as this was where John Calvin established the Calvinist Christian tradition during the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s. While in Geneva, we visited the headquarters of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to visit Dr Hilton, who had been a medical missionary in Nigeria for 20 years and was now in charge of WCC's Medical Commission. We had serious discussions about WHC in general and our programme in particular. We wanted to know new developments along these lines which Hilton had observed in other countries and we explored ways in which the WCC could strengthen our programme. We also met Marlin Van Elderen, son of my New Testament prof at Calvin Seminary; he was editor of a WCC magazine. We also met John Kok, manager of Kok Publishers in Kampen, grandson of *the* Kok-Kampen, famous publishers of Reformed books in The Netherlands.

The next day, we visited more people at WCC as well as at the Lutheran World Federation and the World Association of Reformed Churches, both of which occupied wings off the main WCC building. All of our discussions centred on topics related to ICS programmes. After we finally were satiated with these sumptuous discussions, we drove on to Basel where we visited the Basel Mission House. The Basel Mission is a very ancient Reformed Christian mission. In Nigeria, they are partners of the Church of the Brethren. Of all missionaries in Nigeria, theirs cooperated and encouraged me more than almost any other.

Back Home Again

During the final part of our European trip, Cynthia bought herself a bike and Wiebe a stereo. Once back home, they were both happy

with their purchases and enjoyed them much. Cynthia loved to use it on the compound for short errands Fran would send her on. She attended a Hillcrest staff conference in faraway Miango with Fran and Wiebe and rode her bicycle back the entire 30 kilometres, while Wiebe ran the last ten.

When we returned home, Kevin would still be away for another month. Fran commented, 'It does seem strange with Kevin gone. I guess that's the way things go: the kids usually come one at a time and leave that way! This is good, practice time for us. Now it's only another month before he comes back; next year he'll leave permanently.'

Lydia's Chris graduated from JETS in mid-1986 and was called as a pastor to Plateau Church, a large ECWA congregation in Jos. This meant another move for the Abagas – now a family of four, but we were so happy that he had been called to a church in Jos so that our families remained close. As Pastor, Chris built Plateau Church into a major force in the Nigerian church community. He was an amazing and inspirational preacher and Lydia would often sing in the church. Jude and Jesse also joined the worship team as musicians before they were five, a sign of what was to come in the future.

In February 1987, the kids tried to get Fran and me to embark on a physical fitness regime. They got both of us doing a bit of 'running,' our starting goal being a mile in ten minutes. Fran started with a run/walk a mile in fifteen minutes, while I managed to run three-quarters of a mile non-stop without timing myself.

Our efforts, strenuous as they were, were minute when contrasted to that of the boys. They did non-stop runs of ten kilometres or more along all kinds of bush trails, would come home and then still go rock climbing, trampolining or play ball! Both Kevin and Wiebe had become quite good long-distance runners. In October 1986, both boys ran the Jos half marathon. Out of the seventy-two participants of all ages and every skill level, Kevin came in eighth at 1 hour 31 minutes; Wiebe, tenth at 1 hour 35 minutes even though he was only twelve years old.

You may remember that we had a TV and video equipment. We would occasionally use this for a family evening 'in' instead of 'out.' We would watch some excellent movies together as a family. Fran commented, 'It was almost like reading a book together when the kids were younger. What's nice about it is that you can stop and re-watch a part you didn't get or wanted to discuss.' These were wonderful family evenings, though it was hard to protect our privacy for an entire evening without friends or strangers knocking on the door.

For Christmas in 1986, we planned to travel to the remote Mambila Plateau in Gongola State to visit Ibrahim Lafe's home town of Gembu the day after Christmas. Our plans changed completely, however, when Wiebe came home from a 10km run with severe stomach pains on 22 December. The pain continued until I took him yet again to the emergency room of Evangel Hospital at 4 a.m. on Christmas Eve. The doctor examined him and declared he needed surgery immediately as his appendix had already been ruptured for some time and was poisoning his body. Surgery was scheduled for 9 a.m. that morning. Again, Wiebe went through it without seeming to be in any pain at all. For him, the highlight was that since he was in the hospital on Christmas day, he was featured on the evening news on Plateau TV.

The big occasion of the period was Kevin's graduation from Hillcrest in 1987. From Fran's report on the proceedings, we read:

Sunday, 30 May, was the Hillcrest baccalaureate service. The graduates as well as their parents, were to be honoured at the evening service. We had reserved seating and presented a special number as parents. It was fun to introduce ourselves as "Kevin's mom and dad." Many of the parents we hadn't met before because they work so far away: Chad, Cameroon, Sierra Leone or other parts of Nigeria.

Then the big day itself, 3 June, 1987:

Wednesday at 7 p.m. was the long-awaited graduation programme. The caps and gowns and all the traditional music typical of an American graduation were all part of it here at Hillcrest. It was

a lovely program with lots of light-hearted, humorous things told about each of the 37 graduates. After the program, lots of hugs from everyone in the receiving line. Most of those kids had been in my class in 8th grade, so they were “special” to me too. Many tears were shed as many of the kids were ready to ‘scatter to the four corners of the earth’ as soon as the evening program was over. There was a nice graduation tea for the grads, families and staff members till about 11 p.m. Then everyone was invited to a Lebanese restaurant for a buffet “supper.” Most of us “old” people left shortly after midnight, but the grads stayed there till 5 a.m. and, then they went to a mission hostel for a group breakfast. Kevin came home at 6:30 a.m. quite emotionally drained from all the farewells.

Our Kevin had graduated! Congratulations! Twelve years earlier, we had avoided Kevin’s departure by keeping him home in Biassa for grades one and two. But this time, he was definitely leaving. After toying with pursuing his passion in aviation, Kevin instead chose a more traditional route and attended Calvin College, where Fran and I had met, where he studied Computer Science and Economics.

CHAPTER NINE

JOS V

(JUNE 1987–JUNE 1989)

HOME SERVICE 1987

After Kevin's graduation, we left for our next Home Service period. The family flew to Amsterdam together, but from there, we split up three ways. Fran flew to Grand Rapids to spend time with her family; Cynthia and Wiebe flew to Vancouver as unaccompanied minors to stay with my oldest sister Karen Heikens and her husband; Kevin and I rented a car and toured parts of Germany and the Netherlands on a heritage tour together, his graduation gift. Kevin started at Calvin College in September 1987 while we spent most of our Home Service in Grand Rapids living in a mission house. Cynthia and Wiebe attended Milbrook School for a semester, a feeder school to the dreaded Grand Rapids Christian High School the children wanted to avoid at all costs.

Returning 'Home'

Our return trip from Grand Rapids to Nigeria on 14 January, 1988, was marked by an important first: Kevin and Cor Barendrecht, my first friend at Calvin, drove us to Chicago. CRWM had been flying

missionaries to Chicago, but it found it could save \$300 by driving them. We had some extra time there, which we spent copying addresses from our address book for Kevin. He suddenly remembered he would no longer have access to that important source of address information. From there, we separated, that dreaded difficult and emotional missionary moment of saying good bye, this time to our eldest son. We were glad we could leave him in the neighbourhood of a stable Prins family and on a campus where moral decency and civility remained high priorities.

As to the rest of the trip, it all went according to schedule. At Schiphol, we met a number of Nigerian friends as well as some other Nigeria missionaries. In Kano, everything went so smoothly, we could hardly believe it. The place was better organised than we had ever experienced it. We were met by the Mission driver as well as by Ahmed, a young convert from Islam.

Weatherwise, we had moved from -3°F in Grand Rapids through 20°F in Chicago, 32°F in Amsterdam, and, finally, 85°F in Kano. Fran commented, 'We were all ready for the sunshine!' In Jos, things were lovely: 75°F in the day; 60°F at night. 'Walking around the house bare feet and feeling the sunshine on my arms outside makes me realise that I've grown accustomed to the tropics,' at least the soft Plateau version.

BACK IN NIGERIA

The Family

Here's a brief report on our settling back into our house. Within a day or so, Asabe, our cook, showed up and told us that we all looked quite fat! To Nigerians, being fat is good, for it shows you are doing well, and it reflects especially well on the husband, for it is proof he is successful and taking good care of his family. So, coming from her, this was a compliment – and she was not the only one. At another time, she tried to 'compliment' me by comparing me to a Japanese sumo wrestler! I sure had come a long way from that teenager embarrassed about being so skinny. I told her to be careful in her cooking; other-

wise we might not want her to cook for us anymore. She was quick to respond that this fat was put on in America and thus was not the result of her cooking. *Touche!* Fran wrote, *'She has been outdoing herself again in cooking her lovely Nigerian dishes for us. We are going to have her come just twice a week, because Nigerian food tends to be very fattening. We should not have it too often. We all have to help John get rid of his 'excess baggage.'* “

We were welcomed back properly by our St Piran's Pastor Nathaniel Yisa and his wife Rhoda, both at home and in church. They had become such precious friends to us. Their son John was Wiebe's best friend.

As before, we were running a pretty tight ship in the mornings. I was usually up at four or five o'clock to do research and writing in my home office. At six, I would wake up Fran. As she described the regime:

Wiebe goes running at 6:15, and Cynthia takes her bath at 6:35. We try to have lunches made and breakfast is done by 7:30 and, then we are at school a bit before 8. They like staff to be to school by 7:45 for staff devotions, but those with families are excused so that we can have family devotions instead.

By now you are aware that we like celebrations and parties. 18 February 1988, was my 50th and we made a big deal out of it. Around 100 people joined us that evening. We had bought mountains of beef and had it fried up in a delicious Nigerian way. Lydia made a Nigerian snack and also roasted peanuts. There were six cakes in total, two of them decked with fifty candles! But it was a birthday celebration with a difference. We combined it with the official opening of a new ICS office.

Miscellaneous Vignettes

Sometimes we did relish a break from all that unceasing hosting. During a long July 1988 weekend due to the Muslim pilgrimage holiday, the whole family took a break in a guest house in Bauchi, an hour north of Jos. We swam in their pool and played a lot of tennis.

Fran wrote, 'We wanted to go with just our family because we have so many people over all the time. It's good to be with just the four of us sometimes too!' Not all of the sociability was hosting on our part. That same week we spent an evening with Lydia and Chris' family at their house.

Asabe was still our part-time cook; she had a full-time job in a sock factory. Then there was the other Lydia, the wife of our erst-while steward Kilyobos; she was our part-time housekeeper. This was the situation with respect to her and her family at the time:

Lydia is pregnant again, and we are all hoping for a boy. If this turns out to be another girl, she'll have no support from her husband whatsoever. Her husband, Kilyobas, has been such a disappointment. He drinks a lot and doesn't take care of the family. He was such a nice young man when he first came to Jos, but drink and wrong friends have totally ruined him.

Not much later, we finally had to let Lydia go. She just could not do the basics of housekeeping. She had domestic problems that were becoming increasingly difficult to manage. So, we gave her several months' severance pay and offered to pay her tuition for learning to sew with the sewing machine we bought her. She ended up getting a job doing laundry for the CRC hostel and kept working at Mountain View for several decades.

During early November 1988, we received a letter from Fran's niece, Kristy, who wrote that Mother Jennie was doing poorly. Fran was grateful for Kristy's letter, especially because she was a nurse, but she was exasperated that none of her siblings regularly wrote, except Jane, of course. However, Jane was both teaching and serving as a caregiver to Mother. She did not have much time left to write to us. Fran wrote:

I figured something was wrong because we haven't had any letters from mom for several weeks. But no one else is writing (except Jane), so we hear nothing. Where are my sisters and brothers? Have they all forgotten their little sister? If you don't feel like writing, how about a phone call? Just call Kevin and ask him how easy it is now. The connections lately have been so wonderfully clear.

She ended that long letter with a pastoral comment to Mother: 'Mom, please be assured of our daily prayers for you. We ask that God will give you peace and help you accept His will.'

In response to Kristy's letter, Fran decided to pay Mother a visit. This was in keeping with an agreement we had made between the two of us that when our parents seemed to be reaching their end, we would visit them while still alive, but not come for the funeral. So she ordered tickets for a trip from 27 December to 12 January. However, getting tickets at that time of the year so late was normally next to impossible. Fran wrote, 'I asked the Lord to make it plain to me whether I should go, and the answer came in the form of a prompt delivery of the tickets within a week.' That was pretty special. She took it as a double confirmation: the airline's and the Lord's.

Fran wrote about the 1988 Hillcrest staff Christmas party and our family's part in it:

Wiebe and two friends had prepared a Christmas rap. They called it An Eight Hour Rap because that's how long it took them to write the lyrics and practice it. It went well, and it was his group's second public performance, so they are getting more confident now.

The next day, Fran and I went to Shendam in the southern part of Plateau State to attend the official installation of their new chief. That new chief was Hubert Sheldas, our former Zaria Road neighbour and friend of our kids. He sent us a personal invitation, a high honour indeed for such an intensely traditional cultural institution. Here's a paragraph Fran wrote about it:

Those of you who have visited us will remember Mr Sheldas. We knew he was the oldest son of the chief and realised that someday he might take that position of chief of Shendam. These are really historic traditional occasions to witness. We remember when the Wukari chief was installed, but we didn't know him personally, so this will be very different.

Sometime later, Helen, Hubert's wife, dropped by with a friend. She said that her husband was really like a 'prisoner' in his position. I am not sure she was happy about their new situation. She was a modern

woman who could hardly be expected to fulfil the role traditionally assigned to a chief's first wife. She continued living in Jos to run their dry cleaning business.

Fran left for Grand Rapids on 27 December. She rode with the Van Gerpens, another missionary family, who took her to the Kano Airport and saw to it that she got on the plane. Her flights were fortunately uneventful, even though they were at a busy time and in the winter.

Fran's Mom was not doing well. She was somewhat depressed and never really liked the winter darkness. Her pains and limited mobility meant she spent her time either in her special chair at the living room window or in bed. That window gave her a view of a busy road not only but, beyond that, of the Cascade CRC on the hill, surrounded by lush lawns and weeping willow trees, a scene so beautiful and peaceful that it must have blessed her even in her distress.

Unfortunately, she was also a poor sleeper, and even the slightest noise anywhere in the house would wake her up. That made it difficult for Fran to phone us in Jos because of the time difference. Every evening before going to bed, Mom would say that she hoped she would die during the night. She was tired of living and ready to meet her Lord. Fran was happy to hear that testimony, and assured her that she was glad to have this short visit with her. Mom was thankful that Fran had made an effort to come all that way. Sister Jane was encouraged by the visit and they had some good times together.

After Kevin returned to Grand Rapids from a Christmas visit to B.C., Fran was able to spend some time with him as well. That was certainly a bonus! Kevin enjoyed Fran's cooking. Even a rice and curry meal with some friends at his dorm. And we all continued to be so grateful that he faithfully dropped in to see Grandma and Aunt Jane. In spite of the concern that predicated the visit, Fran's mother regained her health and lived quite a few more years.

We had made plans for the family to spend Christmas 1988 at Baissa, since our visit there in 1986 was postponed due to Wiebe's appendectomy. This time, it did not materialise either because of Fran's trip to Grand Rapids. She did not want her trip to prevent ours,

but we decided to cancel it once more. We decided to spend a quiet 'Momless' Christmas at home.

Towards the end of 1988, I wrote a very brief summary about each member of the family. Instead of distributing the items under different headings, I give them to you here on one plate:

Fran still enjoys teaching in junior high, but she is looking forward to the day she goes back to elementary school – as a teacher, be it understood!

Kevin is at Calvin College (2nd year). During his latest telephone call, he intimated that he was close to deciding his major: a combination of computer science and economics. It is nice to be able to keep contact by telephone with him.

Cynthia (Grade 10) is getting deeper into music all the time. She is both a guitar student as well as a teacher. She is taking voice lessons and is a member of two school choirs. And, according to some of her teachers, she's also good at talking. With a Prins-and-Boer background, what else is new?

Wiebe (Grade 9) continues his running tradition. He is now training for the 12-hour relay charity marathon! His other main interest is in drumming. He has a good drum set at home and is also in the school band as a drummer. If anyone should ever ask me why I am going deaf, I would have some answers. Two doctors have analyzed it as industrial damage, but does that term include drumming in the room next to our bedroom when we take our afternoon nap? The industrial damage was the result of almost five years working in the lumber industry during my teens.

As to New Year's Eve, the kids spent it at a friend's house, watching videos. I spent part of the evening with the Wally Rasch family, Lutheran missionaries. Cynthia gave a sigh of relief when she learnt of that invitation, for she and Wiebe had been afraid of having to babysit me that evening!

Wally Rasch and I had something special going between us. We both loved humour, jokes and laughter. He was quite a character and had grown up as a missionary kid in India, attending Woodstock School, the Indian equivalent to Hillcrest. We also loved to play an

occasional game of chess, but with the proper trappings, which traditionally for both of us had to include a glass of wine or beer and a cigar. He was one of the few people in all of Jos with whom I could enjoy that kind of fellowship. We did it very seldom, neither one of us being smokers or drinkers, which made it all the more special.

I did not stay long at their party but left to attend the St. Piran's midnight service. I wrote:

I always enjoy spending that time in church, for it helps me to reflect. I got home about 12:30 a.m. and then spent an hour playing our new organ – an electronic keyboard that can sound like a pipe organ. I enjoy it very much. I played some Psalms from my Klaverscribo and also from the Psalter Hymnal. With no one around, I could play as loud as I wanted to – and I did!

New Year's morning saw me at St. Piran's once again, partially because it was our tradition, but even more because I find spending time in Church with fellow Christians at such times particularly meaningful. It is a time for looking ahead and reflecting on the Christian hope for the return of Christ and the establishment of the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness shall dwell.

Fran's return trip was pleasant. She was met at the airport by Case Vander Leest, the hostel housefather, who came with the hostel bus to pick her and others up. As to her welcome in her own words:

The family was very happy to see me back again. They did very well without me, but I do notice there are some things for which I am still needed! Cynthia and Wiebe had baked cookies, brownies and cupcakes and put them in the freezer so that was a nice surprise. They told me to get my laundry in the basket by Monday morning because they planned to do the washing. They all said they didn't really know what they ate because no one cooked much. They ate leftovers but, I don't know where they came from if they didn't cook! They were all gone a fair amount and, thus, had few complete meals together.

Kevin had been phoning us quite regularly from Grand Rapids, and his calls usually came through crisp and clear as if from next door.

The other way around was another matter. So, Fran frequently urged the Prinses to try it as well, but without much success. However, in late February, Jane tried dialling again and finally got through. Fran thanked her for her persistence.

She also urged my parents to try. They finally did in February, but, unlike Kevin's calls, it wasn't clear at all. We kept hearing buzzes and dial tones during the conversation. It was enough to discourage them from trying again anytime soon.

Early February 1989, the former Military Head of State who guided Nigeria through her Civil War, General Yakubu Gowon, attended our church. He visited this church occasionally and tried to be as inconspicuous as possible. However, Pastor Nathaniel spotted him and acknowledged his presence. Afterwards, Fran asked him if he could be eligible for office in the future.

He said, "No," because he had had his turn and all former military rulers were excluded. It's too bad, because he is very popular, at least in this part of the country, his home turf. He really kept the country united as best as he could during the Civil War.

During Holy Week 1989, Fran wrote:

We are once again in the middle of what used to be an annual occurrence: no petrol. It hadn't happened for the last few years, so no one took the warnings seriously. But now this is the worst we've ever had. Apparently, it's a bad combination: tanker drivers' strike along with breakdowns at several refineries. The Akpems came up to get their children for the Easter holidays and were stranded all day yesterday since they didn't have enough fuel to get back home. So we had some unexpected guests for supper and breakfast. We had already invited four others for supper, so that made a total of twelve people last night. Good thing some foods "stretch," isn't it?

My parents were preparing to celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary in December. However, they decided to celebrate during the summer of 1989 in order to accommodate our furlough schedule since we were slated to be in BC part of that summer. We appreciated that very much. It would be held on 24 June.

Hillcrest

Fran was teaching mainly Grade 5 for this one semester, while doing a part-time assignment in Middle School. She was teaching eighteen hours of Bible, reading, social studies and math. She wrote, 'I have lots of preparations to do each day, but it's really going quite well and I keep having lots of ideas for what to do with different topics.'

Teaching has so many sides to it. Fran gave a lengthy account of the academic side of her teaching situation, now fully back in Middle School, around mid-October 1988:

I have 73 students this term. They all need grades for reading, English & spelling, so that is a lot of averaging to do. It's always hard to know how much value to assign to each project and still be fair. When I'm tired, I tend to grade harder than when I'm feeling fit. Lots of the kids at Hillcrest are under real pressure to do well. So for some of them, it's really disastrous to get low grades. Some kids work so hard to try to get A's. I assigned a project where kids had to read and report on 500 pages during the nine weeks. One Indian girl turned in a project in which she had read and reported very well on 2,100 pages! Needless to say, she got an A on that. And then there's always the other kind of kid who can't be bothered with such activities as school or homework! When they are children of my good friends, it is doubly hard to give them failing grades. More parents have made appointments with me to check on their kids' progress than ever before. All in all, I keep busy!

A week later, she wrote about her Hausa-language and orientation session for new teachers. The attendance fluctuated anywhere from eight to eighteen. She ordered a different local snack or drink for each session, but with a fluctuating attendance, it was always difficult to know how much to order.

Saturday was the 8th-grade banquet. It was all a lot of work, but things really went well. The other class sponsor was new to the job, so that left a lot of the responsibility for me. Most of the kids were co-operative and appreciative, and then you don't mind the work. These banquets have gotten a lot fancier and bigger than when Kevin was in 8th grade. Unfortunately, it rained from Saturday noon till Sunday noon, so some of the banquet dresses and suits got a bit wet!

Sunday we were invited to a Lebanese restaurant for lunch. A Nigerian family invited a few teachers and the principal. We had what's called "meza" which means "everything," the Lebanese equivalent to the Chinese "dim sum." And that's literally what it is: a taste of everything in the kitchen. They often serve it too fast for my liking. I'd rather wait ten minutes between courses.

INSTITUTE OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY (ICS)

To understand the situation described in this next paragraph, remember that the sections in these chapters do not necessarily follow each other time-wise. We are now going back to a period earlier in the term than the last paragraph above. We start at the beginning of the term and the beginning of the above section.

I was happy to find things at the ICS in good order. I wrote, 'Our finances are a bit more shaky than when I left, but also much better organised, thanks to Kathy.' That was such a relief for me, for I had been at a loss about how to straighten out the accounting, given their disorganised state and my natural inclination to spend my time and energies on programmes and writing rather than accounting. But it wasn't only Kathy who had done a great job on the accounting end. I was 'very grateful to the whole staff for what has been done.' And then, to top it all off, I was absolutely thrilled to find that a huge grant had come through from ICCO, that Dutch donor agency. Fran wrote, 'This will certainly change his next few years. He had so many plans and visions, and this will enable him to carry them out.' A great way to start a new term of service!

In a circular of March 1988, I wrote of my immediate goals and challenges:

One of my major concerns for the next year or two will be finding and training people who will take over the leadership of some of the projects on which we are working. We are now searching for an Assistant who will be trained to take over my position with the ICS and also for someone to take over the work in WHC under CHAN. When that has been accomplished – and I'm afraid it sounds easier than it really is – then I will be able to turn to a new frontier area and, possibly, spend more time on literature production in both English

and Hausa. Another challenge before me is to find a more local and more permanent economic base for the ICS, so that we will not have to constantly appeal to foreign donor agencies. In other words, we hope to make the ICS depend more on local resources and thus have it take deeper roots in the local community.

Moving to the Fourth ICS Office

The ICS was expanding both in programmes and staff. The office we rented from Pineview had become too crowded. It so happened that the student hostel of the Church of the Brethren Mission (CBM), called 'Boulder Hill,' was closing down at the very time I started looking around for another office. It was in a beautiful location just up the street from where we were and across from what was then the Governor's Office but later to become the State House of Assembly. One problem: The CBM had already agreed to rent out the facility to a brewing company. Now, this was the teetotaling CBM renting out their missionary facility to a brewery. Normally such a deal would not be struck, but these people had become unlikely friends through their Hillcrest connections.

However, our family also had strong connections with both Hillcrest and the CBM staff. So I started to press our connections, but especially our common missionary thrust. How could they release their facility that had been paid for by the widows' missionary mite at home to a brewery that meant the total opposite of what these widows intended? The ICS would constitute a continuation of the Christian mission, the very purpose for which CBM had come to Nigeria. The arguments were too overpowering for them. They backed away from their agreement with the brewery and leased the place to us. On my 50th birthday, 18th February 1988, we held an open house at our new facility and thus had a double celebration. Around 100 people responded to our invitation. Now we had space for every programme and more.

