

To Nigeria ... With Love

Mike & Barb Blyth, Serving with SIM in Nigeria

April 21, 2004

As we descended over the Sahel savannah, Nigeria in the dry season looked just the same as ever—brown and dusty. Likewise, as we bumped along in the van through the pothole filled streets of Kano, in darkness because of the power being out, it seemed nothing had changed. Now that we've been in Nigeria for over two months, we have seen a few changes, some positive and some negative.

The first change—a welcome one—was that the guesthouse in Kano now has seats on the toilets. This is a real step forward, because the various SIM missionaries responsible for expediting missionary travelers through Kano have tried over the years to implement this improvement but without lasting success. We understand that until now the management has been discouraged by the fact that the flimsy seats are quickly broken as some villagers try to stand on them rather than sit. Whether that's true or not, only time will tell whether this modernization will endure.

Far more surprising and significant were the changes we found in Luke. We had been away for only a year, but what a difference it made. When we left in January 2003 he had just started putting



two words together, like “Open ... fridge.” When we met him again a year later, the first thing he said was, “Let's go to the Blyths' house.” And he hasn't stopped talking since. During our home assignment he had stayed with the Naatz family, where he had five brothers and sisters and tons of interaction. Besides talking non-stop, Luke loves listening to “Adventures in Odyssey” tapes, helping Mom cook, going to preschool three mornings a week, watering flowers, and wearing band aids.

We do have some important decisions to make regarding Luke in the coming months. Should we go ahead with the court case, as we had planned, to try to adopt him or at least gain official custody? The risk of that is that he could be taken away from us permanently. Meanwhile the authorities don't seem to mind the status quo. Should he have surgery for his spastic leg this summer, when an orthopedic surgeon is visiting, or wait until, possibly, it can be done in the US? Should we keep him in the preschool with other international kids, or send him to the private special education school? Ultimately, which should be his home country, Nigeria or the US? And the biggest question, what kind of puppy should we get for him?

We're seeing changes in the medical ministry as well. On the negative side, we're finding more and more children with HIV/AIDS, one or two cases each week. Large international programs (including President Bush's) to provide antiretroviral drugs are getting off the ground, creating a new and unexpected glimmer of hope. Still, those programs are directed toward adults and not children, and no one knows how successful they will be. On the positive side, more Nigerian churches are getting serious both about *preventing* the spread of HIV, and about caring for those affected by it.

“If bleach kills the HIV virus, why do people with AIDS not drink bleach so that they kill the vi-

Mike & Barb: mike.blyth@bigfoot.com
PMB 2009
Jos, Nigeria
<http://missionary.sim.org/blyth>

Sara: saralynnNG@hotmail.com
c/o Steve & Lisa Gertz, (see on right)

SIM Office:
P.O. Box 7900
Charlotte, NC 28241-7900
(704) 588-4300

Lisa and Steve Gertz: slgertz@bigfoot.com
29W460 Emerald Green Drive #28H
Warrenville IL 60555
(630) 836-0910

Jonathan & Lori: nightwind@myrealbox.com
1217 5th Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54703
(715) 836-9848

rus in their body?” “Why don’t the anti-HIV drugs cure the disease?” “When will there be an AIDS vaccine?” These are some of the more common questions about HIV/AIDS. The updated edition of *AIDS is Real and It’s in Our Church* should be published soon and answers these and many other questions. The first edition addressed the problem in Nigeria, while we’re aiming the new one at Christians all across Africa. There are many books and pamphlets about HIV/AIDS in Africa, but Jean Garland—the main author—and I believe that this book is unique in its combination of breadth, technical accuracy, easy readability, use of stories, and biblical perspective. Please pray with us that it will become a valuable tool for the church in the battle against this epidemic.

Before settling into work on the pediatric ward, I spent two weeks in Kenya at the biannual continuing education conference for missionary doctors and dentists. It’s sponsored by the (American) Christian Medical and Dental Association, and I want to heartily thank all of you who belong to that group. Dozens of doctors, many with previous mission experience and many from top medical centers in the US, took the time and money to come to Africa to help us grow professionally and spiritually. A sampling of topics included

- Ethical issues in reproductive technology;
- Mentoring Christian values to the next generation of Africa’s doctors
- Preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV
- Acute coronary syndrome
- Managing complex humanitarian emergencies
- Stem cells: promises and pitfalls



Triplets

In the first room on rounds, on the first day back at Evangel hospital, I discovered that we had triplets! Three darling baby girls, weighing in at about 2.5 pounds each. Today, five weeks later, they’ve just been discharged. Their combined weight now is slightly less than what our grandson Josiah weighed at birth.

Last week we went as a family to visit them and to take them some quilts that women of Apollo Baptist Church in Glendale, Arizona, had sewn, as well as some baby items like soap and shampoo. The mom was very pleased. The Muslim parents are poor and from a town two hours away, so could not afford the hospital bill. We paid most of it from the children’s fund, explaining to the parents that caring Christians overseas—you, in other words—had contributed money to help when needed. We’re looking forward to seeing the family again in two weeks.



Family News

- Saralynn graduates from Wheaton College on Mothers’ Day. Lori also completes her one-year program in early childhood development. Hurray! Both will be looking for new jobs.
- Jonathan and Lori have a new address and phone number; please make a note of them (see bottom of first page).

Thanks for your prayers, financial support, and encouraging emails and letters. We always enjoy hearing from you!

*Love,
Mike and Barb*

PS: In the past three weeks there have been two armed robberies involving SIM and other missionaries in Jos. Remember to pray for our safety and that we will not be distracted or discouraged by such stresses. Thanks.