

Hello VMC Family,

Bob Klamser and I left Ventura at 4:30 AM on Sept 11th. After a 4 hour flight from LAX to Dulles (fast plane), a 7 hour flight to Frankfurt, and then 6 hour flight to Lagos we arrived in Nigeria at 5pm on Friday Sept 12th. We met Ezekiel Ango at the airport. Ezekiel is the United Missionary Church Association's director of Missions here in Nigeria. After that we waited about 3 hour with him for Dave Mann, the Director of World Partners and Richard Greene, the lead teacher for The Keystone Project to fly in. Once they arrived, we drove to a Baptist Guest house in Lagos where we over-nighted. The weather, vegetation and humidity made if feel very Hawaiian. Even the guest house had Plumerias and palm trees. To our surprise, we were fed our first meal here in Nigeria; spaghetti & meatballs!

Several initial observations about Lagos: rampant unemployment; airport guards with AK-47's looking for bribes, no waiting areas at the airport; Lagos crazy full of people ~ 18 million inhabitants; 1 in 5 Africans lives in Nigeria; driving to guest house there were bazaars/stores open along streets using candles for lighting.

Saturday 13 Oct – pancake breakfast, Richard, Dave, Bob, Joseph (an amazing Christian leader from Uganda), Ezekiel and I, along with our driver Mr. Johnson drove from 9am – 5:30pm. It was only supposed to be a “4” hour drive; the first 2 miles took us over 2 hours. We scraped one car, got bumped by one other. No damage done, some yelling occurred, but that's it. Streets are crazy. 6 or 7 lanes of traffic in which we in California would only have 3 lanes. On our way up to Ilorin where we were going, we would drive anywhere on the streets to avoid potholes, people and motorbikes; left side, right side, either shoulder, and more. All in a day's driving in Nigeria. We crossed two armed check points – waved right through on both. We were called “whitey” by many children – affectionately I believe. My observation while driving is that everyone here is an independent business man. Anytime you slow down, people are running up to the car to sell you something. Reminds me of crossing the border at Tijuana.

14 Oct – Sunday – woke up to pouring rain this morning. All the structures here have metal roofs, so it was quite loud. Scrambled eggs & “sausage” today for breakfast; I didn't ask what was in the sausage. Went to church this morning. The church we went to is associated with the Missionary Denomination's University/Seminary here in Nigeria. Approx 500 people at the service. They were actually installing their new senior and assistant pastors today. Very western style service by African standards. The people were very reserved during the 3 hymns, and then they let loose for the choruses we sang. All the women were dressed up with wonderful head “wrappings”. The men did not wear their hats in church. All the little kids sat up front – so cute. The service was about 3 hours with the extras of dedicating the pastors. Note: approximately 15 minutes of announcements!

For dinner we had asked for a traditional Nigerian dinner. I had pondo yam (cassava root) made into a bread dough like ball served with mixed meat called egusi (I think): the mixed meat included various parts of cow and goat (intestine, leg, and stomach – that I

am aware of) cooked in a chopped spinach base with very hot spices mixed in. I didn't eat too much. It just wasn't my thing.

Monday Oct 15 – I slept well even though the fire alarm went off in the middle of the night. Found out Bob got up, got dressed and went downstairs – at least he was responsible. No one else did. First session of the Keystone project was supposed to start at 8:00am American time. This equated to 9:30am African time. Good sessions both morning and afternoon. During lunch, Bob and I met Pastor Caleb from a little further north. He has a missionary named Lile who is ministering to some of the Songhai people who have moved south for better fishing and farming. We also found out that one of the seminary students lives in Kebbi State where the Songhai are located. We hope to meet him very soon.

Observation: Bob and I originally tried to come to Nigeria several months ago. It didn't work out. We both believe God is working here to have us meet people who we would never have met otherwise. These several people we met today may be just the start to us being able to come alongside the Songhai. We don't know what that will look like for VMC yet, but we firmly believe God is at work.

Prayer requests for our VMC family:

- Pray for the Songhai people
- Pray for the harvest among them – even though the Shiite Muslims are already there, we have heard that many have been unhappy with Shia law.
- Pray for our contacts among the pastors and missionaries here.
- Pray for the Keystone conference – pray that God would raise up many disciples to make disciples to make disciples.....
- Pray for our health and travel mercies – so far so good.
- Praise God for VMC being willing to send us here so that we can join in the work He is doing.