Further ICS Development

Towards the end of August, I signed and paid for a large parcel of land we were going to develop into a mango orchard. This was to replace the bookshop as the future economic base for the ICS. With the shaky economy and the eroding naira, books were becoming an uncertain source of funds. We decided to keep going with books as a ministry but not as a source of funds. Matthew Adams, our Hausa Literature Committee translator, located the land and the owners. They were from his ethnic group and knew him. We assured them that the orchard would bring some employment to their area and that we would hire only their people to run it. The choice of mangoes was strategic: Jos being on a high plateau, its mangoes ripened after the mango season in the rest of the country was already over. So, we would have the entire country as a market for that very popular fruit. The funds for purchase and development came from a European donor agency, to which we were more than grateful.

Community Development

Our Community Development was going ahead full steam; in fact, stronger than ever. After lengthy discussions about the goals and purposes of both ICS and ICCO, we agreed to apply for support from them for a range of activities, especially our Community Development programme. The relationship did not fall into place immediately. Like God's, the mills of donor agencies can sometimes grind slowly! It took a lot of correspondence and more visits from ICCO personnel, but eventually, things fell into place. The ICS became a partner with ICCO and thereby entered a new era. We were now able to expand our office to accommodate additional staff, office equipment and a Community Development vehicle. ICCO would also finance some of our publications. Now we would be in a position to do something significant.

We hired a staff by the name of Joshua, also a member of COCIN and a graduate in Sociology from UniJos. I trained him in my methods by working together with him for a short while, though probably not long enough. He was largely on his own and would drive the ICS

pickup to the various communities where we had projects. Occasionally, I would accompany him for purposes of supervision, but, again, not often enough. Joshua actually invited me several times, but most of the time I had other agenda items to work on or people to meet. I, definitely abdicated more than delegated and still feel bad about that. A few years later, Joshua entered politics and became a member of the Federal House of Assembly. His ICS work had been good training for this new phase of his life.

Early November 1988, I took one of these trips with him to an isolated village in the Pankshin area, the hometown of Solomon Lar and an amazing number of federal politicians as well as military generals, including former Head of State Yakubu Gowon. It was also a dynamic church centre. But none of this dynamism seemed to have rubbed off on some of the villages in the area. This particular village could only be approached by us during the dry season, first by rough dirt roads, better called 'trails.' Then we walked a long distance through a dry creek bed. During the rainy season, the trip would be even more treacherous. The large need the people had recognised was for water. So, Joshua was working on that with them. It was so good to see that these people were beginning to take the bull by the horns, the same bull they had allowed to sleep for a long, long time, while the women in the village had to trek far every day for their water, carrying it in pails or wide basins on their heads.

Appointment of Future Co-ordinator

I continued the search for a future replacement of myself and invited a number of people for preliminary interviews in my office, but at the end of the process only one person was still in the running, Emmanuel Kumzhi, a member of COCIN, a graduate of TCNN and holder of a Masters degree from a British university. Eventually, I introduced him to the Board for an official interview, and he was hired as the Assistant Coordinator with the understanding that he would be trained to take my place. He appeared to have the requisite knowledge as well as interest in the ICS's emphasis on social justice in all its programmes. So he was hired. I was so thankful for the Mission's

agreement to support his salary on a sliding scale. I was elated that we had come this far and was glad to welcome him aboard.

Emmanuel's training for his new position consisted mainly of the two of us working side by side. His office was next door to mine, with a door between the two. We left that door open so that Emmanuel was within hearing range of everything that went on in my office and I had given him the freedom to enter my office at any time to join in whatever I was doing or discussing. I also assigned him to work his way through all the files to understand the history of the ICS as a whole and of all the programmes and projects we were engaged in. I was especially keen on having him understand the perspective by which I led the ICS not only but also own it for himself. If I went anywhere on behalf of the ICS, he would usually come along and participate. I stressed especially the need for him to become a public figure by participating in the events of the various denominations, whether members of CCN/ICS or not. He needed to be active in the area of public relations; people would need to recognise and associate him with the ICS. That was an aspect of his job that did not come naturally to him, for he tended to be more of an introvert.

1 March 1989, was a very important day in my life, in fact, a landmark towards which we had been working for some time. It was the day I handed over the management of the ICS to Emmanuel Kumzhi.

Fran described the handover:

It was done at a nice little ceremony with speeches and all. Harold De Jong, the CRWM representative, said that handing over has always been the aim of missions: to prepare to hand over to local people. John will now officially be the consultant instead of the coordinator. The main difference will be that he will no longer be in charge of the administration. That has gotten to be a big headache with fourteen people working for the ICS. Administration has never been John's strength, so he is especially glad to hand that over. Pray for Emmanuel that he'll be up to this new responsibility.

I can't tell you how relieved I felt at the handover. Suddenly a heavy load fell off my shoulders. I had gotten involved in too many projects

and could no longer handle them efficiently. Some of my stuff was strictly ICS, but others were spillovers from my other relationships such as CRCN, TEKAN, HLC and CHAN. Those were not handed over. In effect, the work was divided in two, with Emmanuel taking half, and I continued with the other mostly non-ICS half.

Of course, I was still associated with the ICS as a consultant. The position was not spelt out, and its success would depend on my relationship with Kumzhi. He moved into my office, and I moved into an office at the other end of the long hallway. We actually did not see much of each other. I did not want to interfere and Emmanuel apparently did not see much reason to consult. So we largely went our own way. That did not surprise me, for all along he had shown himself as kind of a private person who did not follow my example of being 'out there' in the public and participate in community events. Well, it was now up to him.

In hindsight, I believe it was a mistake for me to hang on as a consultant. I so treasured my public image as an ICS person that I could not bear the thought of making a clean break. I was not sure what kind of work or connections I would have without the ICS. Retreating into denominational work for the CRCN appeared too narrow to me. Teaching at TCNN, a subject that had come up, did not appeal to me. The idea of teaching and preparing was okay, but the thought of grading tests and reading endless papers and exams just horrified me. So, ICS consultant was the solution – but it was a mistake. I did not serve a useful function there, especially since Emmanuel felt no need for a consultant, and that was fair enough. Having your predecessor looking over your shoulders is never pleasant. So, while I was officially the ICS consultant and had my office there, I spent most of my time on the far other side of the building and on that half of my work.

Wholistic Health Care (WHC)

CHAN was a mature organisation that had many contacts with foreign donors who supported her various endeavours. Once WHC came under their umbrella, they drew the attention of their partners to this new endeavour. I was, of course, the key person to explain and

persuade them of the need for this project and succeeded. We received a large budget that allowed us an office, staff and automobile.

The first two staff were Useni, a driver, and Julie, a secretary. She was a very efficient secretary and helped me manage my WHC work in an admirable way. She did a wonderful job typing my numerous WHC lectures and other documents that emerged from this programme. The third staff to be recruited was my future replacement, Dr Silas Bot, a quiet, unassuming medical doctor who was greatly interested in WHC as I had worked it out so far. He first became my deputy, and we worked together beautifully.

I had sensed that not being a medical person, I had reached my limit in persuading the hard core biomedical culture of the need for WHC and, thus, for radical changes. I could not go beyond generalities, whereas Bot could put flesh and bones on all the ideas that made up WHC. He was one of them. He may not have been a dynamic speaker, but his lectures and speeches had more medical punch to them than did mine because he could give practical examples, of which he had galore, that spoke to biomedicine.

In due time, he was appointed to take my place, and I became chairman and consultant for the project. I was so happy to hand over to him. Between the two of us, we worked on developing a WHC clinic in a poor Jos neighbourhood called *Tudun Wada*, also supported by our foreign partners. It was to be a kind of laboratory for our WHC theories. At the end of August 1988, we had a foundation-laying ceremony. The actual opening would not be until later.

ALL OUR CHILDREN

Lydia and Chris

In 1988, Lydia was pregnant for the third time. They were suspecting twins since both families had twins in their histories. But ultrasound tests showed it was a single child.

Lydia had been thinking about going to university and by this time had already been accepted by UniJos to start in December, even though she was expecting her baby in January.

Their third (and final) son was born on 10 January, 1989. They had been so sure it would be a girl that they had never even considered a boy's name. They named him Jason. The two older boys at first, were a bit angry and even shed tears about not getting a sister, but they soon reconciled themselves and became quite pleased with another brother. Jude was now in boarding school at SIM's Kent Academy in Miango, nearly 30 km away.

Kevin

With Kevin gone, things were different in the family. I wrote:

We did have a nice and gradual separation during our furlough. Though he did not live at home the past 6 months, we did have frequent contact. Nevertheless, we look forward to seeing him, DV, in June. In the meantime, pray for him as well, for he is planning to join a profession class at Madison Square CRC, and we are extremely happy about that, as you can imagine.

At first, we phoned him regularly since the telephone service in Nigeria had improved considerably. However, at the end of February, they raised their prices by 600 per cent! We quit phoning him, but asked him to phone us instead, which, of course, he had been doing already. It was only half price to phone from the US to us. And sure enough, early in the morning of 28 February, he dialled us directly from his dorm room. But even phoning from the US had its ups and downs according to the fluctuating state of the Nigerian system. It had gone well for some time, but now he often had to try 'several dozen times to make it through.' It was very clear. Apparently 6 a.m. was a good time, since others had a similar experience. It was good we were able to talk, for he had received no letters from us, not one. They had gotten stuck somewhere. A few days later, he received a batch of seven all at once!

Mid-May 1989, Fran wrote about Kevin coming home:

We are so happy that Kevin finally got his visa and hope all his travel arrangements and holiday plans will work out well. We are all very

eager to see him. I'm sure the five weeks will go too fast for all of us. He has lots of friends who will also be here, so there might be some competition for his time. Cynthia says he has to help her with exam study first of all.

After five weeks at home, Kevin went to Europe to spend the summer volunteering for Operation Mobilisation. They assigned him to work in Sicily, where his group would mostly work in French with North African Muslims living there. They also taught him a smattering of basic Arabic terms like greetings. He was challenged properly language-wise by his very international OM team in Sicily. He thought he was pretty good with his three languages, but some of his mates could handle more languages than he did.

The Children at Home

Cynthia and Wiebe were both happy to be back in Jos after their semester in Grand Rapids. Wiebe returned to his final semester of Middle School, while Cynthia was now in High School.

During the summer of 1988, Cynthia and Wiebe both learned to type on our old manual typewriter. Their practice was beginning to pay off. By the end of June, Cynthia knew the whole keyboard and was now working on speed. Wiebe had started later and thus still had a lot of work ahead of him. Fran hoped that by the end of the break, they would be somewhat accomplished typists, for 'then they can use the computer so much easier. Learning to type on a manual and then switching to keyboarding is like learning to drive in a stick shift and then switching to automatic. Everything else is a cinch once you've learned that.'

C&W had jobs to do in the house, like helping with some housework and doing 'lots of cooking.' However, they hadn't found any paying jobs outside the house yet. 'That's tough for teenagers living here, because they really would like to earn some more money.'

Socialising wise, they were no slouches. One evening in mid-July they had twenty-five kids over for a tennis competition. Everyone brought some snacks to the event. The following evening they had ten kids over to watch a video.

Early November, Fran commented on their musical involvement at school: 'It's amazing what these choir directors can get the kids to do. I've always enjoyed the music programmes at Hillcrest, but especially so when one of our children is in it. Kevin kind of dropped out of music in 10th grade, but I hope that Cynthia and Wiebe will keep it up.'

The 1988 fall term, both now in high school, was pretty well the same as before for the kids in terms of their participation in choir and band concerts, both of them performing in their own way with instrument or voice. Cynthia often was given solo parts, which she enjoyed doing. During a February 1989 Talent Night, Wiebe's musical group presented one of their original numbers, a reggae song called 'Delicacy' which to this day is fondly remembered by Hillcrest staff and students of their era. Fran wrote, 'It was crazy, but we were pleased with their efforts. The music and lyrics are their own, and they certainly practice, usually at our house, even when one of us is having an afternoon nap.'

SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS

Nigeria Mission

Throughout the term, we worked amicably with the Mission, attended its various meetings, participated in various committees and took our turns hosting guests, missionaries and meetings. The routine was pretty much as described in earlier chapters.

During the course of 1988, Bill Evenhouse, the Mission musician, had developed a CD together with his Nigerian partner Panam Percy Paul. The title was 'Nigeria, I Love You.' Among other things, the lyrics addressed Nigeria's bribery and corruption. It was right in line with our ICS' League for Action against Bribery.

However, Bill was then authorised by CRWM to promote his musical ministry, including this CD, in the Christian High School system in North America that was associated with the CRC. His was held up as an example of a 'with it' missionary with his popular music addressing Nigeria's social problems with a Christian flavour. This is the new contemporary mission that should appeal to youth.

I understand his tour went over very well with these high school students. Panam went on to become Nigeria's first major Gospel music star. Evenhouse's music ministry studio became popular with musicians in Jos – even Lydia recorded albums there. The musicians who recorded there and the producers who trained under Bill went on to influence – or become – some of Nigeria's leading music stars. These include the likes of TuFace, PSquare; Lydia's sons, Jude and Jesse, and their friend Panshak Zamani (Ice Prince).

Around the turn of the year (1988-1989) my parents sent me a notice about a position in the Canadian office of CRWM in Burlington ON. I took this to be a hint on their part that I should come 'home,' but I was not ready yet.

Nigerian Economy

1988 was a bad year for the Nigerian economy as a whole. The ICS may have perked up because of foreign donations, but it was depressing to see the Nigerian people descending into poverty. Our ministries were suffering from it as well, especially literature production and distribution. I wrote in a letter, 'There is very much unrest in the country, partly because of the deteriorating economy and partly because of the religious mistrust between Christians and Muslims.' Throughout the decade, violence and riots were on the increase.

Throughout previous chapters, you've read about the shortage of petrol. The worst of it hit us in April 1989. Here's my description of the fiasco:

The northern part of Nigeria, including Jos, is right now completely out of gas. There are hardly any cars on the road. Taxis are a popular means of transportation for the ordinary people and the cheapest by far, but there are hardly any on the road now and those that are, charge up to 6 times the normal fee. The government blames all kinds of factors and keeps promising it will be over by 'tomorrow,' but so far, it is only getting worse. You can buy it at the black market at ten times the price, but you run the risk of buying polluted fuel, possibly mixed with kerosene etc. We personally still have some gas, but we are using it only for necessary local trips. Some people have had their cars in the waiting line at a gas station for over a week.

Our supply referred to above was a drum we had in our outside storage shed into which we would sometimes siphon gasoline from our car when it was more readily available at the pumps and then return to the pump for more. At other times we might purchase jerry cans full of petrol and pour them into that drum. Everyone, throughout the city was hoarding the stuff at home.

And then, all of a sudden, all stations were pumping! We got three cars filled. That is, we went with one, siphoned it empty into the drum and returned to the station for more. Fran wrote, 'We really feel rich and blessed with so much petrol. We had really been cutting down on all car movement.' Ten days later, Fran described the situation in a bit more detail:

Right now the market is glutted with petrol, and everyone is buying and storing up. It's against the rules to fill jerry cans or tins at the stations, so everyone makes ten trips to the petrol station: goes home, siphons out into cans, and goes back to the station. Last Tuesday we 'worked' on that project till 11 p.m.! Then we discovered a small hole in the drum, so things had to be redone once again. At any rate, we are now set for a while. There's been a fire at the refinery in Warri, so people assume that soon we'll have another shortage. That's why everyone is stocking up.

Closing Comment

While all the events in this chapter were going on as well as ministry, we were again also working on furlough plans. It was going to be a short one to accommodate the kids' Hillcrest schedules. It was to start with a visit to the Weeks family in London. From there, fly to BC, where we would celebrate my folks' 60th wedding anniversary. And then on to Grand Rapids, we went.

CHAPTER TEN

JOS VI

(JUNE 1989–AUGUST 1991)

HOME SERVICE 1989

As you've repeatedly read above, we always plan Home Service periods well in advance. The normal furlough arrangements would be too disruptive for Cynthia and Wiebe's school schedule, so we planned to have the short furlough coincide with the Hillcrest school break. We spent a few days with the Weeks family, our old missionary friends from Jos who were now back in the UK. After that, it was the typical furlough – seeing family and preaching in churches in the US and Canada, and of course, spending as much time as we could with Kevin.

The big event was another anniversary, my parents' 60th, already referred to earlier. This is only the second time ever that all the ten siblings and parents were in one place, the first one being their 50th anniversary. Only the second and last time! It never happened again. The reason for this unusual situation was that the oldest sisters were already married when Dick, the youngest of all, was born. After a while, Hendrik and I left for Grand Rapids and went our separate ways from there. Apart from those two anniversaries, it never happened before or after.

BACK IN NIGERIA

And then, about a week into August, we once again touched down on Kano tarmac. I had the honour of writing the first letter of the new term on August 11 and wrote:

Though I do not mind little adventures and unexpected things, when it comes to air travel with the family, I prefer things to go on schedule without too many surprises. I am glad that this is what happened. We thank God for a safe arrival home.

We were welcomed back to Nigeria and the Mission with a pot-luck supper. The partying continued with a farewell the Mission gave to seventeen CRC young people who had come for six weeks to experience and, to some degree, help out in mission, but basically to learn something about the Mission and its host people. It became an annual event that is said to have a great life-long effect on its participants.

We were happy that my nephew Fred and Nancy Bosma were coming to Jos to serve as a one-year voluntary accountant in the capacity of Business Manager for the Mission. They were going to live on our compound and thus be our neighbours. I wrote, 'It will be different to have relatives so close by. We look forward to having them around. Fred's job will not be easy, especially because the previous manager is not around to hand over to him and explain the whole system.' They arrived as arranged and soon settled in just down the compound driveway from us. We were excited to have them around, especially their little kids and Nancy's contagious laughter.

It was a real joy to have the Bosmas living so close to us. As Fran wrote in a letter:

It's so much fun to have relatives around; we are thoroughly enjoying the Bosmas here. It's great fun to have the little kids pop in for all kinds of things. Joleen even sat on my lap during the High School Christmas program. She fell asleep at the end, so I told Nancy that I still have the makings of a good mother!

We had them over for both Christmas dinner and New Year's Eve. Nancy hosted a delightful 48th birthday party for Fran. They also spent time with Lydia and Chris, even joining Plateau Church

for the year they were in Jos. The Bosmas were very happy at Chris' church. That in turn made us happy for two reasons. We were glad that they did not submerge themselves in the Hillcrest expatriate Chapel but branched out into the community. Secondly, their happiness at that church was an indication of the good job that Chris was doing as their pastor. We wrote, 'Everyone appreciates them and is trying to keep them here. I hope it works.' It didn't. That was too bad.

And here's the latest on Asabe, who by now was our full-time housekeeper:

She had a baby girl. They've named her Naomi Cynthia! Cynthia got to hold baby Cynthia at the naming ceremony last week. Asabe came back to work this morning with the baby. We went to pick her up and will bring her home when she wants to. She said she was getting bored at home and was ready to come back to work.

We were reaching an important phase in our missionary lives. Kevin had already left four years earlier; Cynthia was about to leave for Calvin; Wiebe had only one year to go at Hillcrest. This is the stage when many missionary families often returned home to keep the family intact. I wrote:

But we had no such plans at the time. We were enjoying the challenges the Lord placed before us. So, unless the Lord clearly shows that He wants us to go elsewhere, we planned to stay. Nigeria had very much become home. Even if we were to return to Canada, where would our kids be? Kevin is planning on Peace Corps. Where will he end up later? The others do not sound like they plan to stay in North America either. So, it may well be that we are as close to our kids in Nigeria as anywhere else in the world.

St. Piran's Church

We continued to remain faithful members at this church where our children had grown up and made many lasting friendships (the godfather of Wiebe's eldest son is Danlami Gomwalk, who Wiebe first met at St. Piran's Sunday school when they were four years old). Like most churches in Nigeria, St. Piran's had a wonderful annual Harvest Sunday celebration.

In November 1989, Fran wrote:

Today was Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday at our church. Normally there are some 300 people at the 9 a.m. service, but there were at least 600 today. We got out a bit late, and the 11 a.m. people started coming early, so there were real traffic jams! There was lots of extra singing and people brought all kinds of produce to distribute to the needy in the neighbourhood. We won't know till next week how much money was collected in the special offering, but it usually is a good sum.

About the next year's celebration in November 1990, she wrote:

Today we will celebrate it by bringing our gifts either in cash or kind. There will be a table outside on the parking lot where the 'kind' can be deposited. We have chosen to give in kind this year, 100 yams which we purchased for the occasion. During the cash collection, people will walk towards the front of the church and deposit it. It is usually a festive occasion.

The second part of the celebration will be a harvest dinner this coming Saturday evening. Everyone will bring a specimen of their local food, whether of some other nation or another tribe. It is usually very good food. John is going to make stamp pot with sausages. Instead of kale, he uses local spinach. We can't buy kale here and the spinach does a better job anyhow.

The Hoekstra Visit

Early June 1990, I went to Kano to pick up Nick and Rennie Hoekstra, long-time friends of mine from Port Alberni, who came for a visit. With everyone else still busy with school, I decided to take a couple of days touring them around before bringing them home. We spent a day in Kano city and another in Zaria.

Nick was an avid footballer and coach even, having shepherded Canadian teams to Europe. So he and Fran organised a soccer match for her school children, with Nick teaching them some new techniques. They were impressed that he knew the game so well. Some of the kids had told their parents about it, and a few even came to

watch the game. The match ended 0-0, 'a good way to end it,' according to Fran. During their time in Jos, Wiebe and Nick watched matches from World Cup 1990 together, particularly the Netherlands matches. Since neither Fran nor I are sports fans, Wiebe really enjoyed this engagement.

The Hoekstras spent two and a half weeks with us. With Useni as our driver, we took them to Mkar, the centre for NKST and the location of various former Mission institutions. We took them to Wukari, our first place of ministry and then to Baissa. The resident missionary in Baissa was sick and needed a doctor's attention. So, when we left, we made a bed for him in the third seat at the back of the station wagon and then carried him to Mkar Hospital. Along the way, we were stopped at a roadblock manned by policemen. When they saw our patient, they wanted to know all about him, but we did not want him disturbed from his sleep. So, when they asked whether he was drunk, we affirmed their opinion with the comment, 'Well, you know young people!' and they let us go. Later on, we regretted the incident as a bad witness. But we got him to the hospital in time and left him in good hands while we continued on our way home. A day or so later, someone else took the Hoekstras to Kano, for I had to take care of Fran who found herself in the operating theatre at the same hospital where Wiebe was born. In fact, she was under the knife the very moment the Hoekstras left. I took leave of them in the hospital lobby.

Life with Drivers

I felt extremely fortunate to have Useni drive us all over with the Hoekstras. It made everything so much easier and more relaxed. He was a CHAN driver, whom I was allowed to use along with the CHAN car for private as well as official purposes. That was quite a perk I enjoyed for over a year or so. However, Useni was interested in another job and so we had to find a replacement. Cynthia put us on the trail that led us to James Kpanto, the driver for Dr Sands, the father of Elliot, her boyfriend at the time. They were going to return to California and thus no longer needed James. Cynthia had gotten to know James

and liked him, while she also knew that the Sands had been very happy with him. So we ended up hiring James as a driver, but now as a personal driver employed and paid by us. James remained with us till we left Nigeria. He became a very close family friend, and after we left, he was hired by the SUM-CRC office, where he still works today as the mission IT manager – running all the IT and electrical systems, though he is fully selftaught. His eldest son is named Benjamin Wiebe Kpanto, and Ben is now the administrator of my website.

Today I wonder why we waited so long to hire a driver. Having a personal driver seemed ostentatious in the missionary culture. Secondly, there was never a Mission budget for a driver so that it would have to come out of our pocket. Neither did the ICS have a budget for it until we received support from ICCO and others. But as the naira began its devaluating slide downwards, hiring a personal driver became more affordable in terms of dollars, the currency in which we were paid. Having a driver saved us so much time that it would have been smart for the Mission to hire a driver just to stand in line at the petrol pump with missionaries' private vehicles to keep them from wasting their Mission time. Well, the Mission or missionaries just did not think that way. Hiring one made life and ministry much more convenient and efficient, but no one followed our example. It cost us money but saved the Mission and the ICS a bundle in terms of a better use of our time and made life so much easier for our entire family as well, for James became much more than just our driver. He became the 'range manager' of all the animals –rabbits, chickens and ducks. He did much of our shopping and banking. He even became our repair and maintenance man for the house and car. To top it all off, he was a great guy whom we could fully trust.

It turned out that our relationship with James went back more than a decade. He was one of the little neighbourhood kids who played ball with our little kids when we lived on Zaria Road. He was also one of those who came to play ball at Mountain View when we first moved there.

