

Harley Street

Update from Matthew & Rachel Harley in Jos, Nigeria

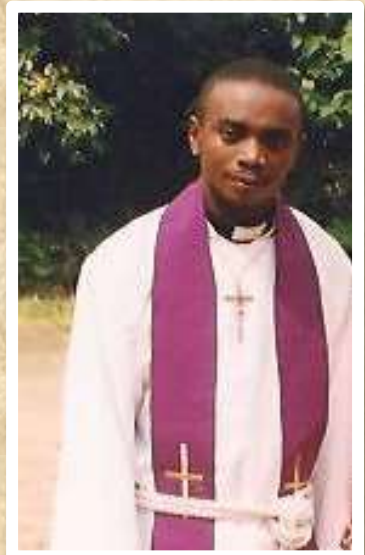
Issue 21 - Sept 2013

- Matthew

What's your praise-name?

Last month, one of our 2013 graduates, whose thesis I supervised, presented a paper at an academic linguistics conference - the 50th West African Languages Congress - held appropriately in the birthplace of Nigerian linguistics, the University of Ibadan. For me, watching him calmly tackle a barrage of questions from some of Nigeria's top linguists was a moment that any proud parent or teacher can surely identify with.

The graduate in question, Kierien Ayugha Ekpang, comes from a culture which has unique praise names for everyone in the community. Only close family or friends use these names, and only on occasions when they've done something especially praiseworthy. Kierien remembers one particular time when his was used: he was 11 years old and his father had just taken the podium to read a passage in Bokyì, his mother-tongue, in front of a crowd of several hundred gathered for the launching of the New Testament. Mr. Ekpang said, "I don't see any reason why I need to do this reading when my son can read it just as fluently". Kierien wasn't expecting this. He had no choice but to come up onto the platform. His words flowed with flawless pronunciation, as awed mutterings rustled through the crowd. As he took his seat a few minutes later, his mother leaned close to his ear and whispered the only two words that were



Rev. Kierien Ekpang



Costus spectabilis*

needed to express her emotions: his praise-name *Ekpang Keka*, which literally means 'leopard flower'. (*Keka* is the local name for Nigeria's national flower, *Costus spectabilis*). After Kierien's performance at the linguistics conference, I too knew just what to say.

Kierien (pronounced *Kirian*) is now pioneering translation work in a new language, Utugwang, which does not yet have a single verse of Scripture. Having done his field work there during his degree, he has already become reasonably proficient in the language (it is closely related to his own), and has established a writing system. What's more, he is fully supported by his church organisation, who could have posted him anywhere, but believed in the value of translation enough to place him there. Please pray for him and his wife and their five children as they settle in to this new community and help produce the very first books, CDs, and other materials in the language.

Icen song-writing workshop

- Rachel

Peter and I had visited the Icen community in December 2011 to learn about their wide variety of traditional song styles, and had proposed that we return to hold a Scripture song writing workshop. Finally, a year later, we got a call one Friday afternoon to tell us that the participants were ready and waiting, please could we start on Monday! So we dropped everything and went, piling all our equipment into my Toyota and heading off on our bumpy bush drive.

The Icen Bible Translation committee organised the practicalities in the village. The workshop was held in a local church, which was equipped with a generator so we were able to use our laptops, projector and speakers for the training sessions. There were 20 participants including: choir masters, choir members, musicians, band leaders, men & women's fellowship leaders, and Sunday school teachers, all eager for the week ahead. Meals were a whole range of local dishes - different types of tuwo (porridge) and soup - always very tasty, and cooked by a few local women in enormous cauldrons and served whenever they were ready. Lunch was often ready around 5pm so I was happy that I'd packed some snacks!



Baobab leaf soup

It was a significant time for us since we had run mini song-writing workshops before, but nothing as ambitious as this. The aim was to compose and record songs based on each chapter in the gospel of Luke along with an opening & ending song - 26 brand new songs in five days! Fortunately, we had some amazing participants, talented and hardworking, and by Thursday afternoon we were ready to start the recording. Our media team from the office came and set up their "recording studio" under a large tree, suspending microphones and light bulbs from the branches and hiding the small generator well away in a nearby cornfield. I wondered at the use of light bulbs dangling there in the hot sunshine. Little did I know how essential they'd be! Before long we were surrounded by a crowd



Recording Scripture songs with the Icen

of locals, all curious to discover what was going on. The first song was a call to all Icen people to come and hear the word of God in their language. Another was about Jesus calling the little children to come to him. For this one, we made use of the growing group of village children. They were delighted to be part of the recording and sang their part with gusto, not minding how many times they had to repeat it until it was just right!

The recording took much longer than expected, and before long the light faded revealing the vast starry expanse overhead. Everyone pulled their clothes tighter about themselves and the women covered themselves in colourful shawls. I was so cold that I had to put my pyjamas on underneath my clothes. Now the only light to see by was provided by those two dangling bulbs, needed especially by the singers in order to read the words of their new creations. Peter was amazing, directing the soloist, the instruments, and the choir. His energy and enthusiasm helped to keep people going, as did the enormous thermos of hot chocolate that was brought out to us. We ended at midnight with a beautiful song about the crucifixion which was followed by a time of personal reflection of what the Lord had done for us in our lives. Fabulous! Wonderful! A privilege to be involved in this work!

'Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship, for they will walk in the light of your presence,' Ps. 89:15

To say that the beginning of the new semester at TCNN has been eventful would be something of an understatement. We knew that two of our core teaching staff would be away on 6-month furloughs, but a week before the semester started, two others had to delay their return by several months for medical reasons, leaving us with only 5 teaching staff to cover 16 BA and MA courses. Even though a colleague from another mission stepped in to help us, life in the department has definitely been in the fast lane since mid-August. Thankfully, another colleague, Dr. Leoma Gilley, will be joining us from Nairobi this weekend, which will be a huge help. But at the moment, I'm teaching phonetics, phonology, grammar, semantics and anthropology - all courses I've taught before fortunately - on top of the usual thesis supervision and some non-TCNN Wycliffe duties.



Students in my phonology class

There have also been some unusual visitors in the department over the rainy season. Termites in the roof, a rat in my phonetics class (even though I only cover human speech sounds), and a snake in the library have all created no little distraction for students and staff alike, particularly Margaret, our usually calm and unassuming librarian, who is, like most Africans, thoroughly petrified of snakes.

Festival of hope

- Rachel

About a month ago I had a call from a friend of mine, Sandra, who runs an orphanage in Jos, telling me about a big celebration she was having called the 'Festival of Hope'. The aim was to raise awareness and funds for orphans here in Plateau State. "Rachel, we'd like the orphans to dance on stage - do you think you can put one together in a week?" Not wanting to miss the opportunity, I took up the challenge and chose a song from the film 'Sister Act 2', a remix of the well known hymn 'Joyful, Joyful'. And it was indeed a joyful occasion. The hall was packed with some well known dignitaries, including the State Governor's son. Some well-loved local musicians also sang with the children on stage. It was very moving...

*"Hear the cry of the land,
See the face of the people,
Hear the cry of the orphans,
See the face of the children.
Lord arise - show yourself strong,"*

I was quite nervous about the dance since although the children had done well in learning the moves, they hadn't been able to memorise them so I was going to have to dance in front with them, like a choir director. I had seen a programme and was relieved that we were near the beginning, but unfortunately everything was jiggled around so we had to wait for a couple of hours before we were told to get ready. By this time, some of the children had wandered off and we only just found them all in time. Finally, we were on stage, and everything was going well until there was a power cut, and we were plunged into total darkness without music. This kind of thing is very common here so you just take it in your stride and get on with it. The children did well and it had been wonderful to get to know each of them a little during the week. As for the event, in addition to creating awareness, enough money was raised to make up food and clothes parcels for 500 orphans. Afterwards, I met Dapps, a local musician, who gave me one of his CDs and asked if I would choreograph a dance for one of the tracks on it! If you'd like to help support an orphan in Jos then let us know.



Orphans dancing at the Festival of Hope

Adoption update

Our adoption adventure has had many twists and turns over the last year. Several times, different babies have been suggested to us as possibilities, but so far nothing has worked out. However, on a recent visit to a local hospital, one of the doctors told us about a lady there due to give birth in about a month's time, who is keen to give her baby up for adoption. Of course, she may change her mind, but we've been told by those looking after her that this is very unlikely given her circumstances, and that they will consider us as possible foster parents. The legal side of things is far from clear but we have been advised that fostering a child for a year or two before we start the adoption process will give us the best chance of success. In the meantime, we've started on those aspects of the process that we can do now: having adoption counselling, talking to lawyers, and having home visits. Please pray that if the Lord does intend for us to look after this child, then he will continue to guide both us and the others involved along the way. If we do end up fostering, the next step would be to apply for legal guardianship of the child, which would hopefully enable us to visit the U.K. together with the child, possibly as early as February 2014.

'Friends, when life gets really difficult, don't jump to the conclusion that God isn't on the job. Instead be glad that you are in the very thick of what Christ experienced. This is a spiritual refining process, with glory just around the corner'
- 1 Peter 4:12-13 (The Message)

Coming up in the arts department...

- Rachel

On 23rd Sept, Peter and I are off to Ghana for a week for a Global Missions Conference. We will be helping to run a track called 'Discipleship Through the Arts' and by the end of the conference, our track needs to come up with some recommendations for what the church in Africa should do in this area.

We are thrilled that Peter has now finished his two-year Ethno Arts training! He will take some time away from the office after our trip to Ghana to do some partnership development work, meaning he needs to raise funds for part of his salary. As a starter, he plans to make his own CD of Scripture songs in different languages. As Peter starts this phase of new partnerships, we are reminded of how thankful we are for all of you who faithfully partner with us. We wouldn't be here without you!

Prayer points

❖ For the fostering/adoption process.

- ❖ For Rachel and Peter's trip to Ghana.
- ❖ For Rachel leading an Ethno-arts workshop at NBTT in Oct.
- ❖ For Matthew with his full teaching load.
- ❖ For Peter as he starts his partnership development.

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SUPPORT: Our financial support has dropped by 20% over the last year. If you would like to support us, then please contact us for more information. You can also give to us online at: www.wycliffe.org.uk/memberfundraising/matthew-and-rachel-harley.

Dressed as the Mad Hatter and Ugly Duchess for Rachel's birthday party!

