

News from Hans and Mary Van den Corput: April 2012

Greetings from Nigeria. The rain has started falling heavily and the road to Ugwueke is again in bad shape. Our apologies that we have not sent a letter for a long time. Several times I started a letter but got distracted by one thing or another.

From June 15 until July 16 we will be on furlough in Holland and we will be staying at the usual Camp "Het Wolfsven", in Mierlo. We are looking forward to seeing the family, especially Hans's mother who has now turned 88 years old. She came to visit us last time at the camp. Although the accommodation is costly we can manage every year with help from friends in Holland. We have not been able to travel to the UK for several years and also this year it will not be possible because of the Olympic Games.

In January, the children at last changed to the American school in Jos (Hillcrest). Maurice was able to continue at his current level, grade 6, and he is doing excellently. However Marcel had to retake his grade 4 year; he too is doing well and seems to enjoy the school. They came home on spring break in March. The school year will end on May 24. Just before the spring break, a bomb went off in a church in Jos, and the school and hostel had to be closed. The children were able to stay with friends in Jos until the holidays started.

During the past year the hospital has continued to grow. A new maternity ward, which was promised by someone from Ugwueke, has been completed and awaits commissioning. This promises to be a big event because the man who made it all happen wants to invite all the governors from the Igbo states and many other dignitaries. It will be combined with the 10 year anniversary of the hospital.

Some gifts have been received from the methodist church, a 100 kV generator and two scanning machines (the scanning machines have yet to be installed) and shortly afterward a container full of medical equipment and materials from the Irish Methodist Church arrived. Much needed items in this container were an automatic theatre table, a huge theatre light, an infant resuscitation table, an incubator and children's beds. So many thanks to all those who have contributed to these gifts. Besides these the hospital has been able to buy a new 60 kV generator and a "new" hospital vehicle from its own resources.

Every day begins with morning prayers and on Sundays there is a service too. These services are held at the entrance of the hospital. Work on building a chapel at the hospital started well and reached roofing level, but this project has not made any progress since last year. We pray that our fortunes will soon change and that we will be able to finish the job.

Last year quite a few Nigerian doctors applied for posts in the hospital. Most of them sought only temporary employment for one year. Of the present 5 full time doctors, only one has stayed for more than 1 year. The question has to be asked: how useful is it to have a lot of doctors around? Doctors are costly, and the number of patients has not increased since last year. Most of the income of the hospital comes from the theatre cases. In spite of the number of doctors my workload has not reduced. None of the doctors can yet do operations on their own. Many patients insist on seeing me and they wait for days until I am available. Sometimes the doctors can only manage to see a few patients in a day. However, we do welcome doctors who are looking for long term employment.

Since 2002, the Methodist church has been hoping that the Colony Hospital that is near to our house at the Colony, Uzuakoli (or better: Lohum) would be returned to the church. This almost happened in 2002, and that was the reason for my employment by the Methodist church. As it did not come to fruition, I continued with the project in Ugwueke. Last year the Abia State Government wanted to return the hospital to the church, but again the process has come to a halt because of local politics. There is no hospital in any of the surrounding villages and people have to go to Umuahia which is 20 km away.

A coin has an up side and a down side. It is good to have the children at a better school, but this has also changed our lives at Uzuakoli. We have got a new dog - the previous dog was killed by a hunter's trap - but he cannot take the place of the boys. Mary is now much more involved in the babies' home or in church programmes. I am spending more time attending to emergencies at the hospital. On Sundays I often attend the hospital service, while Mary worships at the Colony chapel. We have to try hard to keep a bit of family life. Please pray for our family, for the children in Jos and for us in our various locations, that no situation will pull us apart.

Thank you for all your support during the last year.

From Mary, Hans, Maurice en Marcel van den Corput,
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