Fran's Surgery and Convalescence

Yes, Fran was in the hospital in mid-1990. Here's her story and its background:

On 11 May (Kevin's birthday), I had gone to Dr Truxton for my annual physical. She discovered my uterus was enlarged to the point of a three-month pregnancy. She asked me to come back for another checkup on June 5 (our anniversary). It still looked the same so, she sent me to the Teaching Hospital for an ultrasound. That test found out that there was a cyst on one ovary and a 'cystic mass' behind my uterus. She said I would definitely need surgery but that I 'shouldn't lose any sleep over it' and proceed with our planned trip with the Hoekstras.

The surgery was planned for June 15. Dr Truxton said I could eat till midnight on the 14th. So we went out with the Hoekstras and the Bosmas for a nice Chinese meal, but I didn't enjoy it as much as usual!

Arrived at Evangel Hospital at 7 a.m. and was on the operating table by 10 a.m. Dr Truxton was in the room assisting Dr Iya, the surgeon, who had been trained by Dr. Verbrugge. The doctors prayed before beginning; then the anesthesiologist explained what he was doing and, I was out! My next memory was someone shaking me and saying, "We're finished and bringing you to the ICU" where Esther Orkar was the head nurse.

The surgery ended up being a bit more complicated than anticipated. The ovary with the cyst was removed; the 'cystic mass' was so entwined with the uterus that they had to take it all; and they decided to take the appendix as well "seeing they were in the neighbourhood." The "mass" was the size of a softball, so the doctors couldn't understand why it had never bothered me at all. It was sent to the US lab of Dr Verbrugge's medical practice for a biopsy and, thankfully, found to be benign.

The recovery went very well, and I had little trouble with pain and none with infection. The outside stitches looked like "they'd sewed me up with a basting thread" and were removed a week later. The entire cost of the surgery and after-care was a whole \$100! Had it

been done in the US, it would have cost \$10,000. We saved the Mission a bundle. We were so impressed with the hospital that we made a special donation to it.

A week later, Fran was home. The family and the Mission community did their best to help her.

We as a family are keeping close guard over her and we are all quick to say 'No!' to anything she wants to do. The doctors and everyone else continue to warn us that she must not do anything for quite some time. We all take our turns at cooking. Also many missionary families, CRC and others, are providing us with cooked food.

A month later, Fran wrote:

Yesterday, I went to church for the first time again and that went okay but I was glad to get back home. We've been having many visitors and received many cards and flowers. One Nigerian family heard about my surgery and went to the hospital, only to be told that I had been discharged over a month ago! In the Nigerian context, it is very important to come to greet a sick person, no matter how old the news is when you hear it. A few days ago, fifteen women from St. Piran's came for a visit.

Fran learned that 'some good can come out of illness.' For one thing, during her long enforced rest, she had become more appreciative of the tiredness of which both of our mothers were complaining. 'The first few weeks I was too tired to do anything; every little activity tired me out.' I developed a greater appreciation for Dad Wiebe for his never-ending caregiving duties of Oma, and the need for extra strength for all his extra responsibilities. She also wrote that *I* had learned a bit more about patience. 'John has surprised even himself how patiently he sat next to my bed in the hospital and at home, just waiting for me to fall asleep or to chat quietly till I got tired again.'

Our Mothers' Health Struggles

Around New Year 1990, we received news about my mother, Oma Ellie's 'mild' heart attack. It seemed mild to us, for within a few days, she wrote us a letter from her hospital bed. But then more followed, and things seemed pretty serious.

She hung on for two more years, but it was not much more than just hanging on; almost all of it in hospital and senior home beds and mostly in pain and weakness, hardly a life. So I decided to go see her as Fran had done to visit her mother a few years before..

I was very happy to spend this time with the folks, especially since Mom was at home in their apartment instead of the hospital. She seemed listless and without purpose. She just sat there, quite unlike her life of work and activity.

Upon leaving, I ran into an unexpected delay. Siblings Karen and Bill brought me to the Vancouver Airport and, upon my urgings, just dropped me off and went their way. Bad mistake, the second of the mistakes. The first mistake was absolutely stupid: I was twenty-four hours late for my plane! I had exactly one minute to decide whether or not to take a plane that would leave in fifteen minutes. No time to think it through. I bought another ticket that brought me to Amsterdam via London on Monday. Bless that credit card! I would see about reimbursement later.

Since there was no KLM flight to Kano until Friday, I had four days to kill. I stayed at our old friends, the Gorts, and visited friends from our VU days. I also contacted various relatives by phone, especially Mom's siblings, to tell them about her fragile health.

During my absence, I had parked my car at the SIM Guesthouse in Kano. It had no peace. Thieves tried to steal it, but they made a mistake when they hotwired it. As a result, many of the wires burned, including the points. That saved the situation for us. We bought some extra parts and installed them. It so happened that I had a family ride with me, the husband of which was a good mechanic. We had to stop a couple of times along the way to put things in shape. I was glad I had this mechanic with me, for I would not have been able to manage it myself.

At the end of April 1990, Mother Ellie had another heart attack. No one expected her to pull through. The family spent the day with her, and this time, things were different. She was prepared to go and meet the Lord. Karen said that they had a beautiful day together. Afterwards, Oma told the family and the doctors that next time they

should not hook her up to any machine but just let her go. I was overjoyed to hear that, for it meant she had found peace.

Over the next few months, she went up and down. At the end of January 1991, we received a letter written by Mother Ellie. We were surprised but even more pleased.

Mother Jennie, being eight years older than Mother Ellie, was having her serious health struggles, 'all kinds of pain and tiredness. Every evening she prays that God will just take her and relieve her from her pains. She is ready to go not only, but wants to go.'

Towards the end of 1990, she wasn't doing much better than Mother Ellie. She was eighty-seven, very weak and could no longer speak easily, feed herself or get up. She was fortunate to have sister Jane by her side as well as daughters and daughters-in-law who lived nearby and who were ready to assist at any time.

Fran and I felt bad that we were so far away from both of our mothers, but also happy that both of them were surrounded by our siblings. We were so grateful to all of them for their loving care. Kevin would occasionally visit her as well but found it increasingly difficult since she started to talk in Dutch much more, and Kevin no longer understood the language he spoke so well during his toddler years.

Hillcrest

Teaching has relentless demands. I wrote:

Fran is back teaching. In fact, the day after our arrival, she spent all day at school in meetings and preparatory activities. The day after that, she began to teach. This time in primary school, something she has not done since 1965. But she is coping just fine.

Two weeks before the end of the 1989 fall semester, Fran wrote that she was glad she switched to elementary school. 'It is a totally different job from Junior High, but I do like it a lot. I've heard positive comments from lots of parents. That always brings you a good feeling.'

A bit into January 1990, Fran wrote:

Our elementary supervisor is gone on furlough for this coming semester, so he's divided his work up amongst the teachers. I have "inherited" the administrative part, meaning I have to chair the staff meetings and represent the Elementary School at the Administrative Committee level. Because this will be a fair amount of extra work, I have been given three teaching hours off. Tomorrow will be our first staff meeting, so I'll let you know later what I think of this new responsibility.

Early June 1990 marked the end of the school year, the first in which Fran had taught elementary. It was a different ballgame all the way through, including the end:

I found it hard to keep my kids going last week. We had many contests, picnics and parties, and that really makes them all hyper! Maybe end-of-year was easier in the older grades where I had to administer exams? When the children left on Friday at 3 p.m., that part of my work was finished: no exams to mark.

Last Thursday, I invited my whole class to our compound for a picnic. We played three-legged races on the grass, had a scavenger hunt and even a guided tour of the compound. There are so many animals here, it is really like a zoo!

During the 1991 'summer' break, Fran did another Hausa class for some Hillcrest teachers and a few others. The class went much like previous sessions, but its conclusion was different. Fran wrote:

We wound it up with a session on farming vocabulary and tools. James, our gardener/driver, served as my informant for the whole month. On the last day, he had them all cut some grass with a *langa-langa* (cutlass), dig some soil with a *garma* (large hoe) and *fatanya* (small hoe) and cut down some branches with a *gatari* (hatchet). Then we had a "potluck" of all kinds of Nigerian finger foods: fried chicken, fish, beef shish kebabs, bean cakes, cookies, roast corn, plantain, yam, potato and peanuts.

JOHN'S MINISTRY

After this section, the description of my ministry activities is distributed under various headings, but here let me give you a general pic-

ture of one month's worth:

I have many public appearances scheduled for the next month. I will be participating in a two-day workshop on WHC in Ibadan, which is a ten-hour drive. In Jos, I will be preaching one Sunday on heaven and the following on hell. I have never preached on either subject before. I will be speaking at two youth meetings on the topic of the Christian in society. I will also be participating in a committee of the CRCN that is to deal with the future course of the denomination. That will be held in Takum, a seven-hour drive. Then there will be a three-day series of meetings of CHAN where my role is to encourage a more holistic approach to health. And to top it off, there will be a two-day meeting of the Board of Governors of Hillcrest School. Somehow, in between all that, I have to manage various aspects of the ICS, and some other organisations I serve in one capacity or another. So, all in all, I have my work cut out for May.

The statement 'I was busy' would be a gross understatement for that month. I wrote another one of this 'cover all' paragraphs in mid-August:

Besides the opening of school this week, it was a quiet one for me. No big meetings, no long trips, in fact, nothing that was spectacular. Once in a while, I like a week like that. I was able to get some regular work done, like working on the upcoming conference on external debt. This was the week of mailing out the invitations, of which there were many. We do not expect all those invited to attend, for then we will have more than we can manage. We 'overbook' just like the airlines!

I also have to prepare a speech for a Baptist youth group on the subject of church and state, a hot issue in Nigeria these days. I'm also still working on a committee assignment of writing a paper about the future developments of the CRCN. Then, when there is some time left over and there are no people to see me, and there is electricity and the computer is cooperative and ... and ..., well then I work on a translation of part of a book of Abraham Kuyper on miracles, spirits, science, healing and related subjects. Very interesting – to me, at least!

ICS Affairs

After I handed over the ICS to Kumzhi, I was still in my ICS office quite often, but most of my work was not specifically ICS related. Nevertheless, I continued to participate in the ICS community.

Most of my ICS stories in these chapters are about specific programmes or projects we are working on, but not much about the people working there. Mid-January 1991, we had a bad week:

Monday, two of our staff had a car accident with the ICS pickup. They were trying to avoid hitting a group of goats that suddenly appeared in front of them. The pickup, I am told, is totalled. The driver had to have his scalp stitched and feels sore all over. The passenger, another staff member, has received some bruises but is alright otherwise. Then, yesterday, our guard reported that his small child managed to light a match and set their mattress aflame. They caught fire in its early stages but lost the mattress and many clothes. There is no insurance for this kind of thing. A guard, unfortunately, is the lowest paid worker and invariably poor. So I trust that, apart from ourselves, the other ICS staff will also rally round him by donating to his family.

External Debt Programme (ED)

Rev. Herbert Eze, an Igbo graduate of JETS and a livewire of every sort – in ministry, in CAN and in politics especially, was someone I had a great appreciation for. Though stationed in distant Mubi, whenever he came to Jos, he always visited me both at the office and at home. He was a delightful character and a challenging one! One day sometime in 1987 or 1988, he popped in for an afternoon tea at the house and threw me a bomb. He said that, though he appreciated all the things the ICS was doing, we were wasting our time unless we addressed the nation's external debt crisis. External debt?! I was dumbfounded. Our little ICS address that humungous problem? Herbert explained that this crisis was undermining the nation's economy and making everyone poor. It was time for Christians to speak up and help solve the problem.

It took me a year to mull it over, pray about it and discuss it with others, including the ICS Board of Governors in Ibadan and, finally,

my local board. Everyone agreed that we should tackle it in some way, beginning with a conference to explore the subject. Though I was not sure the ICS could contribute anything tangible to this issue, we, i.e. our local Board, Emmanuel Kumzhi and I, decided to take it on. I was also beginning to realise that this would be an opportunity to work with Nigeria's economists, many of whom were Christian in their hearts but Marxist in their economic thinking. I wanted to help them develop a more Christian approach that was neither Marxist nor capitalist, to economics in general as well as to the external debt issue. It would be a way to help them develop a Christian holistic approach to the entire field. If you talk about this in the abstract, no one listens, but if you discuss that in the context of a problem everyone is interested in, they are likely to give it their ears. That, at least, was my theory. I eventually came to regard this conference and its follow-up as one of the most significant projects the Jos ICS ever undertook.

After almost a year of planning, on 26 November 1990, was the big day of the first external debt conference. I present you with two summary reports, one from the day before and one from the week after. The day before, I wrote in a letter,

Tomorrow our big External Debt Conference takes off and will go through Thursday and possibly take us into Friday. It will be the climax of a lot of work on my part. Apart from organising it, which includes doing a lot of running around (because the phone system is not working well) and writing letters, I wrote a paper under the title 'Sounds from the World Church,' some seventy-five pages long. That is too long to read at a conference, so I will have to summarise it mostly and read only the most relevant parts – 'speak to it' as the phrase has it. My paper is meant to serve as a witness to Nigeria how hard the church throughout the world is working on this issue and trying to seek solutions. It is an attempt on my part to show that the Gospel of Christ has some very important insights and contributions to offer on this score. In Nigeria, this is not always realised because of the way most missions have brought the Gospel, one separated from social and economic affairs. Of course, a paper discussed at a conference will hardly reach all of Nigeria. True, but it will reach many pastors and other church leaders, who will work

with the insights gained in this conference. Furthermore, we expect to publish the papers produced by this conference, and thus it will be available for all Nigerians and, in fact, for all people everywhere.

A week after the conference:

We got about 50 people, not as many as we had hoped, but sufficient for a good conference. We now have to find ways of making the church and its members, in general, more aware of its implications, especially for the poor, and of the teachings of the Bible in relation to this phenomenon. I feel that all of my time was well spent. However, the work on this project is not finished. It has only begun. And one thing that the participants have come to understand: Christ is Lord, also over financial and economic affairs. That is not always realised, as you yourselves will know. Greater awareness of that Lordship was not the only goal for this conference, but certainly the major one from my point of view.

We were grateful for the cooperation of a wide range of people, both Nigerian and international. Locally, we had:

Rev Luther Cishak, the Vice-President of the CCN, the proprietor of ICS.

Rev Dr Yusufu Turaki, Conference Chairman.

Colonel Yohanna Madaki, a state governor who was regarded as a hero for defending his people against Fulani-Muslim aggression, consented to serve as the main speaker at the opening.

Prof E. Osagie, an economist at the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS).

Dr M. T. Talib, a Muslim scholar from UniJos.

Dr J. A. Oluwatoko, a Muslim scholar from the National Museum.

And a host of other Nigerian luminaries to whom I apologize for not including them in this list. As we say in Nigeria, 'All protocols observed' and then we promptly and totally disregard them!

Internationally, we had:

Dr M. Ketsela, representing WCC.

Rev J. K. Gathaka, from the Kenyan National Council of Churches.

I was also proud and grateful for the personal encouragement for this project given me by Prof. Bob Goudzwaard, a world-famous Christian economist at the VU in Amsterdam at the time, my doctoral *alma mater*.

CHAN-WHC

In October 1989, I was involved in an SUM Nigeria meeting with the SUM-NRC in Anambra State. From there, I was driven on to Ibadan for a series of CHAN meetings there. We would hold a meeting of the National Executive Committee of which I had become a member by virtue of my position as Director of WHC. We also held the first meeting of the new Board for WHC, of which I was the chief administrator. The meetings were fruitful. It was decided we should look for a full-time Nigerian Chairman for WHC to have the project keep its direction and dynamic.

It was in the context of CHAN that I got to know Prof Ishaya Audu, of whom you've heard before. He was the Vice Chancellor of ABU at the time we were negotiating about becoming an associate chaplain there. The Muslim regime that ousted the Christian President Yakubu Gowon demoted Professor Audu. Under a subsequent regime he climbed to the top as Minister of External Affairs, only to be imprisoned after the next coup. When he was freed, he had himself ordained in a little 'homemade' church and established a humble health clinic for the poor that he operated in his capacity of medical doctor. He was the most humble and self-effacing man I have ever met in Nigeria. In 1989 and the next few years, he was Chairman of the CHAN Board. I loved the man himself and loved working under him.

Much of the work was one of awareness building, which was done mostly by running workshops, seminars and conferences all over the place; some major and regional; others of a more local or denominational sort; sometimes in academic and/or medical environments. The first major one was held in Jos during May 1982; the second in

May 1984; the third in February 1989; the fourth in September 1989. In between these major regional seminars, many smaller ones took place as well in various locations in the country. I have referred to some of these events in previous chapters.

I wrote about a serious regional WHC conference to be held in Bauchi. In a letter, I described the event as follows:

The main subjects we dealt with were faith healing with special emphasis on evil spirits and exorcism and how to relate to Nigerian traditional healing practice. It was a most interesting event with hard and deep discussions. The workshop ended up with proposals to the relevant organisations to include faith healing and exorcism in their healing programmes and to carefully begin to explore and experiment with using the services of traditional medicine men. This was one of a series of major workshops with two more planned for other parts of the country.

Early January 1990, I was the facilitator for a WHC workshop organised by the Presbyterian Church in the southern city of Aba. They had it well organised and took good care of me for almost a week. Though I was leading the workshop most of the time, there were other speakers as well, including modern medical people of various specialities, African prophets and faith healers, as well as a traditional medicine man who belonged to this church. It was a highly successful event that I believe, made a deep impression on the Presbyterian participants.

JOHN'S LITERATURE MINISTRY

As you know from previous chapters, our literature ministry took on many forms: writing, translating, printing, publishing, distributing, teaching, etc. Towards the end of July 1990, I was still working on my book on investments and transnationals, now trying to publish it in Nigeria.

You Can Do Greater Things than Christ

You read a brief reference to one of these books in an earlier 'cover all' paragraph, namely translation of part of a book by Abraham

Kuyper, in which he wrote on miracles, spirits, science, healing and related subjects. A few years earlier, I heard a very interesting sermon from a Lebanese preacher in which he referred to John 14:12, where Jesus predicts that His followers will do even greater things than He has done. That verse both fascinated and puzzled me for some years until I happened to come across a lengthy treatment of this notion in this Kuyper book. I became aware that Kuyper's treatment would be very beneficial for Nigerians as well, and so I decided to translate it.

At the end of August 1990, Fran wrote the following about this project:

John is getting finished with his translation of about 100 pages in Abraham Kuyper's book, *Pro Rege*. He is amazed at Kuyper's insight on the issue of angels, demons, spirits, etc., which is now again under much discussion. These things have always been very important in the African worldview, but until very recently, most missionaries never wanted to address such issues. Now many people are coming here from abroad with seminars on "Power Encounters" and related things. John is very surprised how much thought Kuyper had already given this topic almost a hundred years ago. He hopes to have his translation available for publication sometime this year.

It became a 77-page book, but it would still take some time to complete it since I was also working on other publications. In January 1991, I was working on the final draft. In February, I took it to the printer in the hope that it would be completed 'within the next few weeks.'

Finally, the book was delivered in early May 1991, just in time for our annual Mission Conference. I sold quite a few copies there to our missionary colleagues. Unfortunately, they seldom respond to my writings if they even read them! Fran wrote, *Our own money is tied up in all these writing projects because that way, things get done much quicker. He is selling this book for N20 (\$2), so it takes a while to get our investment back. We'll be taking copies along on our next Home Service tour so we can distribute them to the North American churches.*

I chose its provocative title to arouse curiosity, while it accurately reflected the text on which it was based, John 14:12. But you can't

win them all. One day I had a book table at a conference and was within earshot of a couple of Catholic bishops, who did not know I was the translator and who pointed to the title with the sneering comment, 'Those Protestants!'

Abincin Yini

There was a very popular daily meditation book in Hausa that was published annually. The title was '*Abincin Yini*,' or 'Daily Food.' In early January 1991, I received an invitation to write daily entries for the next couple of years. My reaction was:

I am very happy at that invitation, for the main force behind it is ECWA, a church that in the past has been deeply suspicious of me and has often given me the cold shoulder. They are of a fundamentalist pre-millennial orientation. For years I have tried hard to make friends with them, and it appears that I am getting through. They want me to write one month's worth of meditations, to begin with. I am happy not only for the breakthrough in relations but also because this annual series of meditations is very much of an ingrained part in the lives of the Hausa-speaking Christian community. Through it, I will have access to a wide range of Christians, many of whom are still at a very early stage in Christian development. Though we have not yet had discussions as to the topic, I will try to utilise the occasion to bring this large community of new Christians in touch with the liberating worldview of the Reformed tradition. Of course, before I give my final answer, I will need to consult my missionary colleagues on whether or not to accept this request.

Hausa Literature Committee

Matthew Adams, our one and only HLC staff, kept plugging away at translating, editing, guiding publications through printing and then, finally distributing. The future of this ministry was constantly the major part of the agenda, for the pressure from WLC was increasing: Sell more or disband! Or, at least, they would quit supporting us. The good thing about all these meetings was that we got to see Pastor David, our old friend, again.

Under the rubric of CRCN below, I report on a course on politics I held with pastors in Wukari. As you know by now, when I travel, I usually try to multitask and squeeze the most out of various occasions. At that course, Matthew and I worked hard at promoting HLC publications.

We summarised for them the content of each book and stressed their value for them. We also emphasised that unless the pastors cooperate by allowing these books to be advertised at congregational events, this ministry will soon fold up for lack of market. And then, we predicted, they will cry for lack of books in Hausa. We sold a fair number of books to them at a special discount price. We left more books with *Haske da Gaskiya*, the church's publication arm, to distribute among the public.

At the end of April 1991 we could claim a significant victory about recordings of the Bible in the Hausa language. It took quite a struggle. Here's the story:

For over five years, I have been struggling with an outfit in Florida that publishes very fine recordings of the Bible on cassettes in various languages, including Hausa. We have wanted to distribute these cassettes in Nigeria on a non-commercial basis. However, that outfit has until now insisted that these cassettes are only to be distributed to the physically blind and then free of charge. Not to the spiritually blind. Not to the illiterate 'blind' or to anyone else. People have been pressuring us, for they want to buy it for themselves or others, but not necessarily for the visually blind. This outfit has steadfastly refused to give us permission. We were interested in these cassettes for the ICS as well as for HLC. The Board of ICS recently decided that we would proceed to duplicate and distribute these tapes with or without permission and see where the chips will fall. Well, the chips have fallen in a most acceptable way. Yesterday I got a letter in my capacity as secretary of the HLC in which we were given permission to duplicate and distribute at a non-profit price. I am exceedingly happy, for this will put the Bible in the hands of various target groups who now for one reason or the other, do not read the Bible. I think it will help us, especially in our work among Muslims. We thank God for this development, and many people will be very happy.

MUSLIM MINISTRY***Ruth Veltkamp's Outreach***

In an earlier chapter, I have mentioned the Muslim ministry started by our colleague Ruth Veltkamp some years before. Ruth had gathered around her a group of four converts from Islam, all of them highly trained in the religion; some of them had studied Islam abroad. These men were of Hausa-Fulani extraction and had that Northern culture deeply ingrained in them. Ruth recognised that, rather than try to integrate them in a Christian church composed mainly of the descendants of former Animists whom they deeply despised, it would be better to encourage the development of a church of ex-Muslim Hausa-Fulani that would be free to follow Christ more in keeping with their own culture. This would then become a beachhead or wedge for calling others from that culture to Christ without expecting them to cross over into a culture they despised. It was impeccable missiology that our Mission as a whole supported.

I slowly became involved in this effort in various ways. At first, I participated in occasional Bible studies with these four men. But their reaction during those sessions was one of seeming indifference and passivity. They hardly contributed to the discussions and would often go outside for no particular reason. I was deeply puzzled by this reaction. As time went on, I became more deeply involved.

In March 1990, one of the *Mallams*, as they are called in Hausa or 'Teachers,' invited me to his home village some three hours south of Jos. Here's the story:

A large company, in cahoots with local rulers, is trying to evict them from their farmland in order to turn it into one large farm for growing raw materials for brewing beer. The people are all Muslims, except this one friend. He has been chosen by his people to serve on a small committee to plan a way of trying to stop the move. He wants me to come to help him determine how he can best show the light of Christ in this situation to his fellow villagers. However, since I am a missionary and therefore not supposed to get involved in Nigerian politics I am only going to visit his family as a social call. In the meantime, I will try to get an idea as to how the situation looks and what would be an appropriate Christian witness in this situation.

