

# Harley Street

Update from Matthew & Rachel Harley in Jos, Nigeria Issue 20: Nov 2012

*Dear friends,*

We've been back in the land of sunshine and smiles for 3 months now, after having a super summer in the UK (and Australia) visiting family and friends. It was lovely to catch up with so many of you and we enjoyed being spoilt with wonderful home cooking! Thanks to all who hosted us, fed us and made our visit so special. If we didn't get to see you then we hope to meet up when we're home next.



It was great to get back to our own place and our beautiful, tropical garden. As usual, there were a number of things which needed fixing, such as the generator and some rusty pipes, and we had to flush out a couple of small, furry tenants which had taken the liberty to move in while we were away. We also discovered that there is almost no place where mould won't grow in the rainy season when it's hot and humid. We expected most of our clothes & shoes to go mouldy (which they did) but fortunately washing and airing them sorts that out. Some places are harder to wash however...cracks in wooden furniture...inside the pepperpot... Parts of the interior of our car were so mouldy you might have thought we have smeared them with a thick coating of cheese paste before we left. Now however, we are definitely into dry season, with the next rain not likely to arrive before March or April.

**TCNN**

- Matthew

*"[It] is a really strange language...It is said that they understand one another, but I don't believe any of it"*

So said Joseph Scaliger, probably the most erudite linguist of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in talking about Basque - Europe's oldest and most unusual language, but I imagine that if he had ever stepped foot in Nigeria, he probably would have said the same about many of the languages here. Take Glavda for example, where verb roots often consist of just a single consonant, as do most verb endings, producing phrases like 'kmttrtga' which means 'we (not including the listener) are cooking it for them'. Or Ikwere, where the word for 'tomorrow' can also mean 'yesterday' and the word for 'next year' can also mean 'last year'. Such are joys or pains of grammar, depending on your perspective. At the moment, I fear most of my students are still on the pain side, but hopefully they'll make it across to the joy side before the end of the course!

Anthropology on the other hand only has a joy side. It is virtually impossible for students not to like anthropology. I only have to mention the word 'polygamy' for example, and every student has a comment to make or a story to relate. Polygamy has always been a thorny issue for Christianity in Africa, and most churches here are struggling with it in one way or the other. What do polygamists (and their wives) do when they become Christians?

Can they hold positions in the church? After all, the Bible never explicitly condemns polygamy, even though it upholds monogamy as the ideal. Promoting monogamy in Africa requires first of all a careful examination of the ways that polygamy benefits a society, so that the social needs it meets can be met in other ways. Unless this is done, outlawing it on doctrinal grounds will just push the problems underground, and widen the gulf between belief and behaviour. One student shared the story of a polygamist, who on wanting to become a Christian, was so shunned and excluded by the church that he turned to Islam instead.



My Anthropology class

Cultural insights also form a part of my third class this semester - semantics, or the meaning of words. To take an (almost) seasonal example, in the story of Jesus' birth, we all know that Jesus was born in a stable because there was no room in the inn. Or was he? The word translated 'inn' is much more likely to mean something like 'spare room'; the same word is used to describe where Jesus and his disciples ate the Last Supper. Typical village houses in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine generally had one room, with some having a second adjoining room at one end or on top. The much more natural reading of the text would suggest that when Joseph and Mary arrived at a private house in Bethlehem, the 'spare room' was already occupied, and so Mary had to give birth in the 'living room', where the house-owner's family and, at one end, their animals stayed. Greek has a perfectly good word for 'inn' which is not used at all in the birth narratives, but is used for example in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Christian tradition of there being an 'inn' is more of a Western Christian tradition rather than something based on the principles of semantics and translation.

### **First ethno-arts visit to Waci**

A couple of weeks ago, Peter & I visited the Waci area, about 3 hours' drive from Jos. They only have a few chapters of Luke translated and checked, but that was more than enough for what we wanted to do. We met with a small group of musicians and gave them copies of the Scripture. It was great to see them all reading Waci Scripture for the first time and they were really eager to have a go. We concentrated on Luke 15 (the lost sheep, coin & son) since this chapter had already inspired a number of people to turn from idol worship to Christianity. We did a short Bible study and also a retelling of the story, updating it to contemporary Waci land. So for example the son leaves Waci land for Abuja and after living the highlife there, ends up shining shoes before deciding to return and work as a house-boy for his father.



Yakubu with his 'paint-tin' guitar



After discussing different styles of traditional Waci songs and song composition, the musicians set to work. They worked late into the night and started again early the next morning. By the end of our visit they had composed two new Scripture songs based on the stories of the lost sheep and the lost son. These were sung in the style of cultural celebration songs and were accompanied by the 'igbam' (an indigenous harp) and an improvised guitar made from an old tin of wood-preserved! The songs were beautiful and easy to listen to - a good style for conveying stories. We encouraged them to continue to read & study the Waci Scripture portions and to write more songs. We hope to go back once they have done this to make recordings for them.

- Rachel

## Giving

'And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.' 2 Cor. 9:8

We are so thankful to all of you for your gifts that keep us going out here. Did you know that many others here have been blessed through your giving as well? Here are some of the other things that your gifts have provided for: all kinds of equipment for the Gyero school, including sandals for all the children; school fees for our gate guard's two little girls, Hadiza and Kande (above); support for families who either lost everything or had to flee their homes during times of crisis; and helping a widow with her strawberry-growing business. Your giving has indeed been a rich blessing to many!



## Adoption

God has been working in our hearts for some time now to help us realise that adopting children can be just as special as having our own. We have had to let go of some of our dreams but we have finally reached a place where we can say that perhaps this is actually God's best plan for us! And so the adventure begins...

For us to adopt in the UK would likely mean being based there for at least two years, possibly longer, but somehow this didn't fit in with our calling to be in Nigeria. On the other hand, we had understood that it was illegal for expats to adopt in Nigeria. So what to do? Over the last few months, God does seem to have been opening doors to show a way forward: firstly, some friends got in contact with an experienced Nigerian lawyer, who explained that it was technically legal for expats to adopt in our state, although it had not been done before. One condition was that the couple must have been resident in Nigeria for 5 years, which fortunately we have. Secondly, our landlady, who lives upstairs, recently decided to adopt as well and is currently going through the process with a very pleasant lawyer who is happy to help us too. So last week, he took us to visit the local state orphanage. Virtually all the babies there had been brought in by the police who had found them abandoned in the street. A couple of them were only two or three weeks old. We talked with the staff, cuddled the babies and played with the toddlers. We plan to return several times over the next few weeks to continue building relationships with the staff and the kids. Please pray with us on our long, windy and emotional journey, that God would continue to show us the next steps.

## Prayer points

- ❖ *Our adoption adventure.*
- ❖ *Ethno-arts exploits (wisdom to know which projects to get involved with).*
- ❖ *For the TCNN students as they prepare for exams.*
- ❖ *For Hadiza & Kande adjusting to school life.*

Email: [matthew\\_harley@wycliffe.org](mailto:matthew_harley@wycliffe.org)  
[rachel\\_harley@wycliffe.org](mailto:rachel_harley@wycliffe.org)

Address: P.O.Box 953, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Phone: +234 813 610 5246 (Matthew)  
+234 806 833 2825 (Rachel)

**SUPPORT:** If you would like to join our support team, either prayerfully or financially, then please contact us, and we will send you the information you need.