Tuesday Oct 16 – *Corrections: Caleb is a United Missionary Church of Africa District Superintendent. Lile's name is Salem and he is a missionary in Caleb's district.* Best news of the day – Caleb & Salem came back to us and suggested that they perform a survey of the Songhai area before we come back, to find out and assess the needs of the people! Wow is God good. We also met Josephine who lives in Kebbi State. She works at the Ministry of Education and her husband is the Assistant Director at the Ministry of Agriculture. Tonight we had a pretty good thunder and lightning storm – power kept going on/off. However, that's not any different than any other time here in Nigeria. ☺

Oct 17 – I went to the airport today to get tickets to fly back to Lagos next week. On the way there, we stopped so I could exchange some money. I changed \$1,500.00 into 177,000 Naira. That's a big wad of cash. 177 – 1,000 Naira bills. No one here accepts credit cards. Each 1,000 Naira bill is worth just under \$10.

Oct 18 – Thursday – We are still at the Keystone seminar getting some great teaching and training on making disciples. Today, Bob & I had a chance to share with the participants why we are here. I really thought we might get 1 or 2 more people with interest in the Songhai people. We got at least a dozen! When Bob & I left Ventura, our prayer was to be able to meet up with a person in the church who would see our vision and be able to guide us in Nigeria. We must have close to 20. God has way surpassed our vision. Wow. God has been confirming to both Bob & I that we (VMC) is at the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing. God is at work, we will join Him. Dinner tonight was taken on the campus with the Executive Director of UMCA, the pastor of the chapel, 5 various district superintendents, Ezekiel, Michael – the UMCA’s Chairman of Missions, Joseph and the rest of us from the States. It was a linen table cloth affair. The various leaders each said thank you to us for coming and we had a chance to say thank you to them for hosting us and joining with us in our mission. God is at work.

Thank you everyone for your prayers. God is answering them beyond our wildest dreams.

Update #3

Oct 20th – Saturday – We went to Ezekiel’s graduation. He was receiving his Bachelor’s Degree in Theology from the seminary. Of the 7 awards given out to the 100+ graduates, Ezekiel received 2 for best in English Literature and best in Greek! Not only did he receive these awards, but he received these awards and his degree while he was working a full time job as Director of Missions for the United Missionary Church of Africa. He also travels a lot and so misses many classes; he is married with 3 children, the youngest being 1 month old, etc. God has blessed this man and yet he is so humble.

Oct 21st – went to church today; it ran almost 3 hours. Great worship and teaching. We had lunch with Michael & Ezekiel to work over details of our relationship between UMCA and VMC. Michael really believes we need relationship with the top brass of the UMCA. During lunch today, Bob received the call that his mother had passed away. It was not unexpected and she was ready, but I know it is hard for Bob being on the other side of the globe. Bob spent the afternoon talking with family. I spent the afternoon in the hotel bar (not drinking) watching the Manchester United vs. Chelsea football (soccer) game. This was a huge matchup. I was the only Caucasian in a room with approximately 40 very dark and excited Nigerians. I felt right at home with them. At one point when Chelsea scored, I was getting hugs from strangers. They love their football here. This evening, Michael arranged for us to meet with the President and Executive Director of the UMCA (the top brass). They are embracing everything we have proposed and they will support us in any way they can. They have been trying to get back to missions and praying that there would be people coming in that they can partner with. We were praying for locals we could partner with. God continues to show His face and favor as we seek to reach the Songhai.

Oct 22 – Monday – went to the bank here this morning to get some money that was wired to us last Thursday...the long and short of the story is that the bank only sometimes has

internet access. The records are kept in ledgers! We finally were able to get our money after the local bank here called the headquarters and they compared ledgers for the past several days. It took almost 2 hours! We did a little shopping in the markets, got clothes and a cell phone. We also bought Ezekiel a new cell phone as a graduation present and to say thanks for everything he has done. We have changed our return flights and will be leaving in the morning for a 40+ hour journey home.

Bob & I sincerely thank all of you for your prayers while we have been gone. We look forward to reporting back to VMC collectively and then with many of you individually as time permits.

God is good.

Eric Baucom