Unfortunately, the Mission called an unexpected meeting that forced us to postpone that visit. We had several discussions later about visiting his village, but he became increasingly hesitant and evasive. Finally, I realised he had changed his mind but did not want to say so openly. It all seemed very puzzling, something that I would experience many more times as time went on. In fact, I came to have a good reason to even doubt the story itself.

You will have noticed some hesitation on my part with respect to these converts. There were some 'unexplainables' that created some doubt in me. Nevertheless, under the leadership of Ruth, I continued to participate. In a report for end 1990 and early 1991, I wrote:

One exciting thing in which I have been involved lately is working towards the baptism of the four ex-Muslim preachers that have come to Christ. Since their conversion, each one of them has worked as a free-lance Christian evangelist among Muslim groups that can hardly be reached by other Christians. The whole story is one of the unbelievable miracles and displays of the power of the Spirit of God to overcome resistance to the Gospel. Their baptism will mark the beginning of a new denomination of ex-Muslims. These people, for a variety of reasons, will never fit into an "ordinary" Nigerian church. So, this baptism will be a very historic occasion – the beginning of a most unusual denomination. Many missionaries and others writing about Muslim evangelism in many countries have desired this kind of development. By the grace of God, it looks as if we may become His instruments to actually work this out in practice for the first time anywhere in the world. Please pray for this development; pray for these ex-Muslims. The pressures and persecution they undergo are unbelievable. We examined them Friday and consented to their baptism. It will be done by immersion in a local swimming pool. The baptism will be performed by four pastors, Rev Peter Ipema, a former CRC missionary who for many years was the General Secretary of what was then called the Islam in Africa Project (IAP), a continent-wide and nondenominational outreach to Muslims; Revs. Jabani Mambula, General Secretary of TEKAN and influential church leader in the entire North, and Rev. Maikudi Kure, an ECWA pastor from a Hausa background and myself.

The point here is that we want this new denomination to have the blessing and support of the larger Christian community. It will be followed up by a communion service. Only a few people will be invited to witness the event, for there is a great need for secrecy. If the Muslim community found out about this ahead of time, violence could erupt. As far as the Muslim community is concerned, this will be an underground church for the time being.

In the meantime, I am involved in teaching these men. That itself is an exciting ministry, for they are highly trained Muslim theologians and come with many challenges. Two of them are polygamists. The church in Nigeria does not normally baptise polygamists. However, the CRC has decided in the context of the REC to allow such baptism if polygamy was in place before meeting up with Christ. This is a part of the unusual development of this new church.

As the baptismal date came closer, I had various sessions with the four to teach them about baptism and communion. Finally, on 3 March the baptism took place in the swimming pool of ELM House, a Lutheran mission. I was in charge.

Here's the story:

The baptism is now a thing of the past, though the Christian life has now, of course, seriously morphed into the next stage of worship and service. It went off well. We had it in the ELM House pool, while the liturgical part of both baptism and communion was held in the upper room next to the pool. There were some rumours of potential Muslim violence because of it, but we noticed nothing, though we did take security precautions. Only CRC staff were allowed in and any others invited by the Mallams themselves – none. This baptism basically marks the beginning of a new denomination consisting of ex-Muslims. It is the first time, to my knowledge, that three mission-related ecclesiastical organisations have co-operated in the baptism of polygamists! TEKAN and ECWA do not approve of that, but these pastors were so interested in this event that they said they would come without representing their organisations. CRC is the only one to allow the baptism of polygamists if they were in that state prior to becoming Christian. In some mission ways, the CRC is remarkably tolerant and advanced. I was excited about being in charge of such a historic and unusual occasion. Though I never was

told the details, Kure was strongly criticised by his church for his participation in this baptism.

A week later, I met Umaru, the leader of the converted *Mallams*, in Ruth's house, with both of them feeling badly defeated. Here's the story:

He had just come from Zaria where one of the new converts had been clubbed to death, while a sympathetic supporter mysteriously died in a hospital a day or so earlier. He also reported of tremendous hardships by a few new converts in Sokoto and Potiskum. Both he and Ruth felt terribly worn out, for they simply did not know which way to turn anymore. Their sources of financial aid have dried up, and their emotional strength similarly drained. Both were exhausted. After some discussion, I felt the time had come for the larger community, that is, both other missionaries and the Nigerian Christian community, to take greater responsibility for this movement now that this baptism had taken place. I suggested we call an emergency meeting of a number of key Nigerian leaders for that very evening.

God had it all planned. One of them, Selcan Miner, a businessman living close to the CRC office, had already talked it over with some other leaders and had written a paper outlining his views and plans for this newly emerging Christian community of ex-Muslims. This plan will involve Nigerian Christians taking up responsibility for this new development. A preliminary meeting will be held next week Monday. This was very much the kind of thing I had in mind, but I did not know that this man was already working on it. With his clout, we are almost sure that something will come out of it. Also, when he heard of the financial troubles the group in Potiskum is experiencing, he promised N7,000 to help them out, to be picked up the next morning.

You can tell from my last few letters that I am getting increasingly involved in this Muslim ministry. This is inevitable, given my experience, knowledge of Hausa language, etc. I do enjoy this involvement, but it will mean I will have to drop some other things. I have already indicated that I intended to resign as Secretary to the SUM Nigeria Committee, for whom I am responsible for all missionary

immigration and related matters, including the annual license applications for Mission radios by which the various missions keep in touch with each other.

I was happy that I had Inuwa Jamaika as my administrative assistant who did most of the actual work. But it was still taking too much of my time away from my main ministry. It was a necessary function, but it was not my cup of tea and created constant interruptions in my 'normal' work. I felt that if I dropped that, I could perhaps handle increasing involvement in this Muslim ministry.

This ministry had its ups and downs. After the above 'down,' here's an 'up' only a few weeks later:

There are three Muslim 'professors' who teach in the mosque during the month of fasting (right now) for Muslims. One became a Christian a couple of months ago, and the second became a Christian this weekend. The Spirit of God is just working in marvellous and unexpected ways. He is now infiltrating the very pillars of the Jos Muslim community. God's emissary was Umaru, one of the four Muslims we baptised in early March. There is tremendous turmoil within that community right now, not only in Jos, but also in Katsina and Sokoto.

During that month, we planned:

...a two-day seminar of some ten people, including the four former Muslims recently baptised. The subject of the seminar will be issues like church leadership, various aspects of baptism, etc. We want to encourage the mallams to begin their own denomination now and begin baptising their converts. My assignment is on the subject of baptism. And going through my computer Bible programme, I am reminded once again that authority to baptise in the early church was very fluid.

During the last week, another very important pillar of the Jos Muslim community came to Christ, and he immediately began talking about setting up their church. So, the Spirit is moving, and we want to make sure we are not placing obstacles in the way.

Also, I spent one day travelling to Zaria with Umaru to introduce him and his group to some prominent church leaders in the area.

You may remember from an earlier letter that the Muslims brutally clubbed a new convert to death. We are now trying to bring the 'regular' church and this former Muslim group together at least enough so that church leaders will protect these new Christians against further violence. We met all the people we wanted and were able to establish an initial relationship of trust along with a promise that they will stand by the new converts. Umaru will return alone this coming week to work on details with them. The reason I took this journey is that among the missionaries, I am the only one with significant contact in that city.

It may seem strange to you that such introductions are needed at all. The reason is that most Christians in the 'regular' mission churches are from ethnic groups that historically have been very hostile to the tribes to which these former Muslims belong. It will take a great work of reconciliation on the part of the Spirit to have these people come to trust and accept each other.

After I completed the CRCN course on politics in Wukari in May that I mentioned earlier, I went on to Takum, 80 km to the south, in order to check on the safety of one of Ruth's baptised *mallams*.

He lives in Takum but had gone to Bauchi, the scene of recent severe riots. He had been gone for some time, and we were concerned for his safety. It turned out that he had arrived home the previous day and had left for Jos about an hour before we arrived! We were happy to learn of his safety. At the school where he teaches, I met two old-time acquaintances, and it was very nice to learn of their progress during the intervening years.

What I did not write in the letter from which the above is quoted was that these acquaintances did not realise this colleague of theirs had become a Christian. He had been teaching Islamic Religious Knowledge as before, and they had noticed no change in his attitude or behaviour. When I pressed them, they were surprised as to the reason for my coming. It was one of the various emerging signs that things were not as they seemed on the surface, something that would become clearer with time – or so I thought later on.

MISCELLANEOUS MUSLIM MINISTRY, ISSUES AND PEOPLE

One early September Monday evening I was invited to a meeting called by a group of Nigerians to discuss a new type of Muslim evangelism on cassettes. Here's the report I wrote on it:

You may remember Ibrahim Usman Sangari, a rich Christian businessman from Wukari but who now lives in Jos. He is an ex-Muslim himself. He is the one who invited us to join him in thinking about it. The idea is to create Christian cassettes on which someone would read from the Bible in the Arabic language. After reading a few verses, someone else will comment on the meaning of these verses in another language, whether Hausa, English or some other Nigerian language. The Bible reader would read it in chanting style so as to conform as much as possible to the way the Muslims like holy literature to be read. It was a good meeting in which we all agreed that this would be a good venture. We have decided to call another meeting soon, and we will invite some other people crucial in such a ministry to make sure it will have wide backing and acceptance. It is a joy to be able to contribute as a missionary to such new evangelistic experiments. It is also quite likely that I will be permanently involved in this budding programme through my work in HLC.

Shifting attention to the former Pastor Ezekiel, who became a Muslim for very complex reasons, I also visited him again on my May 1990 journey to Takum. I wrote, I do not believe that God will allow him to stay a Muslim, and so I try to keep contact. Since I will be in his area, I think I will take the trouble of visiting him to see how things are going. And, of course, pray with him and his family. Please do remember to pray for Ezekiel and Saratu that they may return to their first love.

A year later, I paid him another visit. The rumour that he was rethinking things was persistent, but hardly true to fact.

Instead he has dug himself in very deeply, family-wise, social status, economically, etc. It went so deep that it will take a very great act of God's grace to cut through these. His very life would be endangered; his family – now polygamous – would be torn apart; his economic arrangements would be destroyed, etc. He would have to move away for his safety, and I do not know of any place in Nigeria



Drs Tim and Elizabeth Gyuse, former leaders of Great Commission, then professors at University of Makurdi



Wendy and Jeremy Hinds, experts in Islamic studies



Fran cataloging books for the ICS Library, 1993



Participant in the ICS Handicapped Program

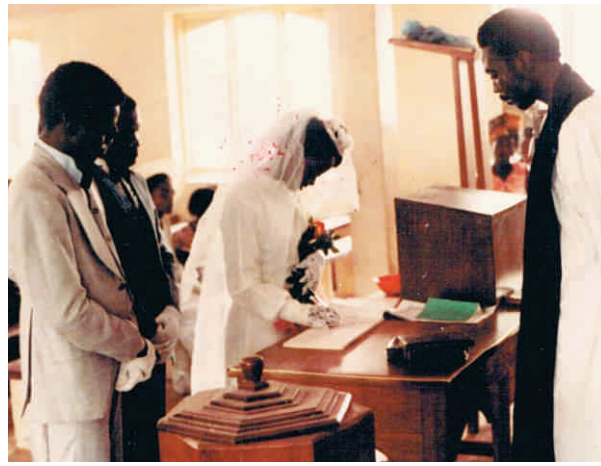
**Current photos of Hillcrest School, Jos where Fran taught
from 1981-1996**



**Mountain View compound in Jos where the Boers lived
from 1981-1996**

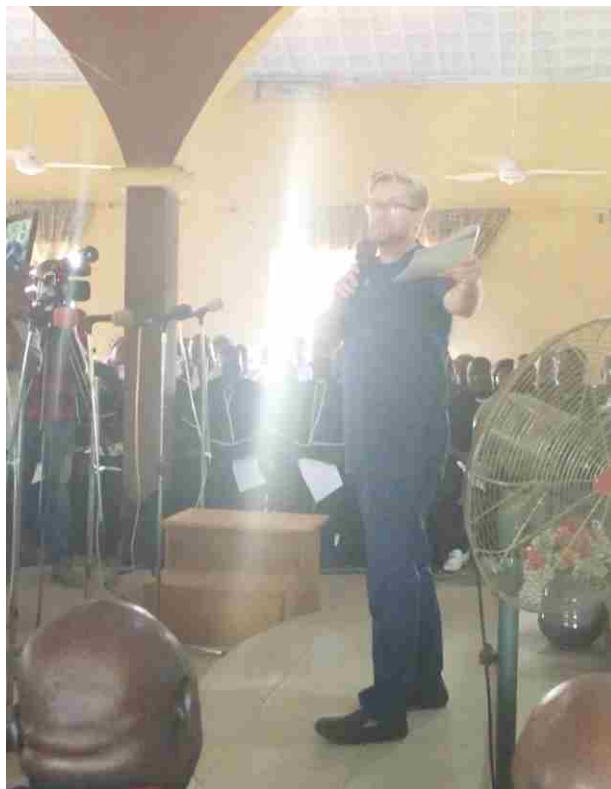


Chris and Lydia's wedding, Wukari, 1980





Wiebe Boer and Mathias Luka Agbu families with the Aku Uka, Wukari, Taraba State, 2017.



Wiebe delivering John's eulogy during the funeral service of his long time colleague, friend and brother and former CRCN President Rev Dr David Angye, Wukari, Taraba State, 2018.



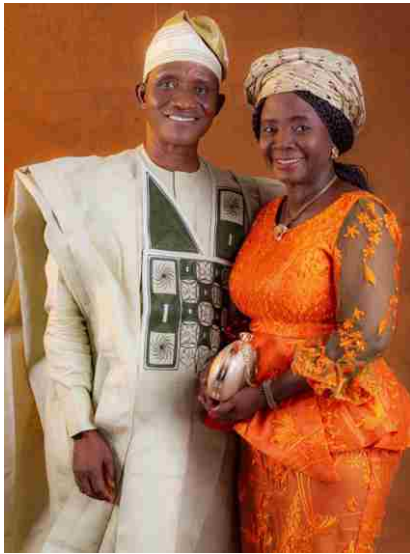
Wiebe's sons with Rev Ibrahim and Ladi Lafe in Jos, 2019.



James and Mary Kpanto on the Boer family farm in Kwall, Plateau State, 2021.



Jesse Jagz album cover with an image of Lydia, Kevin, Cynthia and Wiebe from around 1975



Rev Chris and Lydia Abaga during the celebration of Lydia's 60th birthday and their 40th wedding anniversary in Abuja, December 2020



Chris, Lydia with Wiebe and his son Gerrit



Chris, Lydia and their three sons; Jude, Jesse and Jason with extended family

where he would be safe. He did not tell me these things, but it is clear to anyone who knows anything about the fate of ex-Muslim leaders in Nigeria.

Our discussion took the direction of his complaints. The church did not deal straight with him. They used false trumped-up charges of theft to get rid of him, while the real reason was that several pastors were afraid and jealous of him because he was so much more popular with the people than they were. The investigation that should have been conducted was pushed under the carpet, for it would have revealed many irregular financial dealings on the part of certain pastors. I told him that, though I am not in the CRCN power structure, I would begin to push for an honest investigation. And I will, but it is going to cause a crisis. I suspect that it will need the touch of TEKAN's standing Reconciliation Committee. TEKAN is a fellowship of churches to which CRCN belongs and which helps churches when they run into divisive problems. They serve as sort of neutral arbitrators.

As to my promise to push for that investigation, I remember discussing the issue with some TEKAN leaders, but no one was interested enough to initiate action.

April 1991, Nigeria went into another Christian-Muslim convulsion:

In Katsina, one Muslim sect is at odds with the state's Muslim government. Many people have been killed and properties destroyed. In Bauchi, only some 120 km from Jos, Muslims have destroyed many Christian properties and churches. They have also killed several hundred Christians. I am not sure to what extent Christians are retaliating, but I suspect they are. A few years ago, when Muslims did the same, they were warned by leaders of the Christian community that next time Christians would not simply turn the other cheek, for that gesture is only misunderstood by them as weakness. The whole country is very nervous.

A few days later,

Nigeria is very upset about terrible clashes between Christians and Muslims, especially in Bauchi State just north of us. It is said that

more people died in these clashes than in the Persian Gulf War. Yet I have not seen anything about it in the Western press. Also, a dozen churches have been burnt in Bauchi city, but I do not know how many were burnt in the villages. Many homes and businesses have also been destroyed. The atmosphere in Nigeria is always tense between these two religious groups and, one wonders whether the country will ever overcome them.

These converted ex-Muslim teachers and their followers about whom we have been writing undergo all kinds of terrors, including physical torture, poisoning, witch spells, burning of houses, taking away of wives and families. You name any horror you can think of, and someone has done it to at least one of them.

I should add a thought here. It is difficult to say to what extent the above mentality represents genuine Islam or whether it is a corrupt form of Muslim folk religion. Many Muslim writers oppose this mentality, but it would take serious research to determine the truth of the matter.

For further details in these matters, I urge you to read my series studies in Christian - Muslim Relations that can be found on our website at www.socialtheology.com/islamica.

INVOLVEMENT IN CRCN AND CRC

Three years earlier, we had gone to Wukari to attend the funeral of Pastor Habila Adda's wife, one of the first evangelists in the CRCN area and the first pastor of Wukari CRCN. Now Habila himself passed away in September 1989. He baptised both Kevin and Cynthia. To our disappointment, Wiebe was baptised by a younger pastor, Ezekiel Adamu, because Habila was too sick and weak. During the intervening years, I wrote a short biography of Pastor Habila in Hausa, and recently I edited and updated it. It can be found at www.SocialTheology.com/boeriana.

The Takum Church Dedication

I felt greatly honoured to be invited by the Takum CRCN to preach at the dedication of their new church building on 'Holy' Saturday, that

is, the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter. Fran and I both went. Cynthia had been invited by a family to join them for the Easter weekend at a nice hotel and intended to spend her time swimming and sunbathing while Wiebe stayed at home, a 'real treat,' he said. The Bosmas promised to keep a secret eye on him!

Like so many of our joint journeys, this one also was a mixture of recreation, sociality and ministry. We left on Wednesday and went via Mkar, where we stayed overnight in our Mission guesthouse. That evening as well as on the way back, we took a dip in the lovely pool of the Benue Cement Company just outside Mkar. Easter is in the midst of Nigeria's *bazara*, the hottest and muggiest and most unpleasant time of the year. So a nice, well-maintained pool was just such a treat. On Thursday, I had a meeting about Muslim ministry at the CRCN Secretariat in Takum. Then we moved on to Donga to visit Bob and Ineke Lodewyk, who were overseeing the construction of the new Veenstra Seminary there. Early Saturday, we returned to Takum for the opening celebration of the new church building. After it was all over, we returned to Mkar for another dip and spent Easter with some friends.

Here's Fran's report about the church building itself and the celebration:

It took about fifteen years to finish the building project, and it is a lovely building. It seats over 3000 people. The style reminded me of the 'cathedral' churches in Amsterdam. The dedication service, during which many choirs presented their special music, started late and then lasted for a whole five hours. John was the preacher, and he took only thirty minutes! It was very hot and uncomfortable in the church, but somehow the service was interesting enough to keep my attention. Those of our missionaries who do not understand Hausa, of course, found it very long.

As to my sermon, I had prepared very carefully and had decided to focus on the new church as a bulwark of God's justice in the town that would demonstrate and illustrate what the Prophet Micah said in Micah 6:8: *'God has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to*

walk humbly with your God.'

I had also decided to be very concrete in the sermon by calling a spade a spade. On the basis of newspaper reports over the period of a year, I had identified a major state and local problem, namely that the rich and powerful were tricking the peasants to sell their farmlands. Then the former would amalgamate them into mega-farms on which the former owners would now be the labourers. This was all in keeping with the Federal Government's agricultural policies of increasing efficiency and productivity. I prepared to use this information as the main concrete example in the community. It hit hard, for this was happening in Takum big time. No one had ever connected this with religion or ethics. So I surprised the congregation with statistics and a couple of stories I read from newspaper clippings I had brought. I challenged the congregation, especially the more influential among them, to have this church become an example of the Micah passage by resisting this trend that would have devastating effects on the town's later generations, who would now all be landless with the income derived from the sale of their ancestral lands long spent and gone.

However – and this is a big one – very early into the sermon, I noticed the town's most rich and powerful man, a retired general probably the second or third most powerful man in the nation, sitting there off to the side. According to newspaper reports, in Takum, he was the main perpetrator of the problem I was exposing and he had the power to order me arrested and either imprisoned or deported immediately! I panicked; my knees nearly buckled under me, but I could not show this. I had to proceed with my usual vigour and do so with authority and courage. I flashed a quick prayer to my Heavenly Father who immediately helped me straighten out and continue as I was.

After the long service was over, I was ushered into a back room, and we were served a grand dinner that included the chicken stew for which the Takum women had such a great reputation with me, but the Lord mercifully kept the man in question out of the room. We did not meet. I would have loved to have met him later and discuss it, but I could not face it for that day. We drove off to Mkar, but later

I heard that some people had been unhappy with my sermon: I had brought politics into the pulpit. Well, yes, I had, but so did the Prophet Micah. I was glad I was free to drive away but wondered about my future in the country. In 2010, Wiebe met the general in Lagos, and he even asked Wiebe for copies of my Christian/ Muslim book series which were shortly after dispatched to him.

CRC Mission in Liberia

In 1989, I met up with CRC Liberia missionaries in Jos. Discussions with them led to their decision to invite me to Liberia to conduct a workshop in October similar to the kind we were holding in Nigeria on what I began to call 'emancipation theology' and community development. I was very happy with the invitation, especially since the expenses would not come out of the ICS but the CRC Liberia Mission. We decided we would go with the two of us, with Fran's ticket paid out of our pocket. Linda Horlings agreed to sub for her, also at our expense, of course. Cynthia and Wiebe were old enough to stay home 'alone,' but we were happy that the Bosmas were on the compound as well! We decided to go a week early so that we would have a chance to look around and listen carefully to help me render my presentation more relevant to the Liberian situation.

When we arrived at the Lagos Airport to catch our Ghana Airways flight, we saw a hastily scribbled note on their office door saying, 'Flight cancelled. Sorry for any inconvenience'! That's it. No explanation and no information about alternatives. Fortunately, we carried US dollars on us and used it to buy a ticket on an unscheduled and unexpected Nigerian Airways flight to Monrovia, the Liberian capital. Since our flight had been rescheduled, we sent a note by courier to our Liberian hosts, but it did not arrive, and so there was thus no one to meet us in Monrovia. We knew about ELWA, an SIM radio station, and went there by taxi to book into their guest house.

From there, we contacted Ron Geerlings, formerly our colleague in Jos, the CRC missionary who had invited us. During the ensuing week, we spent time with each of the five CRC missionary families in Liberia. They all seemed to appreciate the visit of these senior

missionaries. None of them get many CRC visitors, not like in Nigeria. During these visits, I learned a lot about Liberian conditions and found that the lot of the average citizen was not all that different from her Nigerian counterpart. This awareness proved very helpful during my presentations the next week and gave me some confidence that I had something to contribute to their situation.

And then the conference as described by Fran:

John was the speaker at their annual TEE conference. There were delegates from some 25 small denominations in the Buchanan area, usually about 250 people at each session. Everything was translated into Bassa, the local language. John had lots of Bible references, and seeing only the NT is available in Bassa, the sessions were often slow moving. People seemed to appreciate John's messages, and often, the translator would throw in a few extra "Amens" and "Praise the Lord" when he caught on to some of John's points!

Yes, the chats with missionaries had made me aware of certain conditions that I should address in this conference, including the feeling that as a visiting foreigner, I was very vulnerable if there should be any government informers in the crowd. As in Nigeria in such conferences, we used our ICS publication *Living in God's World* to guide the discussions on oppression and corruption, but I kept inserting phrases like, 'Well, this is the way it is in Nigeria; it is different here,' or 'I'm not talking about Liberia but Nigeria.' The participants understood exactly what I was doing and why. They never tired of laughing loudly whenever I would insert such comments.

One thing that amazed us less than two months later in Nigeria was the Liberian coup that plunged the country into over a decade of civil war and devastation. No one seemed to have any idea of a possible coup. Even in the conference discussions, not a single reference to any such possibility. But there it was, only a few weeks later. Did the missionaries not realise anything was up? Did Liberians expect something but hid it from us? We enjoyed our trip to Liberia and had even planned to go there for Christmas with the family, but that could no longer happen. The next visit to Liberia by one of our

family members was almost twenty years later when Wiebe visited at the invitation of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Africa's first elected female head of state.

Aviation seemed always to be uncertain at best. Ghana Airways was there promptly on time for our return flight. However, according to Fran:

When we landed in Accra, Ghana, they said the airport was closed to departures. We'd have to wait for another flight in a day or two! They did put us up in a nice hotel with excellent food, but we were concerned because we had no way to get a message to Cynthia and Wiebe. Remember, we had both decided never to leave them at the same time because of what happened in Amsterdam? And here we had done it again and caught in the same trap! The next evening it was really push and shove, but we managed to get on the flight to Lome/Lagos. We stayed at the SIM's Challenge compound in Lagos and drove back to Jos (1020 km) on November 3rd.

We arrived home on Friday night. Cynthia and Wiebe had been somewhat worried about us but assumed we were delayed somewhere. On Monday, it was back to that relentless Hillcrest for Fran, and from Tuesday-Friday, it was Ibadan for John with the extra treat of a HLC meeting on Saturday. Fran wrote, 'Needless to say, he's wiped out now; I'll let him sleep away his Sunday afternoon!'

In the meantime, at the home front, Linda Horlings had subbed for Fran every day as agreed, but Nancy Bosma took over the extra day we were late. We had an altogether wonderful and successful trip, even if fraught with aviation antics.

THE NIGERIAN SITUATION

Nigerian Environment

1990 was also the year of another coup attempt, this time against Babangida, who himself had become the nation's leader through a coup. Major Gideon Orkar and a group of mostly Christian army officers tried to restore democracy and excise the core Muslim North from Nigeria. Gideon was brother to John Orkar, a close friend of ours and

the Nigeria Director of Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC). At the time, Orkar was in the US for meetings, but his wife Esther was in Nigeria, and she was taken in for seven hours of interrogation. She said she was treated well.

The coup attempt failed and life went on as if nothing had happened. Most of the plotters, including Gideon, were executed. The attempt to excise the core northern Muslim states was an indication as to how relations between Christians and Muslims had deteriorated over the past decade or so. It was an ugly scene that grew increasingly volatile as the years moved on.

In a December 1990 circular to our supporting churches, I described the atmosphere around an election:

This is a weekend of uncertainty, for tomorrow elections will be held for local government. This is the first attempt at elections since the military government took over six years ago. Today is a “work-free” day to give people a chance to travel to their place of registration, which is often in a place different from where they live. We as foreigners, have all been advised to stay in our compounds, for no one quite trusts the situation. Will things be orderly or will there be violence? Tomorrow, we will see if anything has been learnt by the people in terms of democracy. I cannot really predict how it will go. We can only pray for peace and order.

This is how it actually went:

Yes, this was a historic week for Nigeria. The march back to a civilian government has taken a few strides, and this weekend another big one was made. Local elections were held on Saturday. A national curfew was in effect until 3 p.m. You could only be on the road if you had a voter registration card and were on your way to or from your voting booth. There was a booth across the road from us so that we could watch it. Hardly anyone showed up. We are told that was due to the breakdown of an agreement made between the major ethnic groups in Jos to vote in certain ways. It also seemed that the voting cards were not at hand. Later on, we learned that little or no violence occurred anywhere in the country. We were happy to learn that. On the other hand, voter turnout was very thin, and that

was disappointing. There are several reasons for that. Some were afraid of violence. Some were downright cynical and felt the whole thing would be rigged anyhow. Others were afraid of post-election intimidation because it was open voting so that everyone could see how people voted. The results will not be fully known until a week from now.

And here are some post-election reflections for your edification:

Last time I referred to elections held here for local government throughout the whole country. They were held and, for Nigerian doings, they went very smoothly. However, there are enough problems that everywhere tribunals have been organised to investigate allegations of irregularities. The new party system imposed by the military government is much like the two US parties, with one a bit to the left (SDP like Democrats) and the other a bit to the right (NRC like the Republicans). The SDP won with a majority that I would peg at about 55%, if you take the overall picture. That is an interesting result because many people felt that the SDP is the party for Christians and the NRC for Muslims. The results show that this is not the way it is viewed, for in some Muslim states, the SDP won completely and in some Christian states the NRC took the lead.

Because of the distorted political situation, the ICS Board decided that, in addition to carrying on with the External Debt campaign, we should organise a conference on 'Christians and Politics.' They saw the two as directly related to each other. This conference, they declared, is directly relevant since it will be a very political year, with the return to civilian rule scheduled for 1992. Christians and Muslims will be vying with each other for control of the nation throughout 1991. Hence, it is imperative that Christians have a deep acquaintance with the Word of God as it pertains to politics in this country.

In January 1991, I wrote:

Things were a bit tense here for a few days, for there were rumours that some Muslim groups wanted to start trouble against Westerners in the country because of the Gulf War. However, the storm blew over. The government has pledged seriously to protect the lives of foreigners and not to allow extremist groups to harass us. So, we go

about our tasks as we normally do. We do restrict our travels away from Jos.

By the 20th or so, things were still tense around Jos, for Muslims were upset about the Gulf War, ostensibly fought to 'liberate' the Kuwaitis. Some Northern Muslims started to threaten foreigners. But it was not only the Muslims who were angry; so was the Nigerian press and the majority of the people around Jos and the country as a whole. I commented in a letter to my parents, 'Let us pray that the allies will show greater interest in peace than they have so far.' Well, we went about our tasks as we normally did, but we *were* a bit nervous and tried to stay out of the public eye as much as possible. We were happy that the Gulf War was over soon and surprised that Saddam seemed to have given up so easily. Personally, I felt that this war was just another expression of American imperialism that should not have occurred.

In March, we were facing a national census. The last one they conducted more or less successfully was in the 1960s.

NIGERIAN CONDITIONS

As always, we were struggling with telephone communications to our families. With our mothers not well, we wanted to be able to call our parents in the worst way, but no dice. Occasionally Kevin got through to us after many attempts. We were quite sure that our telephone was sabotaged by some junior maintenance person at the telephone company. Several indications pointed to it. 'Tomorrow,' I wrote, 'I will begin a new campaign to get around the problem.' Only a couple of days later, it was repaired. How successful was that!

If the telephone itself was not sabotaged, the bill often would be! Early May 1990, it was cut off again. This time,

Because we supposedly owe them a bill of some ₦600. That is mild. Many others have bills of ₦1,000 or more. It seems that the telephone company needs money and has no scruples about how to get it. I do not know whether I will have any success with reconnection without spending a lot of time.

Once in a while, we would be blessed by an unexpected telephone miracle. Imagine my surprise the other day when I picked up the phone and had Dad on the line! It took me a few moments to realise what had happened. The phone had been out for over two weeks. I had sent a Nigerian mission staff to try to have it repaired and fully expected a call from the telephone company to check it out. I had just returned home from the ICS office when the phone rang. Of course, it would be the telephone company. Wrong. It was Dad. Dad was lucky, too, for I was not normally home at 10 AM.

ALL OUR CHILDREN

Lydia and Chris

Due to busy lives on the part of all of us and the considerable distance between our homes, our interaction with Lydia and family had reduced considerably. However, our level of mutual affection stayed on course. But change was in the air for both Chris and Lydia. Chris was going to leave Plateau Church to work for the ECWA denomination and Lydia was planning to enter university.

Kevin

We kept in touch with Kevin during his time at Calvin, but we did not write much about him in our letters. He kept in touch with his grandparents on his own. So, there is next to nothing in our sources that tell us anything about him or even just trigger our memories. However, during the 1990 summer, he once again joined OM. We received a postcard from Toronto and even a letter (!) from Montreal. We were 'happy that Kevin is really enjoying his OM experience again. He is considering doing a longer-term with them.' His upbeat attitude towards this ministry was confirmed in several of his letters.

Once he started Calvin again, he got deeply involved and had little time for anything else. However, he did find time to help Grandma and Jane with chores around their house like lawn work and painting. He wrote that his classes were all very time consuming and that he had trouble setting priorities for himself.

Since we have so few details about Kevin, we'll take any little morsel we find, right? So, in a December 1990 circular I wrote:

Final year econ student at Calvin College. Hopes to visit us for a month over Christmas and we are all looking forward to that. Does not know what's ahead for him. Spent part of his summer evangelising in Quebec, using French. In the meantime, he has also turned into a professional house painter.

Kevin phoned us 15 December, 1990. That was not so unusual except for a very unpleasant reason. He had to get something off his chest: A friend of his had committed suicide by shooting himself in the head! What a shocking experience. It would take him some time to overcome that one. He was scheduled to write a major exam the same day, but he would try to postpone it. As you can imagine, he did not feel up to it. We had never met the boy, but we did get to meet his parents after we moved to Grand Rapids in 1996.

Shortly after, he came home for the 1990 Christmas break. As Fran told about his arrival:

As you know, Kevin came three weeks ago. John and Wiebe went up to Kano to meet him, and they didn't recognise him because of his glasses, beard, and long hair. He hadn't told us about the change in his appearance, and neither had anyone written about it, so they were very surprised! Cynthia and I didn't recognise him either as he got out of the car when he got home.

We all had a good laugh about it. I remembered him as he looked at the high school picture hanging in our living room; now that I'm used to it, I like his intellectual philosophy professor look. We've had so many wonderful discussions about everything with him. He has become so mature, and his heart is certainly in the right place. We are having a great time together.

Kevin's boxes did not come on the flight with him, so they waited around Kano for most of Monday, but, in the end, they drove down empty-handed. His Christmas presents to us, and some cards and letters were in those loads, so we got them all two days after Christmas.

I wrote to my parents:

It is really nice to have all of us together for these few weeks. There is a bit of tension occasionally caused by the fact that Kevin is no longer a teenager and thus no longer has teenage interests. In many ways, he feels more at home with adults. The kids are a bit disappointed about that. Kevin does what he can to accommodate them and I think he does as good a job of it as can be expected. He thoroughly enjoyed the Abraka adventure with all of us.

Early January, with the kids back in school,

...Wiebe & Cynthia are back in school and so is Fran, of course. Wiebe just broke a sixteen-year old Hillcrest record for running the 5000m yesterday. Both of them have just been assigned their parts in the school play. Wiebe was happy with his part, but at first 'Cynthia was not thrilled with hers.' They were going to do 'The Pirates of Penzance.'

Fran wrote:

Wiebe is one of the pirates, while Cynthia is one of the daughters, and has some lovely solos to sing. We'll see how things work out for them. We just got a video copy of the 1983 play when she played Helen Keller in 'The Miracle Worker.' It was great fun to see that, and it certainly brought back memories. I hope she'll keep on with both music and drama when she goes off to college.

Wiebe's 5000m record of 16:54 at Hillcrest has not yet been broken at the time of this writing. Kevin featured prominently for a few days on the Hillcrest campus. I wrote,

At the opening assembly a few days ago, Kevin featured as the main speaker, and he did very well. Even high school kids thought he did well, including his teenage brother and sister. Fran and I were proud of him – or should I say "grateful?" That is probably the better word.

He also visited Fran's third-grade class a couple of times and even taught calculus for two days in high school. He was toying with the idea of teaching high school math for a few years. His students said

he did a great job those two days.

When it was time for Kevin to return to Grand Rapids, I drove him to Kano. He had a stopover in London, where he spent a few days with friends from Hillcrest. We were told by other travellers that trans-Atlantic routes had hardly any passengers for fear of terrorism! We prayed for Kevin's safe return to the US.

Only a month or so later, we heard via the grapevine that Kevin had enrolled in the US Peace Corps. We were proud of the adventurous nature this portrayed but probably a bit annoyed that the news did not come from him. It did not surprise us. However, it meant he might not be around to help Cynthia settle in at Calvin or welcome us to Grand Rapids in August. That we did regret. Oh, well!

Fair is fair. In May 1991, I reported that Kevin had begun to write us regularly. He wrote that he planned to spend most of his summer house painting together with Krister Evenhouse, as he did in 1990. And, of course, he had just graduated from Calvin! However, he still had to take some summer courses to get his full credits. A couple of months later, we complained we were not hearing much from him and commented, 'That is unusual for him!' He had really changed in the letter-writing department, but the question was whether this 'unusual' of his would once again become the new usual?

THE CHILDREN AT HOME

Fran's first letter in this mission term described Cynthia's birthday party – twenty kids for pizza and a video; nine girls to our house for fresh doughnuts at 10:30 pm; then all to the guest house for an all-night slumber party. And then there was Wiebe with his Akustix Group working on new arrangements. A typical Boer bang beginning!

During the 1989 fall semester, both kids were doing track workouts.

After the holidays, they will have several track meets against other schools. Wiebe is training for the long-distance events of 3000 and 5000m. He's out running about 1½ hour each morning to build up his endurance. Cynthia is training for the 800 meters, but, unfortu-

nately, she hurt her back on Monday. She'll be seeing some people about it today. Her back has always been sensitive, but somehow it feels worse and different than usual. We hope someone will help her out; otherwise, we'll try to get her a doctor's, appointment for later this week.

This is more like an in-between notification about our kids' student leadership. At the end of the school year, Wiebe was elected class president for the next year, while Cynthia was Secretary to the Student Council. I commented, 'It is nice to see our kids take active roles like that.' Cynthia had the best academic performance of high school in the first semester of her senior year, setting her on the path to college. Unlike Kevin, who explored many options, Cynthia was set on going to Calvin and was already accepted in November 1990.

Finally, the big day for Cynthia came: She graduated from high school! The Mission held a 'graduation coffee' in her honour. She was the only CRC student to graduate.

Cynthia spent the summer after graduation travelling and preparing to start Calvin College in September. Wiebe also spent the summer in North America, first visiting my family in Canada and then spending most of the time in Grand Rapids, where he worked for the paint crew of Kevin and his long time friend since Wukari days Krister Evenhouse.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Fran and I left Nigeria on 16 August 1991, for our next furlough, while Wiebe would return to Jos just three days earlier. He wanted to do his full Grade 12 at Hillcrest instead of in Grand Rapids. So we arranged for him to board at the Mountain View Hostel during our furlough. We would arrive in Grand Rapids on 26 August to meet Kevin and Cynthia. As to the ten days between our departure from Jos and arrival in Grand Rapids, Fran and I would be doing a trip to Denmark. Herewith we had completed another term of missionary service in Nigeria, the ninth, six of which were based in Jos. We had now been in Nigeria as missionaries for twenty-five years, and ideas

of departure and retirement started slowly entering out thoughts. Lydia was very much settled in her own family, and within a year, all of our other children would have left Nigeria. I was already handing over my key ministries to Nigerian successors. Was our time in Nigeria coming to an end?

In an October 1990 letter to Jake and Karen in connection with his 62nd birthday, I wrote about my retirement thoughts, though I was only 52 years old. I had given early thought to retirement and now wrote to them:

By 62, I will do all I have in my limited power to retire. I do not know whether we can swing it, but we will surely try. Not that I am tired of working, but it would seem so good to be able to spend the last few years of my strength at what I am best at: bringing the Gospel by the printed page, the Gospel as it applies to social and economic life. Well, we'll see what God has in store for us. The idea of early retirement actually came from Dad when I was home in February he advised me to try for retirement at sixty.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

JOS VII

(AUGUST 1991–MAY 1996)

NIGERIAN MINISTRY

In December 1991, we flew back to Nigeria in order to rejoin Wiebe before the Christmas holidays set in at the CRC hostel, where he had stayed for the semester. The trip had its good and bad sides. We should have been charged \$116 for overweight – baggage that is, not personal –, but they let us go free. That was nothing to be sneezed at. We appreciated that our entire luggage came through to Kano without hassles. Some missionaries had bad experiences in this department. The only thing was that, due to heavy harmattan dust from the Sahara, we could not land in Kano and were flown to Accra, Ghana. A few hours later, the air cleared, and we landed in Kano. We arrived at the SIM Guesthouse at 3 a.m.

Nigeria was still the Nigeria we had left. Herewith the petrol situation on the ground and some comments:

We have rudely awakened to the Nigerian realities once again when we learned of the petrol shortage that has been going on for a couple

of months and was by this time biting harder than ever. There are awful lines at all petrol stations here in Jos, with hardly any traffic on the streets and hordes of people, who would normally be taking taxis, either hitchhiking or walking. Of course, tardiness at work is rife. Too bad that bikes are not acceptable to most people. It would make it easier for many of them not only to get to work, but it would also save them a lot of money. At the moment, James, our driver, saves about N8 per day with his bike. In addition, we often send him on the bike and pay him for its use. In the meantime, we minimise going anywhere with the car, for we have only 1/3 of a tank left.

The above was not surprising, as you will realise from previous chapters. However, a very surprising situation hit me hard. Here is the surprise and succeeding political developments:

Upon our return, I find that Matthew Adams, our translator for Hausa Literature Committee, has been elected Chairman of South Jos Local Government, which includes our area as well as through Bukuru. That makes him the mayor. This means we have to find a replacement, something that will not be easy. An acquaintance of mine, a graduate of TCNN and a pastor of the United Methodist Church, has become the governor of the new Taraba State, which comprises CRCN country, while his deputy is yet another friend of ours from Wukari. So, we have some friends in high places now.

Matthew did only one term as mayor and then withdrew from public life, but that governor, popularly known as Governor Jolly, stayed on for many terms and, in fact, reached the stage of a senior governor in the country. Unfortunately, he was said to be very corrupt, and did not set a good example of what one would expect of a pastor in politics. As to Matthew, I wrote, 'I will miss him sorely, for he was a man with a rare combination of abilities and skills. He will be hard to replace.'

The Family

Early February 1992, Wiebe wrote the family letter. He began with his parents: 'Dad is continuing to work hard in his task of making Nigeria better from the missionary point of view. Mom is teaching as

usual and is once again thought of as Hillcrest elementary's greatest teacher.' It was a very well-written letter.

We were nearing Fran's 50th, a big one we wanted to mark properly with an open house event. Almost a month earlier, Fran wrote:

Gerald Hogeterp from Ottawa is here for a year teaching at RTCN, the Reformed seminary in Mkar. He will turn fifty as well that day, so we have invited him to join our celebration. Isn't that a coincidence? Their daughter is staying at Mt. View hostel. She and Wiebe talked about birthdays and found out their parents were both born on the same day in the same province. He is, however, a few hours younger than me!

We butchered a ton of rabbits from our holdings and invited the entire St. Piran's community as well as missionary colleagues from within and outside of our Mission and, of course, many friends. An open house was in our own spacious front yard. We had invited Dr John Orkar, our good friend and the CRC's Nigeria Director for CRWRC, to serve as MC.

Then it happened: Mother Ellie passed away that very week. Now the question was whether we should proceed with the party or postpone it in her honour. After considerable wavering, we decided to proceed in the conviction that she would have wanted it that way. It was an ambiguous experience for us, but under the circumstances, it was as great a party as could be managed. A check on the pictures taken confirms that fully. All the communities and individuals invited showed up in full strength. Two Hillcrest students, Calvin Horlings and Nathan Nyabam entertained us all with a trumpet duet. Jude, Jesse and Jason sang some birthday songs. Lydia was the main hostess for the occasion. Orkar did his usual great job as MC.

It was a tumultuous time for us – my Mother's death; Fran's 50th birthday. Then, only three months later, we had Wiebe's graduation and our 30th wedding anniversary on the same day. Wiebe's graduation also marked Hillcrest's 50th anniversary. In October 1993, Fran's mother passed away as well, leaving us with only one parent between us – my father Wiebe Boer.

We had decided to give our son Wiebe's graduation greater emphasis and celebrate our anniversary the following week instead with just a family dinner in a local restaurant. We had a big and expensive celebration with Fran's 50th birthday and therefore decided to keep this event low-key. But we were grateful to God for our marriage. He had been good to us.

Wiebe had a strong senior year academically, with his running, drumming, and as president of the Hillcrest Student Counsel. We were reaching the end of the school year again and went through all the usual hoops: Talent Night, Athletic Awards, Awards Assemblies, Baccalaureate Service, Graduation Teas, Senior Banquet, etc. He and a group of his friends approached their Junior-Senior Banquet in an unusual way.

He wore a dress jacket (made of burlap), shorts and sandals. About twelve of them got together and rented a Mercedes lorry for the evening – their way of winning the contest with their classmates of who would arrive in the largest Benz. They had couches on the back and got driven from place to place in style! Sounds great, doesn't it? That little kid of ours had become a very creative rebel! As Student Council president he and some other students met with the Chairman of the Board of Governors to lodge some very specific complaints against the Hillcrest administration.

In a subsequent letter:

Wiebe has been a very active Student Council president this year, fighting against rather arbitrary and unfair administrative practices in the school. Some of his problems and assertions are supposed to be dealt with at the meeting of the Board of Governors this weekend. We are wondering what will be their response. Quite a few of the teachers praise him for challenging the administration, for he is doing what some of them would like to do but do not dare.

Wiebe's graduation from Hillcrest on 5 June, 1992 had finally arrived. Just like his mother, he had always achieved high scores all through his school years. I wrote to my Dad:

He had to make a speech at the occasion and did a wonderful job. People were impressed with the historical range of his speech and the awareness that he showed of political developments during his Hillcrest years, as well as his fine and challenging sense of humour. Fran and I were really proud of him.

Though Wiebe wanted to go to the University of Michigan or the University of British Columbia where he had been accepted, the tedious college application process at the time – pre-e-mail and with a very poor postal/ courier system – was taking too long, and both schools thought he was an international student though he was both American and Canadian. He ended up reluctantly going to Calvin with plans to transfer after a year. He ended up graduating from Calvin – staying primarily because of the amazing running program where he was coached by Brian Diemer, an Olympic medallist. Wiebe made it all the way to NCCA Cross Country Nationals, which was quite an achievement.

After graduation from Hillcrest, Wiebe spent the summer before starting Calvin College first in British Columbia, where he worked at a tree farm and then flying all over the USA coast to coast visiting friends using a special ticket we had bought for him that allowed unlimited flying for a month.

Lydia was continuing with her university degree program in Special Education, and Jude, Jesse, and Jason were growing fast and were already recognised as talented musicians. It was always a pleasure having them visit us – when at our house, they loved to spend hours and hours reading books from our library.

After graduation from Calvin, Kevin joined the Peace Corps and was posted to Botswana to teach math in the remote Kalahari village of Mathethe. This began a ten-year sojourn for him in southern Africa, including time in Mathethe, Kanye and Gaborone, Botswana, and Cape Town, South Africa. While in Botswana, Kevin became fluent in Setswana, again demonstrating his amazing language learning ability.

Cynthia pursued a degree in Social Work at Calvin College, working long hours at Raybrook Manor, a retirement home, to pay her way through school. She visited Nigeria for Wiebe's graduation, though

her trip was almost aborted as she did not get her visa until the last minute – after none other than former President Yakubu Gowon kindly intervened with a phone call to the Nigerian embassy in Washington DC. In 1995, Cynthia got married to another Calvin student – Andy Tanis, and after his graduation in 1997, they spent three years in Japan together as English teachers. This was the first and only time, anyone in our family has spent an extended time in Asia. During their time in Japan, they had their first child, a daughter who they named Asia Asami Tanis in 1999 – we now had family members born in Europe, North America, Africa, and Asia!

Ruminations about Future Ministry

We had put in twenty-six years of service, and all four of the kids were now out of the house. This was a natural time to consider our own future in Nigeria. On top of that, missionaries were being terminated because of a reduction in churches giving to missions, and my position with the ICS had now fully ended. This made the question even more urgent. Here is Fran's record of our ruminations in mid-1992:

It is ironic that we had been saying that maybe it was time for a change after Wiebe graduated. We had been in touch with an organisation looking for people with ThDs or PhDs to teach Religious Studies at universities in the former USSR. Also, there are requests for people to teach English to army officers and their children there. You might have seen mention of that in the *Banner*. Maybe we can work out something through CRWM. But we had never expected our career in Nigeria to come to this kind of an end. For some time, we had also considered John retiring early and my continuing to teach at Hillcrest. I got a letter from the Board two weeks ago that two people had been terminated at Hillcrest, but I was asked to continue.

We missionaries were angry and upset about staff and ministry terminations, but there was also another side. In the above paragraph, you read about various ministries abroad that we were thinking and praying about. In a late June letter, I wrote:

It was only a few days before all this began that we had begun to inquire into ministry in Russia or some other former Communist country. Their governments are begging for people to help them with the Gospel, a most unusual development. So, we had begun to make inquiries about that before all this started and before we knew anything like this would happen. Perhaps this is the Lord's prodding us to serve elsewhere? We will see what develops and seek His will in all of it.

We continued exploring the possibility of going to Russia. On my upcoming trip from Grand Rapids to BC I planned to stop over in Kansas for an interview at the International Institute for Christian Studies (IICS). In fact, the evening I wrote the letter containing this information, we were scheduled for dinner at the home of Danny McCain, the President of IICS, who happens to be serving at UniJos. I did carry through on that plan and had that interview with the IICS, though in the end, nothing came of it. There were also opportunities to return to North America to pastor a church – with openings in Grand Rapids and South Dakota, plus an administrative role for CRWM in Russia as they build up the new mission effort there. But none of these led to anything, and so for the time being, we would stay put in Nigeria to continue our ministry. Another option we were considering was that Fran would continue teaching at Hillcrest while I would retire and focus fully on writing or teaching at UniJos. But even this option seemed uncertain as the mission was cutting back on staff positions at Hillcrest also.

RESUMING AT HILLCREST

After spending some time away from teaching and working on other projects, by mid-June 1993, Fran had some indications for her next assignment. She was going to teach Grade 5. This was something new to her; the only time she had taught that grade was half time in 1988. She expected to teach all the courses, except art, music, and P.E. 'Social Studies and Science will be the biggest challenge,' she surmised. She spent much of the summer break planning the new courses. She worked on turning her Reading course into a largely

independent study project. The next course to work on was Social Studies, something totally new.

Her classroom entered the new age with the introduction of one single computer, which she had to share with the students. She was used to IBM equipment at home, but this was an Apple. She had to work hard to keep up with her pupils, who used the computer to write their stories for English class, but she managed and slowly got used to it. She was grateful to the clerk in the office who helped her to get printouts of the children's stories. Now and then, she would spend part of a day to practice on the Apple in order to stay ahead of the students.

It was good for her to be back on the payroll, for it was an expensive year for us. In the meantime, my monthly salary would be reduced by around \$500 because my spouse was also on the payroll, a strange arrangement by the Mission that affected only missionaries but not the people in the CRC office in Grand Rapids. It was a transition arrangement from the time married women could not be on the Mission payroll at all. From that point of view, it could be regarded as 'progress.' Fran and Nelle were among the first married women on the payroll, apart from Nelle Smith, who decades ago had been there all along.

In an early February 1994 letter to Sister Jane, Fran described her experiences in her 5th grade English class in an interesting way:

For our first assignment, each child has written an original story. We went through it step by step with titles, using the thesaurus, developing a plot, drawing illustrations, etc. Yesterday I started grading them. I always develop a special grading sheet for each project to make it more objective. Some of the kids put time into theirs and have come up with beautiful projects, nicely typed up and creatively done. Others ... Oh well, seeing you are also a teacher, you know the end of the sentence! The excuses that kids come up with are endless. Adam and Eve really got something started there!

JOHN'S MINISTRY

Upon our return to Jos in December 1991, I continued much of my former ministries with ICS, WHC and beyond, as well as writing projects. Nigeria had just gone through new elections. Some Christians who were elected to various positions had been influenced by my ministry directly via discussions and conferences or indirectly by reading my books and other documents I had produced or distributed. A few of them were seriously determined to apply the Word of God to their positions. I was encouraged by that in spite of the skepticism of others that they would soon succumb to the political games that were played by most politicians and parties.

In my January 1992 circular, I described the challenges ahead:

Some 50 million or more Christians, most of them having inherited a Gospel divorced from important segments of life. Another 50 or more million Muslims, most of whom hate Christ and His church and who have contempt for the reduced version of the Gospel they have seen in Nigeria. In addition, the population is growing by leaps and bounds, faster than almost any country in the world. And so are Nigeria's cities. Challenges, challenges, challenges. I pray to God that the CRC may be equipped by the Spirit of God to meet them head-on.

That prayer was indeed needed, for I had been told by a CRWM leader that I should reduce my expectation of what the CRC can do; we can't do it all, I was told. There was some truth to that, of course, but to the extent that this truth led to the shrinking of our horizons and missionary ambitions to small local projects and short five-year plans, it was an attitude fatal to Nigeria. This attitude deprived her of a vigorous, aggressive, full-orbed and long-term Gospel presentation. With smart leveraging of the resources available from Western donor agencies and foundations as well as from within Nigeria, we could have introduced a mighty dynamic for the Gospel. I was aware of some of that at the time and argued for it, but some of it is also hindsight.

ICS

Community Development

Community Development had been an ICS concern from its beginning. You do not hear much of it recently in these pages because these are Fran and John's memoirs, not a history of the ICS and its ministries. It had been taken over completely by Kumzhi and his staff so that I was not much involved anymore, except occasionally visiting development projects in various communities and in delivering occasional speeches or lectures on the subject.

As far as visiting projects goes, sometime during this era, we had visitors from CRWRC in Grand Rapids who wanted to see things with their own eyes.

External Debt Conference

The ED conference was history, but it took a long time for the lecturers to send me the lecture versions they wanted to be published. When they had submitted the finished papers, I still needed to edit them and did so in a modern way: on the computer while travelling by car. Yes, it was now possible for me to use travel time productively. I wrote the following about one Lagos trip:

The new thing was that I was accompanied by the new laptop computer. While I was on the airplane, or waiting at the airport and early morning in the hotel, I worked on editing papers written by Nigerian lecturers. I got home at about 11:30 am. By the time I arrived home, I had already put in over three hours of editing work. Now that is a blessing only a laptop computer makes possible. I am so grateful to Jake and Karen as well as Francis and Trena and a few others who made it possible to purchase this computer.

The editing process was made even easier by the discovery of another modern facility, the Executive Lounge at the Lagos Airport.

This is a special room with comfortable furnishings and air conditioning, where you can await your plane for N30 or \$2.50. It was a worthwhile deal, given the fact that public seating at that airport is

atrocious, uncomfortable, and very crowded. And since I had to wait close to two hours, I made grateful use of the place.

While going about various ministries and travelling all over the place, having a driver and computer enabled me to spend much more time editing the conference papers and getting them ready for publishing.

The follow-up to the External Debt Conference was more than editing the papers and publishing a book. The conclusions of the Conference had to be shared with the general population, and the decisions worked out. Of course, all the conferees were supposed to do that within their communities. To what extent they did, I cannot tell. But I worked at it very hard by soliciting speaking opportunities in churches, colleges and universities. When I participated in other events, I would always try to insert the External Debt issue somewhere by summarising the conference and fishing for an invitation sometime in the near future.

My CRCN worldview course (see section below under ‘World-views’) was just another example of such piggybacking. However, I definitely got the impression that they felt the topic too remote for them to be concerned with it. That was too bad, for it is a basic component of the distortions in the Nigerian economy that everyone felt, even if they could not see the connection.

Another example was the naming ceremony of a new-born grandchild of Jabanni Mambula, the Chairman of the ICS Board. In a brief speech at the occasion, after welcoming the child into the world, I drew the attention of the audience to the fact that this new baby had never yet set foot in a bank or signed any papers, but it was born with a heavy load of external debt on its head. Some thought that relating this new birth to the external debt was sort of humorous, while one or two thought I was carrying it too far; a naming ceremony was not the place for such subjects. They were probably right.

In the preface to the published report, we read:

That conference was the first, not the last. Since then, already another smaller conference was held for Jos-based pastors and others are being planned in various cities. Since then, Rev. Herbert Eze

has hosted several smaller gatherings of pastors in the Mubi area. Also, a pamphlet has already been published in which our findings have been summarised and in which the reader is encouraged to take action in terms of his position and his locality.

However, I have never encountered so much resistance as I did in this context. I arranged for many speaking opportunities, and some materialised, but most did not, an experience I seldom had in other programmes. The car would break down, or appointments would be called off at the last moment. I might arrive at a place only to find that the person with whom I had made the arrangements had not carried through or was away. It was simply amazing the way this programme was resisted, even by the devil himself. That was the only way I could explain this strange resistance. I drew the conclusion that Satan's unusually strong resistance meant we hit the nail on the head with this programme. He did not want the people liberated from this heavy economic yoke. He did not want the Nigerian churches to challenge their overseas partners.

Someone might argue that it was God Himself who ditched the programme and did not want it to materialise. However, the entire effort was bathed in prayer. I knew myself to be a servant of Christ, not of Satan. That interpretation just did not hold.

Mid-February 1993, I arranged to visit Jolly Tanko Yusuf in Kaduna. Please read the following about him:

He was born and raised in Takum in a strongly Muslim family. He received his basic education from CRC missionaries there, eventually was employed by them and worked especially closely with Ray Browneye, who came as a builder but ended up our Mission's pioneer pilot. When he confided in Browneye that he had political interests, he was encouraged to pursue them. He became a successful politician, everywhere challenging both colonialists and Muslims. Apparently, he made such a 'nuisance' of himself that the Government got him out of the way by appointing him ambassador to important countries like China and West Germany. When he returned, he became the most famous Christian political activist in the country, much of it under the aegis of CAN. See also his autobiography, *That We May Be One* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

I went to visit Yusuf for two reasons. One is that he wanted my help in getting *his* book edited. The other was to get his advice about how to overcome this constant and stubborn resistance to the external debt project and get it off the ground. I remember discussing it with him, but I do not remember the nature or content of his advice.

A few weeks later, the report on the External Debt Conference finally made its appearance. It was printed locally under the title *The Church and the External Debt: Report on a Conference Held in Jos, Nigeria, 26-30 November 1990*. It was published by the ICS. Under the name of Emmanuel Kumzhi, a paragraph in the Preface introduced the book as follows:

You have in your hands the results of the first conference on the external debt hosted by the ICS. The compilation of papers is an expression of the fact that, despite misunderstandings in some quarters, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, Lord and Saviour, and His followers are deeply concerned with the affairs of this world not only, but also have their unique contributions to offer for the healing of the nation's economy and politics.

The outside back cover features some hard-hitting quotations from around the world:

Talking about the \$28 billion External Debt of the Philippines, Leonor Briones commented, 'This is money... that we never saw, that we never counted, that we never spent and which never benefited our people.' A Venezuelan group similarly protested that 'no one knows the exact destination of these loans or where the development projects ... are.' Emilio Castro of the WCC lamented, 'We may never know the truth about what happened to all of that money, but one thing is certain: the people never saw any of it, and yet it is they who still have to pay it back.' Cardinal Arns of Brazil complained that 'None of the military presidents asked for advice or permission of the National Congress in incurring these debts. The foreign debt of a dictatorial decision was imposed on a whole nation. How, where, and why the money was spent is never explained.'

The above is followed by a statement from Professor E. Osagie, a prominent Nigerian economist at NIPSS:

The long-term strategy I propose is to foster a national moral rebirth through a revival which would turn the world upside down. The remarkable thing about the state of our social reality in Nigeria today is that we cannot be expected to solve our problems successfully until a revival of national and multi-denominational scope takes place.

The relation between external debt and a Christian revival may not be easily discernible to some, but a careful reading of this book will shed light on the linkage between economics and Christian spirituality.

Shortly after the report was published, I spent a day with a Christian economist who was planning to run seminars on the debt problem by using the report. Though no one started an open public national campaign to solve the debt issue, this particular incident indicated that at least some individuals had been motivated and equipped to take part of the bull by the horns. In addition, the Osagie quote above indicated that at least some economists were now beginning to think Christian-like about their theories and discard their previous Marxist framework. That had been a large part of my motivation in this project.

Bala Dogo of UniJos wrote a review on the report in which he wrote, 'This compilation of papers is an expression of the fact that, despite misunderstandings in some quarters, Jesus Christ and His followers are deeply concerned with the affairs of this world not only, but also have their unique contributions to offer for the healing of the nation's economy and politics.' Ever heard or read that before?! The review ended with this statement: 'The book is a must for any child of God in Nigeria who is committed to the emancipation of the human race.' (*Today's Challenge*, No. 1, 1993, p. 26)

I also tried to participate in the national discussion on external debt in other forums. Sometimes that did not work. Once *News-watch*, a national weekly, published a letter of mine that was a blend of humour and sarcasm: 'In your excellent special edition, *Years of Waste* (Oct. 4, 1993), you asked: 'Why is a nation once awash in petro-naira now groaning under the heavyweight of debt?' I ask,

‘Why do we continue to ask such questions when we all know the answer?’ I then described an actual scenario of conscious bribery, waste and corruption at UniJos and continued, ‘I am told no one at the university is challenging such callous procedures. Of course, I do not believe such an incredible story!’ Then I gave another example: ‘This past week, a daily newspaper reported that the reason for petrol shortage at one of our oil depots is that its managers have their hands forced by high military boys. Now, surely, that could not be? Perhaps someone should sue that paper for slandering the military.’ I signed it with my Hausa pseudonym ‘Yahaya MaiGona.’ Had I signed it with my real name, it might not have been published, especially not with a name like ‘Boer.’

My work on external debt also received wider and international recognition. *Der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Missionswissenschaft* (The German Association for Missiology) invited me to write an article for their magazine *Zeitschrift für Mission* (Journal of Mission) on the external debt. I wrote it in English, and they translated it into German under the title *Ausere Schulden und das Evangelium* (External Debt and the Gospel, No. 4, 1993, pp. 221-227).

The REC invited me to speak on the issue at a conference in Malawi in February 1994. They wanted me to give some theological perspectives on the issue and help them think about what the church could do about it. They were looking for money to buy my ticket, and I was negotiating with CRWM for permission for this project. I ended up not going due to lack of money on the part of REC. We might have considered buying the ticket ourselves, except that we were slated to travel to North America on our own, while we were also considering visiting Kevin in Botswana. That effectively prevented our financial input. But the invitation did indicate that the issue was taken seriously by the global Reformed community. It did help, of course, that through my friend Paul Schrottenboer, fellow Kuyperian and past General Secretary of REC, I was well known to the REC administration.

In May 1994, I reaffirmed the intention of the external debt project:

The reason for this campaign is, again, to help people realise that Christ is Lord over economic affairs and that the Bible has some very practical perspectives on this area of life. If they are applied, they can contribute towards the liberation of this debt demon, and the Name of God will be glorified. Muslims are also bringing their perspectives to the issue and are blaming an overly spiritual Christianity for having contributed to the problem. Our campaign aims to turn that reputation around. We had scheduled the first in a series of church and college seminars, but our main facilitator fell sick that very morning. So it needs to be rescheduled. The Baptists have also given us a date. So, the campaign is slowly making some headway.

Almost a year later, I received a letter from the BBC World Service indicating they might be interested ‘in doing a review of *The Church and the External Debt* on their programme ‘Focus on Faith.’ Unfortunately, it took over three months for the letter to get here, so maybe they are no longer interested now. But that would really be neat.’ By the time I responded, the BBC had moved on. If nothing else, this BBC overture demonstrated that we had a significant shark by the tail that was judged to be of interest and importance to much of the world. We were not chasing mere shadows. Unfortunately, the delayed correspondence was the obstacle this time. I told you earlier that there seemed to be a concerted effort on the part of someone to thwart the success of our external debt project, even at this global level. This was just the latest in a long series.

The report on the External Debt Conference is available on: www.SocialTheology.com/boeriana

Developments at ICS

I continued to serve officially as a consultant to ICS, but that part of the work never developed into anything significant. Of course, I worked on the external debt program, an ICS project, and would be invited to speak on ICS-related concerns, but not much beyond that. However, in early 1993 Kumzhi, my successor at the ICS, went on a two-year study leave to the UK. The Acting Director, Habila Istifanus,

the person operating the Bible correspondence courses, had not had sufficient introduction to the ICS programmes and needed my input and advice more frequently. I even had to attend meetings that I had ceased attending. That meant, I needed to spend more time on the ICS again.

Wholistic Health Care – CHAN

My work in WHC started under the aegis of ICS and then moved into the CHAN camp. However, in early 1992 I also worked on the issue under the auspices of our Mission. I went to Kano in the far north.

...to make arrangements with Prof. Rev. Dr. Isaac Sodeye for him to serve as a major resource person for a workshop I am organising for our CRC missionaries on such issues as power encounter, deliverance, and the African spirit world. This man is both a medical doctor and a retired professor of some medical specialty. However, he also has a private clinic in which he addresses all the above concerns. In addition, he is an Anglican clergyman. We missionaries have for too long avoided such concerns, an attitude we have inherited from our Western rationalistic upbringing. The result is that we have created churches that are powerless vis a vis a major concern of Africans. It is a major reason for the multiplication of mushroom churches. I had a long discussion with Sodeye, and he was thrilled at being invited. After that discussion, I was sure we had picked the right man.

The preparations for that Mission WHC conference yielded good results, even though Sodeye had to call off due to Christian-Muslim problems in his city.

Over the past few years, I had run a lot of WHC workshops, seminars and conferences that had produced a lot of papers and lectures by a host of different speakers. It was decided to collect most of them into a book but was published in two volumes.

End March 1994, I completed the editing and now had to write an introduction. From there, off to the printer it would be.

I expect that this year I will withdraw from that work. It has reached a high degree of maturity and stability and thus no longer needs a missionary touch. I am very happy with the progress made in this area and will always look back to this part of my work with a sense of gratitude and accomplishment.

The two volumes were published under the title *Wholistic Health Care*. Vol. 1 has as a subtitle, *Medical and Religious Dimensions*; vol. 2, *Social and Political Dimensions*, all edited by myself and Dr Dennis Ityavyar and published by CHAN itself. Apart from the subjects you would expect in treatment of WHC, interesting subjects, include evil spirits and exorcism, faith healing, bondage and deliverance, miracles and healing the effect of worldviews on healthcare, African Traditional Medicine and its underlying wholism, and political aspects of WHC. With all the various religions, worldviews and denominations of Nigeria represented in this set, I believe this to be one of the most important works on WHC in the world. It is a jewel of African and holistic insights, whether Animistic, Muslim, or Christian.

With this, I completed a thirteen-year involvement in WHC with CHAN. The project was now fully Nigerianised and in good hands, with Dr Bot at the helm. On July 10, I was given a proper send-off by CHAN at the Bot home. 'John is really proud of this accomplishment,' wrote Fran. I was and continue to be very grateful for the opportunity to start up and participate for so many years in an area that was so badly in need of reformation, not to say radical change. Of course, though no longer involved in CHAN, interest in WHC would stay with me, and I would continue to promote it whenever the opportunity presented itself.

Hausa Literature Committee

You've already read about Matthew Adam's surprising election to the position of chairman of the local government, something akin to the mayor. In mid-January 1992, we held a meeting of HLC to find a replacement for him.

You may remember there was talk of closing down this ministry due to low sales volume. Our sponsors in Grand Rapids did not buy

our argument that, though low sales volume, our publications did reach the *primary* intended target, namely pastors, Bible teachers and students. In our March 1993 meeting, 'We spent our time discussing the future and how this work should continue. We have advised two different church organisations to come up with proposals to us before our June meeting on how they would run this programme if they took it over.' We had not yet hired a replacement of Matthew.

In July, the HLC met in Takum with the CRCN publishing arm known as '*Haske da Gaskiya Publications*' (HG – Light and Truth Publications). The idea was to merge HLC with that body. The negotiations went smoothly; we soon arrived at a tentative agreement. The next step was for both parties to submit this document to their parent bodies for ratification, HG to the CRCN Executive Committee and HLC to World Literature Committee in Grand Rapids. The terms of the merger were as follows:

They include provisions to keep HLC intact but now as an advisory committee to HG. The latter publishes for the needs of the CRCN, while HLC publishes for all of Nigeria. To ensure that both emphases continue, HLC will also continue, but now under HG. One advantage is that HLC does not have to hire a new full-time administrator to replace Matthew. The Director of HG will also become Director of HLC and take over the function of our former staff. CRCN Executive Committee was to discuss the modalities of their taking over the distribution part of the work.

Miscellaneous Literature Work

David Ashu was a very influential leader of the CRCN. He was also the Benue-Plateau State Commissioner who years ago had invited me to help him and some of his colleagues in developing a Christian perspective for their work as State Commissioners. He had written a history of the CRCN, but, not being a writer, he needed considerable help making it publishable. He once again turned to me for this project and I gladly accepted to make sure it saw the daylight not only but do so in a respectful manner so that the book could serve as a source for responsible research. I started that project in February of 1993.

July 1993, was an exciting month for both of us. In the same week that Fran's project, the Women's Fellowship Bible Study, was delivered, my book *Caught in the Middle* also made its debut. Considering that I had started planning for it some ten years earlier, you can imagine my happiness that it was now available for distribution.

The physical appearance of the book was a big disappointment. We had agreed on red to match the External Debt book, but instead, it was a weak pink. Also, the pages inside were of different textures and colours. Its appearance was simply too shabby for the North American market for which it was intended, not nearly as attractive and crisp as its twin on the external debt. Worst of all, the index did not match the pagination! I regret that I accepted it; I should have demanded a repeat, for its shabby appearance meant it was doomed to failure. It highly embarrassed me and would hardly lead to respect for my scholarship. North American circulation was minimal.

Throughout all the years of literary effort, I did my best to get my books into the hands of the powerful and elite. You may remember I sent books to former Governor Lar when he was in prison. On New Year's 1994, I met Yakubu Gowon, the former Military Head of State, at church as we had done before. I presented him with a copy of what I called 'My Trilogy': the three books on the mission, external debt and, transnationals.

What you write and publish can leave you vulnerable for years. My doctoral dissertation was published in 1979. Fifteen years later, October 1994, an Australian, Peter James Spartalis, wrote a book about the Sudan United Mission with the title *Karl Kumm: Last of the Livingstones*, in which he attacked me for allegedly dishonouring the memory of Karl Kumm, the German founder of that mission. I wrote a rebuttal in the form of a review that was published in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. I might not have bothered, except that a German publisher was planning to do a German edition in which my name would likely also be attacked. I did wish to protect my reputation as a scholar and writer.

A humorous part of the story is that Spartalis had asked me for permission to use this title, which was my coinage as the title of my

master's thesis at the Free University. He liked the title; he just didn't like my book!

MUSLIM AFFAIRS

Imani Muslim Ministry

You've read about my involvement in Ruth Veltkamp's Muslim Ministry. '*Imani*' was the Hausa name the emerging church had adopted, its main meaning being 'faith' or 'trust.'

The last February 1992 weekend, Fran, Wiebe, and I were all down with the flu, disabled and weak. It was a bad time for this to happen for me, for I had a couple of important jobs to do.

I was scheduled to hold an important meeting with the four ex-Muslim preachers I have written about earlier. There are some problems with their use of money the Mission gives them to help out other ex-Muslims who get into all kinds of persecution and often need money to get them out of scrapes. I was supposed to tell them that there would be no further Mission money until the problems are ironed out. That was going to be a hard job, and it was assigned to me because of my command of Hausa and experience. Anyhow, I could not do that as a result of the sickness. Today another ex-Muslim is to be baptised, and I wanted to be there, but I decided to stay home.

Every Sunday evening there was a group of about ten people who prayed for this Muslim Ministry at the home of Umaru, the leader of Ruth's *Mallams*. Easter Sunday evening, we attended the event; it was our second time.

In mid-April I went on a verification trip with two of the baptised ex-Muslims to meet some of the people they claimed to be evangelising.

We first visited a young man who used to be a law student. Upon his conversion, his financial backing disappeared, and he quit school. He is now working in some government legal office, while he is a part-time voluntary evangelist. I advised him to think about continuing his law studies in order to become a lawyer with a special interest in the legal problems of ex-Muslims who have their rights infringed a thousand times. He promised to prayerfully consider it.

Then we visited the family of one of my companions in a village some ten miles off the road into the bush. We had to drive the car through the middle of farmland, for there was no road. We met his mother, who burst into tears. The villagers, all Muslims, had talked badly of her son because he had become a Christian. Now her son paid her a visit along with two other “important” people. Clearly, he had not become the bad person others spoke of. Some emotional tears were shed. It was interesting to see the very primitive village from which this highly educated theologian/preacher/evangelist came. That man had come a long way.

The same man divorced his Muslim wife recently because she had tried to poison him. He has now married a Christian girl from a good family in Takum. I am happy about that.

Next, our trip took us to a village where there was a small group of ex-Muslim Christians. Their interest in the gospel had awoken while listening to a visiting revival preacher. Then one of our evangelists started working with them. It is a small group, and some of its members are persecuted by their families. They hope to begin building a small church.

I regretted I had no other Christian companion from outside the *Imani* group to help me interpret the various situations I encountered. I did not always feel comfortable with the stories I heard. Remember: I was the outsider, that is, from outside the culture we had entered, far outside. It was not my last verification trip.

In early May, I spent an entire day in a meeting with the four men. They came in once a month for such meetings.

The first part is spent in a Bible study. Then we hear reports about the evangelism everyone has done during the month, and we pray about specific persons and problems. Then we discuss other issues. Some of the issues discussed yesterday include my role in this ministry and our relationship with other groups involved in Muslim ministry. The reason my role came up is that I normally serve as an advisor to this ministry and participate actively on a selective basis as my other duties allow or as certain kinds of problems come up. However, Ruth Veltkamp is going on furlough at the end of this

month. So we had to discuss how to keep at least a skeletal programme going during her absence. I do not have room on my fork for more hay, but I did offer to help out with some additional aspects of this work. However, at this point, I do not know just how I am going to cope with it, except to drop some of my present activities. And I am already behind there.

The other subject that came up for discussion was the relationship of our group to another group that is also developing among Muslims. That group has a different philosophy. Many of its members, also ex-Muslims, have joined existing churches, whereas our group is working towards the development of a special denomination geared to the special spiritual needs of ex-Muslims. There has long been friction between these two groups. However, they agreed to my proposal of a joint worship service on May 24 to be followed by a time of informal fellowship.

That joint service did not materialise. It was supposed to be held in the church building owned by Keith Hallam, a former British colonial officer who had become a Nigerian citizen and a popular Christian businessman. It was located in a remote place, the place where Ibrahim Lafe held services for new converts. There were people, but only one person showed up from the two targeted groups, not even any of the four baptised *Mallams*. The first attempt at reconciliation had failed. Fran wrote, 'There is a lot of suspicion and tension in all this work right now, so John is getting stressed out.'

As I reflected many years later on those differences, I wondered whether the main difference between the two groups might have been ethnic. The *Mallams* were of Hausa-Fulani stock and highly educated in Islam; the others were from other ethnic backgrounds and less versed in Islamic theology. The latter may have been more open to the ethnic groups that make up the church in northern Nigeria.

We celebrated Ruth's birthday in 1993 at our house with supper together with the Evenhouses and one of the baptised *Mallams*. He was coming with his two wives. We were not sure how we would handle the seating since in their Muslim culture men, and women don't do too many things together, especially if there are non-relatives

present. Remember, we did not demand from converts that they drop their customs and traditions. We considered that a matter between them and the Spirit of God working in their hearts. The fact that the man was bringing not just one wife, but two, to this little party was an indication that things were changing for them.

From the above, it will not surprise you to be told that Ruth's programme had become controversial within the Mission and CRCN and other churches and among Christian leaders. And so, after consultations with Nigerian church leaders, the Mission decided to continue the ministry for now but to cut out the money. The idea was to see whether these people had really become Christians. We decided to do some more serious investigations and then to make a final decision.

Ruth tended to dismiss all these charges and suspicions. She advanced various explanations along the way. At first, she would somehow explain them all away as safety and security issues. The *Mallams* had to cover their tracks thoroughly due to extreme dangers to their lives. She admitted that there was indeed fraud and deceit, but that was only to be expected, given the culture of deceit that had enveloped these *Mallams* all their lives. We needed to allow for a transition period from deceit to the truth. We needed to allow time for spiritual growth to take place. The implication was that the Mission needed to tolerate the deceitful use of donors' money! That was a tough one! As these new Christians had to struggle with the 'old man' within them and often were still overcome by Satan, the same was true for their critics, including missionaries and Nigerian Christians. We, too, were not beyond the reach of Satan. Years later, looking Fran and me straight in the eye, Ruth explained that we were influenced by Satan more than we realise. That is, of course, true for everyone, according to the Apostle Paul, also for her and the *Mallams*.

Around this time, I received an anonymous letter accusing me of instigating all these charges about the *Mallams*. 'I am advised to repent. It was mailed in Samaru, near Zaria. No idea as to the author, though I would expect it to be one of the four original *Imanis*. For the moment, I will treat this one as a joke.'

CRWM was under intense pressure. On the one hand, there were the Nigeria missionaries who felt they could no longer support Ruth's ministry. On the other hand, there were Ruth and her supporters in the USA, a group that included some very generous donors that CRWM did not wish to lose. So CRWM devised a clever plan. They recruited an Egyptian US-based international ex-Muslim evangelist who was also supported by one of Ruth's main supporters, a wealthy industrialist and former Nigeria missionary. This Egyptian was asked to come and size up the situation. His report would determine CRWM's decision. It was expected that the report would also serve to maintain the support of that industrialist. After all, he trusted that Egyptian enough to support him.

Upon his arrival, this Egyptian met with us missionaries and severely scolded us for doubting the veracity of the conversion of these men. We had no good reason, he contended, for such shameful behaviour. Then he holed up with the four men exclusively for several days and came out with the shocking announcement: they were *not* Christian! After he announced his decision, he went into hiding till the day he was scheduled to leave Nigeria. He felt that threatened for his life! The Mission driver, accompanied by me, drove him to Kano. I was happy to see him get through Customs safely. CRWM accepted his report.

In October 1994, Ruth decided to leave Nigeria because of the negative evaluation she received from both the Nigerian and missionary communities. The Nigerians included ex-Muslims that I knew as well as born Christians from Hausa-Fulani stock.

On November 20, 1994, we missionaries gave her a farewell dinner. Fran and I felt very sad, for we did want this ministry to be genuine. No one felt that Ruth was a fraud but that the ministry was rife with fraud, based on the many times the *Mallams'* claims could not be verified.

Ruth returned to Nigeria for many years and was first based at the West Africa Theological Seminary (WATS) in Lagos, an institution of which Wiebe is now on the board. While at WATS, she taught Muslim evangelism techniques to seminary students and continued

the *Imani* ministry on her 'own' time. Later on, she moved her base to West Michigan near Grand Rapids. The stories she continues to share with an exclusive group of people, including us, are exciting.

We eventually changed our minds and have come to believe in the co-operative ministry by Umaru and her. The consistent stories over the decades simply cannot be made up. The result is a wide-flung international ministry spanning Africa and the Middle East, including highly educated Muslim theologians. We remain in touch with her.

Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations

During the 1990s, my major writing project was a book of holistic meditations mostly based on the books of Moses in the Old Testament. It was published as *The Prophet Moses for Today: 366 Social Biblical Meditations* and is available at <www.SocialTheology.com/Boeriana>. Its purpose was to help readers develop a holistic Christian worldview that could stand up against the Muslim challenge.

It was also during the 1990s that I first began to think about and plan writing a book on Christian-Muslim relations as they developed in Nigeria. At the beginning, I had no idea that it would end up a massive project of eight volumes; 2700+ pages. In a letter, I wrote,

This project will constitute a witness to Muslims that the Christian Gospel is concerned with all of life. The upshot of many missions in Africa has been a very narrow Gospel separated from the realities of life, and Muslims have noticed that. They have contempt for Christianity, partially because of the narrowness they have seen in it. So I want to show them that Christ is related to all of life, and I want to do that through the tradition spawned by Abraham Kuyper, who has a better handle on the comprehensive nature of the Gospel than most others. As to Christians, because they have inherited this narrow sort of Gospel, I want to show them that they should reject that kind of Gospel and go for a broader one. They cannot chop up life into religious and non-religious areas, some of which are of concern to Christ and others are not. *Every square inch!*

Having said all that, the question became how they could live together in one country in cooperation rather than with the constant threat of killing each other. That would be the tricky part of the book, and I did not yet have the answer to it. That would be the part that would require a lot more study.

But I had also begun working on that Christian-Muslim project. I was basically gathering data. At this point, it still was a private project to be carried out in off time, but I was trying to think of a way to make this an official project for which I could use Mission time and money.

I engaged in a bit of politicking. I was not so confident that CRWM in Grand Rapids would approve my application to include this project in my official ministry, budget and time-wise. However, if any suggestion of this nature would come from the church, CRCN in my case, it would carry much more weight. So, I did some spadework by talking to various CRCN leaders and eventually it appeared on the agenda of the CRCN Executive Committee who, recommended to the Mission that they accept this project. It worked. All parties in the line of authority eventually approved! I was even given two blocks of time to devote to it, one in Nigeria and three months in Grand Rapids. I was most grateful for this last generous provision. Little did I realise at the time how the project would expand into eight volumes and require more than a decade for research and writing. Most of it was accomplished after we left the Mission in 1996. The last volume made its debut in 2009, fifteen years after it was approved and thirteen after we left Nigeria! However, apart from those blocks of time, it was a part-time and occasional project for me until we moved to Vancouver in 2001. From that time, it became our major preoccupation. I say 'our,' for Fran was also deeply involved by organising and re-organising files and data, heavy editing, and getting each volume ready for publication. After leaving Nigeria, it was no longer a CRWM project; it became a purely personal and private project, finance and all.

PLATEAU CLUB

Somewhere during these years, we did something we had wanted to do for years but never got around to it. I wrote,

We joined Plateau Club, a prestigious club in town some 70 years old, started by the colonialists but now run by Nigerians. You can play tennis, snooker, billiards, chess, swim, eat or just lounge around. My main reason for joining it is to get to know different people in a social context. I have slowly become aware that our social life is too much with missionaries and Nigerian church leaders. This club will put us into a different orbit, and I believe it will be healthy not only for social purposes but also for our witness. But now I have to buy a pool cue, for the club does not supply them. They are not available in town, but I can order from Lagos.

For a long time, I had the habit of dropping by in the late afternoon to enjoy a plate of pepper soup, that has as its main ingredient cow leg, goat head, *kayan ciki* (intestines from various animals) or chicken drumstick. I know it does not sound very appetising to you, but you have to live here for a while to appreciate the good things in life. Not every missionary learned to enjoy such delicacies, for it required a high tolerance of red hot pepper. Fran never liked it very much, but our kids love it.

CRC MISSION: TERMINATIONS AND REASSIGNMENT

For some years now there had been a serious money shortage in the Mission. It was not over.

As a missionary community we are quite downcast this week. Because of troubles in the CRC denomination in North America, income has gone down greatly so that we not only have to cut our budgets (which means scale down our ministries and leave things undone), but in Jos, at least two people have to be released. We have seen it coming, but we are unhappy about the way the decisions have been made. Many of us are protesting, saying that the choice of those to be released is arbitrary. We will see what comes of it.

The issues continued to drag on. Missionaries could not come to an agreement as to who should be terminated so that the decision was made in Grand Rapids. The protests referred to were mostly letters, both from the Jos Mission as well as from individual missionaries. Fran and I were not the least among them; we wrote voluminously.

For me, that was not so unusual, but it was very much so for Fran. Her spirited correspondence with them would have made interesting reading for you, but we destroyed it for the sake of healing the bitterness that arose during the process.

Then the axe fell. The Beeksmas were terminated after six years at Hillcrest. Well, not too much to be said there, in view of their junior status. But the axe also fell on the two Evenhouses, who had served 26 years. Nelle was now a Hillcrest teacher, while Bill was the Mission's Director of Music Ministry. A year earlier, Bill toured the Christian schools in North America with a musical programme that was touted by CRWM as a model for contemporary mission. Now, a year later, suddenly CRWM announced that it was not into that kind of music; it preferred 'hymnody!' Where did that come from? No discussion on such a change; no decision; no minute to be read. Just like that: a new music policy! Unbelievable! It sounded like a nonsense excuse. In fact, all Jos-based ministries were on the block with the exception of Hillcrest. In spite of the Mission dropping the music ministry, it is likely the one Jos ministry that had the longest and widest impact on Nigerian society, being at the root of much of the success of musicians from Jos who went international.

The 'troubles' in the Mission had also spilled over to Hillcrest, a fact of which we were unaware at the time. The Principal had been saying wonderful things about Fran to her face, but apparently, he had written negative letters about both her and Nelle Evenhouse to our home office. He accused both of them of bringing the CRC 'troubles' into their classrooms, and, as a result, they were not paying enough attention to their students. This was all kept hidden from the troops, but it was left to Nelle to have dug it out and expose the duplicity.

Later, Fran reported:

The Hillcrest Board of Governors made a historic decision at its last meeting: they decided not to reappoint the present principal but instead asked him to go back to classroom teaching. They appointed someone who had been 'acting' principal as the real one now. This all still has to do with what happened two years ago with Nelle's termination. It took this long for some of the 'rot' to surface, but it does seem as if at last a bit of justice is being done.

The abrupt terminations in 1992 were totally unexpected, and we were all shocked. But there was even more to come, as per Fran's letter of mid June:

Tuesday morning Bill Van Tol phoned that his committee was recommending to the Executive Committee of World Missions that John's work be terminated at the end of our current term. John is devastated. Our contract with the Board is until August 1995, we have time to think it all through, but this has been a very hard week for all of us. In addition to closing down Evenhouse's Music Ministry and ours, the current proposal would also close down the Urban and Muslim ministries.

Though initially there was some confusion about my situation, I was not to be terminated personally, but only my association with the ICS. As devastating as that seemed to me at the time, in hindsight, that was a good decision that I should have made earlier. But it did raise the question as to my future ministry. What other possibilities might there be for me? Within Nigeria, returning to CRCN or teaching at TCNN were among the possibilities. And, as written earlier we were already exploring other mission opportunities in new fields.

It was obvious that the Grand Rapids office was acting out of confusion. That was understandable; when you are responsible for so many families in so many countries and suddenly find yourself without the means to carry out that responsibility, this is likely to lead to panic. What will happen to these families?

The first ones to leave Nigeria were the Beeksmas in July 1992. In January 1993, Bill Evenhouse left. Then events began to overtake these developments, with the Mission having made some adjustments. They responded to criticism without admitting it. Discussions were now underway for me to return to the fold of CRCN. The plan called for our continued living in Jos. Such an arrangement would allow Fran to continue teaching at Hillcrest. The plan would go through some adjustments before its final approval.

When both the Evenhouses left permanently in July, I encouraged them to pursue the issues that led to their dismissal. Bureaucrats should not get away with the arbitrary exercise of power. They

were scheduled to have an interview with authorities from an international school in Cairo. Early September, they phoned us from Grand Rapids that they were going to Cairo, where they both had landed jobs that were to their liking. Nelle especially did not want to live in the US. They lived in Egypt until 2020 when they returned to the USA.

The CRC has an in-house Judiciary Committee (JC) known to very few people. Its purpose is to solve internal conflicts to ensure justice but also to prevent such conflicts from ending up in the public court system. The Evenhouses took their case to this body. The Committee scheduled a meeting for early September 1995, after Fran would already be back in Nigeria. She was interviewed by Jim La-Grand, who represented the Evenhouses and who would report on his interview with Fran at the hearing.

I was invited to attend the actual session as a witness. My recollection has it that Fran's deposition was duly read but in summary while I was given the opportunity to present an oral witness. The JC ruled in favour of the Evenhouses and rewarded them a hefty amount for the injustice they suffered at the hands of CRWM. The Evenhouses donated most of the money to the Music Ministry in Jos that was now operated independently by a Nigerian team. The case was, of course, hushed up. The constituency never found out.

In mid-August, I received a request via Tim Palmer, my good friend and the CRCN representative on the TCNN staff, to consider teaching there.

He asked me whether I would be interested in teaching there instead of working directly in the CRCN as the present developments have it. I responded fairly positively, but in my heart, I am not interested in burying myself in such a college. I would much rather teach at a university if I had to choose between them. My calling is to help people relate the Gospel to life and society.

I continued writing about TCNN:

They are enlarging their programme by having added a Masters Degree course. Palmer has already written to the President of CRCN

about this, for I would be teaching in a slot they would have to fill. I would represent the Reformed tradition in this ecumenical school. I am prepared to consider it if CRCN would like me to do this for them. However, I might prefer a part-time teaching position there with the rest of the time devoted to helping the CRCN Education and Literature departments with advice and other help.

Ron Geerlings was a former CRC Hillcrest teacher who had always been sympathetic towards my holistic mission thrust. He had recently begun working in the Grand Rapids Mission administration as West Africa Director. He visited Jos in September 1993, during which time we had a long discussion with him. It was clear he did not want my holistic programme terminated. In fact, he asked me to produce the very best evaluation document possible so that it could serve as a model for ministry elsewhere. That was the very opposite of what some other administrators had in mind.

Early October, I finally completed the document to be used for evaluating my ministry:

It is over fifty pages, including some appendices of letters from people who want this ministry to continue. In the meantime, the Mission Director has relented on his pressure. I get the feeling he realises he jumped the gun with all of his remarks. He should have just sat back and observed me for a few months before opening his mouth, but he was so eager to please the administration that he tumbled headlong into his own trap. Of course, I don't know what will be the outcome of the evaluation. I am prepared to be re-assigned to CRCN, possibly in combination with TCNN, but I want CRWM to continue an active relationship with ICS. It is too valuable an instrument to just cast aside. It is an avenue through which we can address almost any issue or problem, a way through which we can help in pioneering the application of the Gospel to different areas of life.

I slowly adjusted to the idea of leaving the ICS altogether and even began to think the time had come for me to move on. In fact, I had made such a proposal more than three years ago, but the conditions had not been met. However, I was loathing giving up my influence

in the ICS altogether. After all, it had been my 'baby' from the start. Perhaps membership on the Board would be the way to go.

In April 1994, the evaluation process of my work reached a climax, though it was not yet completed or approved.

The committee had produced a report on my work and now invited me to respond to it. Two other members of the committee had not attended the previous meeting: Pastor David Angye, President of CRCN, and Tim Palmer, a CRC teacher at TCNN. Among the three of us, we edited that report that it came out almost like a new document. It now sounds much more positive, for we challenged successfully all the negative parts of it by demanding to know the facts on which these statements were based. Since they were based more on prejudice and suspicions, these statements could not stand up to such pressure, and out they went. The report now has to be approved by a few committees till it reaches the Executive Committee of CRWM.

I also recommended that our mission should continue to support ICS by making available salary support for a Nigerian to take my place, one with a minimum of a master's degree. That was also agreeable. The reason for my recommendation is that it is time for Nigerianisation to take its full course there. It is now mostly a matter of time before I move over. However, I expect that we will continue to live in our present house in Jos.

A month later to the day the evaluation report was presented to the Mission in Jos, but for information only. My colleagues passed two minutes that I summarise as follows:

(1) to thank yours truly for his work since 1977 and (2) to support the idea that I move over to CRCN. This move includes the provision for halftime at TCNN under the CRCN flag. Among other things, that will give me a good reason for staying in Jos rather than moving 'down bush,' something I do not want any more at this stage.

The above section is a retelling of many unpleasant events during this term. Much more could be written, but we will leave it at this. Enough is enough. You have been sufficiently alerted to the human

nature of the ecclesiastical and missionary worlds.

A few days later, we packed up and started our 1994 vacation – in North America. The decision as to our future assignment had been made so that the beginning of this vacation was also the closing of an important phase of ministry and, hopefully, the sad story of mission intrigue.

NIGERIAN CONDITIONS: VIGNETTES

I am going to give you some random snapshots here of life in Nigeria – good and bad.

There is something to be said for a seriously multi-religious country like Nigeria, especially if you enjoy holidays. During April-May 1992, we had three long weekends in a row. The first one was to celebrate the end of Muslim fasting; the second, the Christian Easter weekend; the third, May Day, the equivalent to North America's Labour Day. These were all regulars. In addition, the Government occasionally declares a special holiday such as to celebrate a national sporting victory, especially international football (soccer) victories. These holidays were fun, but what they did to the economy was another question. I often spent such days either writing or in meetings. Hillcrest closes on such holidays, sometimes unexpectedly.

In early July 1992, Nigeria was in the process of federal elections. The first one was for senators and members of the House of Assembly. It went well.

The election was peaceful, and so far, I have not heard about any fighting. That is progress for this country. The next election will be for the president, and that will be in December. Then, early January 1993, the new president will be installed and Nigeria will have a civilian government. The big political issue is whether Muslims or Christians will be in power. That issue will not be settled until the presidential elections.

Upon our return from North America in early 1993, we found that postal charges had increased sharply. Now that may not sound so ominous. How could postal rates possibly constitute anything seri-

ous? Just read the following from Fran's letter:

It used to cost us N1.50 to send you a letter. Now, if we mail it by Nigerian post, it is N30 or \$1.50 US. Now \$1.50 does not sound all that bad, but it is close to double the Canadian rate and close to triple the US rate. When you consider that a two-day wage for many Nigerians and for many more it is a three-day wage, then you can see it is an impossible rate. Not only that, but they are now charging heavily for any incoming packages. We have sent close to fifty boxes of books by post from GR. If what we hear is true, then we will have to pay through the nose to collect those packages. That would be too bad, for we intended to make this literature available cheaply to Nigerians. Now that may not be possible, and we may have to shoulder the heavy expense ourselves. We already have an investment of over \$1000 in these books.

Two weeks later, I wrote to Dad:

You may be wondering about the change in the type of paper we are using for these letters. The reason is that postage has gone up very much, and we are trying to conserve. It went up from N1.50 to N30 – 2000%! Most Nigerians can no longer afford to send letters abroad now, and the post office, that used to be crowded every day all day, is now largely empty. At the moment, commercial courier is cheaper than post office and that is unheard of. Ever heard of such an impact of a postal fee increase?

End of March, I wrote:

Nigeria continues to have its own brand of excitement. I wrote some time ago that all the civil servants, state and federal, were on strike. That strike is now over with most governments having caved in to the demand of a 45% increase in salaries. However, food prices have gone up similarly so that no one stands to gain.

While the strike was ending, a gasoline shortage began and is still in full strength. No one seems to know the reason for it this time, but it happens almost yearly. Gas is heavily subsidised and costs around three cents a litre! There is talk of increasing the price, but there is also the threat of violence if it is increased. Last year we bought a full drum and put it aside. It is on that supply that we are driving right now.

Here is Fran's report on a sad visit to Pastor David:

He took us to Fyayi, his birth village. That area was one of the hardest hit during the latest Tiv-Jukun disturbances. In fact, his whole village was wiped out: farms and houses completely burned. The citrus orchard he was developing to help him in his retirement is completely ruined. His house and those of his brothers are burned, and the walls smashed to bits.

A few old people were sitting amongst the ruins and still 'living' there. They said they might as well die there because at least they had water available in a nearby stream. If they moved to Wukari, they would have no water as the whole new expensive system piped in from Ibi produces nothing. Even though this destruction happened over a year ago, nothing has been rebuilt because people are afraid and have no money. It was a real emotional experience for David to show us the ruins.

We solicited funds from family to come to David's rescue. We were grateful to Sister Jane for coming through and so was David. He planned to use the money to buy yam seedlings for his farm near Wukari, closer to his residence, so he could keep a better eye on it.

The petrol shortage was also once again becoming serious. Fran wrote:

There's been no regular supply for over three months. James is in line right now, but the tanker hasn't even come to deliver the fuel yet, just the rumour that one is coming. Once it comes, it could still take him several hours because the line is already so long. He finally did get petrol at midnight, after being in line from 2 pm. Patience. Patience!

However, sometimes amazing petrol miracles occurred. At the end of July 1993, I was in Takum and just by chance drove into a petrol station and wonder of wonders, 'it had petrol and no line up at all. That is something we have not seen since a year ago! We bought a whole drum (48 gallons) for 500 naira – some US \$12.50. Around Jos, it is still the same as before in this respect.'

In August 1994, the fuel situation had become more desperate

than ever – except for in Takum. When people did find some hidden source, it was too expensive so that people with a long commute by car found it cheaper just to stay home.

I am tempted to give you another lecture on the price of petrol, including the politics of it, but I feel merciful today! Some of you, though, might have found it very interesting and intriguing. Apart from religion perhaps, that petrol chaos adversely influenced all the country's politics, economics and, in fact, life in general. I commented that 'this was a situation that absorbs everyone and is a major conversation item with everyone offering solutions to everyone else but with no one listening and applying any of these solutions.'

I was scheduled to go to Takum during this time and left with four empty petrol drums in our Toyota van to be filled up there. The petrol I bought there was meant to be shared with our Jos missionaries. This was the second time that petrol was available in Takum but nowhere else.

12 June 1993, was a very important day in the political development of Nigeria. There was a national curfew till 4 p.m. because of the presidential elections. We wrote:

If all goes well, the military will step aside for a new civilian government. The new president will take over sometime in August. People are allowed on the road only to go to the voting booth, vote, and return home. That makes for a wonderfully quiet street in front of our house.

The results of the presidential election were cancelled, even though it was said to be the cleanest election so far. The man elected president was MKO Abiola, a Muslim business tycoon, philanthropist, and sports enthusiast. He had even become an international figure with his global campaign for reparations for the slave trade. No one was sure of the reason, and till this day there has been no public explanation as to why the military head of state General Ibrahim Babangida decided against allowing Abiola to become the president. Wiebe was visiting Nigeria at the time and we were on a trip together in Taraba when we heard of the annulment. Several newspapers supporting his

election were closed down, including Abiola's own *Concord Newspaper*. Western nations were beginning to apply sanctions against the country.

Unrest in the country went from bad to worse. In July, all the universities in the country shut down. All teaching staff were fired! Imagine all of them throughout the entire country! Riots were taking place in various cities, though Jos remained quiet.

Then on August 22, I wrote:

This is the week in Nigeria about which everyone has been worried. No one feels comfortable. Everything is at a standstill in anticipation. The handover to civilians is to take place, but at this time, no one knows to whom! Abiola still claims he expects to be installed! Anything can happen. Anything. Many southerners have left the North in anticipation of the worst. But by the time you read this, we should know what has happened.

Yes, we did. On August 29, 1993,

We are now two days past D-Day, the 27th, when IBB, our Military President, promised to step down and hand over to a civilian government. He did, though most people doubted he would. He kept the whole country in suspense by not announcing until the 27th who would take over. Well, the person to head an Interim Government is Shonekan, the former chief of UTC, the largest company in Nigeria and affiliate of Unilever. The cabinet list has been published and seems fairly evenly divided over the country's main groupings. This government will have some six months or more to run the country, arrange for new presidential elections and then hand over to an elected government.

We are at this point breathing a sigh of relief. No Civil War – at least, not yet. Nigeria pushed itself to the brink and is now trying to back away from it. However, the Labour Congress announced a nationwide strike in rejection of the election annulment.

The new Interim Government seems to be getting a hold of the situation, and various major groupings in the country are falling into line. The many strikes, either threatened or actual have pretty well

been called off. The universities are soon going to open up again. The major problem still at a serious stage is the lack of various petroleum products used by many people – petrol, cooking gas, diesel and kerosene.

In November, we had another bloodless coup. The military once again took over with General Sani Abacha, the most senior officer in Babangida's regime who stayed on as Shonekan's Minister of Defense, taking over as the new military head of state. The people were deeply divided over this development, of course, but a semblance of order set in again that was widely appreciated. Universities, unions, and other organisations went back to work; petrol became available again, though at a price three times as high at a whole 10 cents a litre. Still very cheap. Cheap petrol was one of the few ways in which the people benefited from the nation's oil.

Various state governments established committees or task forces to investigate the reason for the constant petrol shortage. However, before long, two of the chairmen were killed! Obviously, it was a very touchy matter and dangerous.

1993 had been quite the year. It was about as turbulent as you'd want it. Three governments. Various university strikes. Terrible petrol shortage. Civil service strike. And then the straightest presidential election ever in the country – only to have it annulled. So much unrest that a lot of our work had to be postponed, especially our work on the External Debt and the Library aiming to aid students in integrating faith, learning, and life.

The new order imposed by the new military government did not do much to make Nigeria any safer. You've read about armed robbers. Well, on January 2, 1994, Kevin drove Fran and me to Kano to pick up Cynthia, who was coming for a brief visit. However, I was nervous throughout the journey.

The day before we went, Rev. Habila, the ICS Acting Director, had gone to Kano to pick up Emmanuel Kumzhi, studying in England and who came home for the holidays. Emmanuel had let it be known at the airport that he had hard currency (pounds) on him. So, thieves

somehow traced them to Habila's house the following night and demanded the pounds. They were interested only in money, whether naira or pounds, not in any of his electronic equipment. They got only 300 naira and no pounds, for they were in Emmanuel's hands. Fortunately, no one got seriously hurt, only bruised, though Habila had a gun pointed at his heart. So, we were nervous, wondering whether anyone was following us. Nothing happened. Thank God. Kevin was appalled that we had to constantly take such precautions and wondered how we could live this way.

The Government sought to stabilise the naira, Nigeria's 'dollar,' but it took a long time. In the meantime, chaos reigned supreme.

The government still insists on a rate of ₦22, but after a month and a half, it seems they still do not have any procedures in place as to how this can all be done through Central Bank. In the meantime, the black or parallel market has been outlawed. 108 people in Kano have been rounded up, only to be released the same evening. The participants say there is no way the government can stop them, for it is their living. No hard currency is available to anyone except in the parallel market. And so the newspapers continue to publish parallel market exchange rates. It stands at some N45 to a dollar. In short, it is a mess, but people are very careful, for they are afraid of being arrested. At the moment, we are living on the money we have in Lion Bank that we exchanged a few months ago at a legal and favourable rate.

This monetary chaos even entered the church in a very open way. Towards the end of April 1994, during a special church service that included reps from various organisations, a rep from the Nigerian Bible Society let it be known that 'they had millions of naira but needed dollars. Anyone having dollars should see them, and they would exchange into naira at N45 to \$1— totally illegal and twice the official price. And all that in a church service!'

Beginning in September 2001, Jos was repeatedly in the international news due to it being an epicentre of violence in Nigeria, both ethnic and religious. It was hardly a new phenomenon. We already had it back in April 1994 as Fran wrote:

We've had some serious political troubles in Jos the last few days: lots of rioting, looting, and burning. The problem was over the appointment by the military of the mayor of Jos North. Then people use the occasion to recruit and rile up many others to join the fracas and so the riot and violence escalate till it is totally out of control. A dusk to dawn curfew has been imposed on the city. That makes it quiet on our normally busy road.

A few days later, I presented more details:

The riot was about the appointment of a Muslim non-indigene as administrator for Jos North Local Government. The local tribes, always at each others' throats about who owns Jos, are united in their opposition to this appointment. They staged peaceful protests. The appointment was withdrawn, after which the Muslim Hausa community started rioting. The market at Gada Biyu was burnt down and so is a large part of the main market. At least three people got killed in the fracas. Three mosques got burnt. The Muslims then tried to burn a church at Gada Biyu, but the women prevented it. The burning of that mosque was most likely the result of the general rioting and burning done by the Muslims themselves. The Thornburg family, CRC missionaries, got caught in a rioting crowd and, some rioters threatened to attack them, but by the grace of God, no one touched them, though they climbed all over the car behind them. Now just last night, we heard that the local Catholic seminary was set ablaze. The TV news said it was an accident of some sort, but the coincidence is too great to just simply believe that. It is most likely a continuation of the fracas. In the meantime, we have the dusk-dawn curfew in effect, which makes our evenings very nice and quiet, since we live on the main road into town.

In a general newsletter, I wrote:

This continues to be a volatile country, though some of the most obvious unruliness has been reined in somewhat. It has been a year of terrible gasoline shortages, though towards the end, that eased up and by now we can get it easily – most of the time. Right now, we are battling a water shortage due to repairs of the system. We make do with a well that is supplemented by a few tankers a week – a costly way to take a bath! Universities have been closed for six months,

but they should start-up in a week or so. I have never seen a more discouraged student generation. Inflation and devaluation continue hand in hand. Result: wages far short even for basic needs. How most Nigerians make it and still smile is beyond us.

CLOSING COMMENTS

And with this, we have come to the end of another term of service in Nigeria. It was a very rough term, with staff terminations, awkward decisions in both Jos and Grand Rapids offices, basic disagreements over the nature of the mission, turmoil in Ruth's Muslim ministry, and reassignment for me. My own ministry came under fierce attack, partially by people who had neither professional knowledge of missions nor of the Reformed worldview and who thought unconsciously in the dualistic terms they grew up with within the CRC. By the time the fracas and our term were over, we had lost a number of missionaries and ministries aimed at modern Nigeria. I myself, of course, was reassigned to the CRCN with my relationship to ICS coming to an official end, but all of the conflict left a bitter taste and made us both wonder how much longer we could stay on working for the mission in Nigeria.

Both Fran and I had every reason to thank God for this term, despite the unpleasanties referred to above. We had served in God's Kingdom in a multi-faceted way that we were proud of. We were grateful to be part of a team that had contributed to the growth of the Nigerian church. And now we were looking forward to a month of personal vacation time and of fellowship with relatives and friends.

Other than some time spent in both 1994 and 1995 in North America with family and mission work, we continued to live and work in Nigeria. Fran continued teaching at Hillcrest, where she was by then one of the most senior teachers, and me with my new role split between teaching at TCNN and as the consultant to the CRCN's education and publication departments. After three years at Calvin, Wiebe missed Nigeria too much and came home to spend a year studying Political Science at the University of Jos. With persistent strikes and other issues, he did not end up having many classes, but

he had a rich year reconnecting with his childhood home from the perspective of a young adult. He left in April 1996 and travelled to British Columbia to visit his Opa Wiebe, just in time to see Opa one last time before he passed away. It was fitting that our son Wiebe Boer was the last person to speak to his own Opa Wiebe Boer before he died. Though we could not make the funeral, Wiebe was there to read the eulogy on my behalf.

By this time, Lydia's Chris was an independent crusade evangelist and author, with three books completed and ready for publication. Lydia was making progress with her Special Education degree at UniJos, so Wiebe and Lydia were technically schoolmates for a while. Jude was moving on to senior secondary school at Baptist High School, a rival school to Hillcrest, while Jason was in Kiddy Joy Private School and little Jason was in boarding school at Kent Academy.

We ended up leaving Nigeria permanently in mid-1996 after 30 amazing years of ministry to return to North America, where we would be closer to our siblings and their families that we had been apart from for so long. It also provided the opportunity to pursue the many writing projects I had in mind but could not make progress on with the busy nature of our lives in Nigeria.

After all is said and done, we thank God for the opportunity He gave us to contribute to the shaping of His Kingdom in Nigeria. And we thank the CRC denomination, together with II Highland CRC and the other supporting congregations, for supporting our efforts through the years. But it was not the end of God working in and through our lives. While it took a different shape and worked itself out in another environment, we remain guided by the same principles – and, more importantly, by the same God. We trust you have *enjoyed* reading about the struggles to establish a more holistic version of the Kingdom of God, but more than that, have been *challenged* to live and work in a similar holistic fashion in your own context.

EPILOGUE

OUR POST-NIGERIA MINISTRIES

Life did not stop for us during our post-Nigeria years, of course. In fact, we have many adventurous and productive years to look back upon now that we find ourselves in Vancouver, Canada, in the year 2021. Our post-Nigeria years can be divided into two main periods: Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA from 1996-2001 and Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada from late 2001. We engaged in a lot of travel, both in Canada and the USA, mostly by our recreational vehicle. Internationally, we visited Nigeria several times and at various times found ourselves in different countries, including Trinidad for Wiebe's wedding, Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire, Mauritania to visit son Wiebe, Tunisia to visit our Nigerian friend Obed Mailafia, Egypt to visit Nigeria colleagues Bill and Nelle Evenhouse, the UK to visit Nigeria colleagues Graham and Katy Weeks and the Netherlands to visit several friends and relatives. We have also driven all over North America in our recreational vehicle (RV), making it as far as the Arctic Circle in Canada's Yukon Territory. However, most of our years were spent in writing, all of it driven by our holistic emphasis on Christ for all of life.

The Grand Rapids period started with confusion and searching. Fran was American; I, Canadian. If we were to stay in that city, I

would have to emigrate, get a work permit and, eventually, a Green Card. I managed all three in quick succession and thus was free to work in the USA to provide some income for us while I started my writing projects.

Fran was the first to find employment in an administrative position at Hope Network, a wide-flung ministry to the handicapped. She was stretched there computer-wise, but did enjoy the challenge. She remained there until we moved to Vancouver in 2001.

From the media, I learned about different aspects of senior housing. My attention was drawn to the generally low pay for staff so that many of them held two jobs to make ends meet. Many were Christian institutions with mostly well-to-do Christian residents. I also observed that some secular labour unions were eyeing these institutions and wanted to organise them. These were the secular unions that often adhered to the class struggle principle instead of co-operation.

I realised that these Christian institutions would soon be challenged by these unions and it would not look pretty for them. So, it occurred to me they should be pro-active by approaching the Christian Labor Association of America (CLA) for them to organise their staff. That would be a much better fit. Since these institutions were totally anti-union, one would not expect them to approach the CLA, even though both these homes and the CLA were birthed by the same community of the CRC.

So, I offered my services to the CLA and drew up a plan for me to work part time to try to organise these homes. The CLA accepted the plan. I worked for them for almost a year. However, I was not prepared for the opposition to the CLA or any other union on the part of that Christian community. I had the Christian vision of cooperation between an employer and this Christian union over against the hostility with which other unions operated at the time. I met opposition everywhere, and eventually, the CLA laid me off for total lack of success. This was a case of not understanding the local culture. I was more at home in Nigerian culture than in that of America.

Then an unforeseen inheritance from Fran's sister Jane who supported us in so many ways during our years in Nigeria, but who died

unexpectedly in 2000, made it possible for Fran to retire earlier than anticipated. Then and there, we decided we would move to Vancouver, Canada, a move we had anticipated for quite some time. Both of us disliked the Michigan climate and preferred the mild climate of the West Coast. In addition, Kevin lived in California while Cynthia lived near Seattle, both on the West Coast on the US side. That was another drawing card for us. We could not predict where Wiebe, our youngest son, would eventually live. So, we hired a van, loaded it with our goods and I drove off to Vancouver, right about the time of 9/11, a driving distance of 3796 kilometres.

Now it was time for Fran to immigrate. It was a simple procedure since I was a Canadian and promised to take full responsibility for her so that she would not have to work. We moved into our rental flat that we had already arranged earlier and in which we still live almost nineteen years later, right in the middle of Vancouver's downtown.

Now both of us were retired. We ended up receiving pensions from both the Canadian and American governments as well as from the CRC, who had been our sponsoring church throughout our Nigeria years. Those pensions and the income from some investments gave us a living, enough for rent, food and other expenses. Until this day, we are both amazed and very grateful to the Lord for having made those provisions for us.

We were officially retired but hardly idle. You will recall that already during our Nigeria years, I was planning and, in fact, started writing what I thought would be one book about Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria. The emphasis was again going to be on the holistic Gospel of Christ applied to all of life, including politics, business, science, and every other field of culture. I was going to interpret both sides of the *religious* struggle between them from that perspective. I would explain to Christians that the Gospel was much broader than the narrowed version inherited from missionaries and that they needed to embrace the holistic version if they were to succeed in their struggle. Muslims would be told that they had gotten the wrong impression about Christianity from the narrow Gospel Christians had inherited and practiced. I would explain both sides to each other.

The one book became a series of eight!

It took some years of effort on the part of both Fran and myself to complete this project. The series was first published in Canada by Essence Publishing. Subsequently, they were republished in Nigeria by ACTS of Bukuru, near Jos. They are all out of print now but available online at < www.SocialTheology.com/Islamica > and at < www.lulu.com >.

As these books rolled off the press, especially the Nigerian academic community gratefully made use of the very wide research on which it was all based. I doubt that there is a more extensive source for the history of the Nigerian struggle than this set for the years it covers. A major theme throughout the series is that the struggle is predominantly and basically a *religious* struggle, with power, politics, and economics playing an important but secondary role.

Upon completion of the above project, Fran and I spent two years writing our five-volume memoirs. Volume 1 covers our lives from birth to moving to Nigeria. Volumes 2-3 cover our Nigerian ministry along with family and social life. The book you are currently holding is a popularised summary of these two volumes. Volumes 4 and 5 deal with our post -Nigeria lives and travels. So, if you want more information about our Nigerian phase, you can find it in volumes 2-3 on < www.SocialTheology.com/boeriana > under the same title.

Our final project to date is ORAL – Online Reformational Academic Library. Our website has been expanded to include a bibliography of holistic Christian academic writings to give the global university community access to Christian academic literature instead of the secular genre that dominates there. You can find extensive references to economics, politics, history, art, philosophy, etc. Most of the website of < www.SocialTheology.com > serves the purposes of that library. You now have at hand an amazingly wide range of Christian literature you probably never knew existed.

OUR CHILDREN

Lydia is our oldest daughter. She's in Abuja with husband, Chris Abaga and is the principal of a large private international secondary school

called the Africa Community School. She is also developing a school of her own. Chris continues to write and preach. Their three sons are now all grown up. After attending Calvin College, part of the time living with us, Jude returned to Jos to work for the internet company Wiebe had co-founded called AfriOne and also teamed up with his younger brother Jesse and producers and musicians with links back to Bill Evenhouse's music ministry to start their music careers. They were both signed to Chocolate City Music by lawyer Audu Maikori, and along with their friend Panshak Zamani became internationally renowned rap and hip-hop stars. Jude went by the stage name of 'MI' and Jesse by the name of 'Jesse Jagz'. Jude has now moved into the next stage of his career with the launch of TASCK, a public relations strategy firm. Jesse has moved back to Jos to continue his music career and recently got married to Tolu, a lecturer at the University of Jos. Jesse's daughter Jade is now a teenager and the spitting image of Lydia as a child. The youngest son Jason is a scriptwriter for Tinsel, a popular Nigerian soap opera, while his wife Jessica is also a scriptwriter and content editor for major television shows. Jason and Jessica have a daughter named Inara, Lydia's second grandchild and our second great-grandchild.

Then there's our oldest son Kevin, who, upon graduating from Calvin College, went to Botswana with Peace Corps and then to Cape Town. From there he was pulled to California by his future wife, Theresa, where he now lives in Mountain View, Silicon Valley. He's held various jobs, including real estate, real estate computer consultancy, consultant at McKinsey, and, finally, Yahoo. Somewhere, in between, he did two years at Yale for an MBA. He now operates an AirBnB management business. Their daughter Anneke is ten years of age and goes to school in a Spanish immersion program, adding another cultural dimension to the family.

Upon graduation from Calvin, Cynthia worked for a while in Grand Rapids, then in Japan to teach English. She currently lives in Auburn, in the Greater Seattle area, where she is Marketing Coordinator for one company but two shopping centres. She and her former husband, Andy, have two children. Asia, now a college student, is in-

terested in graphic design and singing. Ezra recently graduated from high school and specialises in computer gaming. Cynthia has since married Cecil Boyd, a businessman.

Wiebe, upon completing Calvin, went on to obtain a Ph.D. in African History from Yale. He then worked for a series of organisations and companies, including McKinsey in the USA, World Vision in Mauritania, the Rockefeller Foundation in Nairobi, Heirs Holdings and BCG in Lagos. He and his family are still based in Lagos, Nigeria, where he is the CEO for a Shell subsidiary, All On, reorganising electricity distribution in Nigeria. He is the author of the very popular *A Story of Heroes and Epics: The History of Football in Nigeria*, based on his doctoral research. He and his Trinidadian wife Joanna have four boys: Jehan, a student at John Hopkins University, Stephan, a student at Millfield School in Somerset, England while Gerrit and Markus attend the American International School of Lagos. Joanna attended Calvin and earned an MA in Human Resources Management from the University of London and runs Empire Jane, a business creating Nigerian cultural-themed home goods.

We thank God for our multicultural and far-flung family.

INSTITUTIONAL LEGACY

You may also wonder what happened to the many institutions we were involved in during our ministry in Nigeria. Here is a brief synopsis of where they are today.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC) –

This is the denomination that sponsored us for missionary service. It covers Canada and the USA and is a fully established church, though small by North American standards. Its central service centres are in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, and in Burlington, Ontario, Canada.

It owns Calvin University, from which both of us and three of our children graduated, as well as Calvin Theological Seminary from which I graduated in 1965. Both of them are in Grand Rapids. The constituency of the denomination has spawned many social organisations, including an entire system of education from kindergarten

through the post-graduate Institute for Christian Studies, social justice, business, agriculture, and labour.

The Sudan United Mission (SUM) – The CRC in Nigeria has worked under the umbrella of the SUM, a mission network in which each member mission is independent but speaks with one voice to the government, including visa matters. Most of the members have been absorbed into the churches that emerged from them, except for that of the CRC, because it has spawned several churches. Its Nigerian headquarters is in Jos. Recently, the name has been updated but within the confines of the acronym that is so famous and popular in Nigeria. The result is the awkward ‘Servants United Mission.’ Though now small and with a dwindling number of missionaries, the SUM-CRC continues to operate to support the several denominations started by the mission as well as other ministries in Nigeria.

Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria (CRCN) – This was the church that became our home church in Nigeria and in which we worked full time from 1996-1977, after which we moved over to the ICS – Institute of Church & Society in Jos. After that move in 1977, we continued to serve the CRCN on committees and other activities. It has had a series of names due to the ever-changing political map of the country. Its current name was chosen by Nigerians. It is not a part of the CRC that sent the missionaries, but it is fully autonomous and has a special sister relationship with the CRC.

CRCN today has almost 300 ordained ministers in active service. She has 19 Regional Church Councils. The Church is rooted in Taraba and neighbouring states. There are some congregations and worship centres in cities such as Abuja, Lagos, Maiduguri, Zaria, and Jos. She has several hundred thousand members across the country, and the current governor of Taraba State, Darius Dickson Ishaku, is a CRCN member.

The church owns the Veenstra Theological Seminary (VTS) Donga, where most of the pastors are being trained. Others are trained at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN) Bukuru, where

CRCN is also a co-proprietor alongside other TEKAN churches. Besides VTS, CRCN has 3 Christian Training Colleges (CTC), 8 Secondary Schools, 28 Nursery and Primary Schools. Most of these are located in Taraba State. The church also partners with the CRC's mission in sponsoring a Nigerian missionary to Sierra Leone, the Reverend Istifanus Bahago.

Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria (TEKAN) – This fellowship consists of all the churches that emerged from the SUM plus a few others. The acronym comes from the organisation's Hausa name, by which it is known better than its English full name. TEKAN continues to be very active politically among its members and is an active member of various Christian networks, including the Christian Association of Nigeria, the widest ecumenical body in the country. TEKAN is the proprietor of the Theological College of Northern Nigeria.

Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN) – TCNN is located 15 kilometres from Jos, Plateau State, on a campus of about 100 acres. From its inception, TCNN has offered certificates and diplomas in theology. In 1980, TCNN began to offer a Bachelor of Divinity degree (BD). In 1991, the college began to offer a Master of Theology (M.Th.) degree.

Since 1980, TCNN has been affiliated with the University of Jos. It is recognised not only by TEKAN but also by many other denominations as an excellent institution for the training of future ministers, both academically and spiritually. At present, there are about 300 students at the college, and it remains one of the most prestigious seminaries in Northern Nigeria.

THE INSTITUTE OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY (ICS) –

The Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), the first ecumenical organisation in the country and concentrated mostly in the south, established the ICS in Ibadan around 1966. Soon the need was felt for a northern office, which was established in Jos in 1977, with me as

coordinator. In due time, a gentleman by the name of Emmanuel Kumzhi replaced me. By the time I left the ICS, it was a sizable institution with nearly 20 staff members, mostly supported by European donor organisations.

Under Nigerian leadership, the rented premises were replaced with the ICS's own building in Rayfield, just outside Bukuru. In an attempt to become financially independent, a mango farm was started outside of Jos. The last time we visited Jos, Mr. Kumzhi had moved on. That building was occupied by others, while I have the impression that the farm had fallen into other hands. The Ibadan premises had also fallen into disuse. All of this was apparently at least partly due to mismanagement at CCN headquarters, where the flow of donor finance was either stopped or diverted. To the best of my knowledge, CCN itself is almost extinct except on paper, by which it serves as one of the three pillars of CAN.

Wholistic Health Care (WHC) – We left Nigeria with Dr Silas Bot having taken over this project. It was, of course, under the Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN). CHAN had many departments, the leader of which felt threatened by the challenge WHC represented to his department. Soon after we left, that leader received a promotion, which increased his power within the organisation. He did all he could to thwart all WHC efforts – and succeeded. CHAN itself still seems to be flourishing, but WHC is off the map. However, the seed of WHC has been planted in the hearts and minds of many health care professionals. Among other things, it freed them from the official pretense of a complete rejection of and disdain for African Traditional Medicine and made them more open to healing traditions besides the proud colonial and Mission tradition of Western medicine.

However, the two-volume book it published is its enduring legacy. It is a unique and even rare collection of lectures on health care from a multi-religious perspective, containing Muslim and African Traditional contributions as well as Christian. It is published by CHAN (1995) under the title *Wholistic Health Care* with the subtitles *Re-*

ligious and Medical Dimensions and Cultural and Political Dimensions. The co-authors are Dr Dennis Ityavyar, the Benue State Commissioner of Education, and myself, Dr Jan H. Boer. It is a *must-read* for researchers in African health care.

Hillcrest School, Jos – This is the school Fran taught at for 15 years and from which Kevin, Cynthia, and Wiebe graduated. Lydia's granddaughter Jade also attended Hillcrest for some time. Hillcrest celebrated the 75th anniversary of its founding in 2017, quite a remarkable longevity. With the number of foreign missionaries in Nigeria declining from the 1990s as Nigerian leadership took over the churches, as well as the Muslim-Christian conflicts that have plagued Plateau State off and on since 2001, Hillcrest is now a much smaller school. The facilities are exactly what they were 30 years ago, except that it had to beef up security arrangements. Though it has a smaller student body, it continues to graduate excellent students who go on to make an impact in various sectors in Nigeria and around the world.

FINAL COMMENT

And with this, we close this book with deep thanksgiving in our hearts for what our heavenly Father has allowed us to accomplish during these years of our lives. We never expected to spend 30 years in Nigerian ministry, but God is the God of surprises. We are surprised till this day! And to this day, Nigerian academics seek us out for advice and information. Some are busy building institutions fashioned in our holistic spirit. Our work has not been in vain.

To God be the praise and glory!

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