

News from the Van den Corputs January 2013

Dear all,

I am writing from a cold Holland at New Year. The burial of a good friend of ours- on January 7- is the reason for my leaving Nigeria at the busiest time of the year. My friend who has just died had also lived for 10 years in Nigeria and had been supportive to us and our children since 1991. Every year she and her husband used to help us with the booking of the holidayhouse in Holland. They are the godparents of Maurice and have been communicating with us all the time we have lived in Nigeria.

The preparations for the trip were quite chaotic. I had to get a local flight, an international flight and a visa on the same day. At this time of the year all flights from Nigeria are fully booked because of Christmas. Because of a mistake by the travel agency in the booking of the internal flight, I had to make a new booking for a later flight at the crowded airport, which led to my arrival at the Immigration Office in Abuja near closing time. They were not willing to handle the case so late, but praise be to God that I was still able to catch the plane that night.

This weekend I should have made a trip to Jos to take the children back to school. I am thankful that the son of a former neighbour took them back for me. The hostel where the boys stay during term-time closes during the long holiday periods; if it is just a short break Mary takes them to the family house in Jos. The trip to Jos is about 700 km but it takes a whole day because of road blocks, bad roads and stops by tax collectors. Although I have paid all the Local Government and State taxes, collectors on the roads often stop me as a white person at various points to collect the taxes. They stop people from passing by putting a rod with nails in front of the tyres until they have paid what they want them to pay. The only day on which they do not work is on Sunday.

Handover of General Hospital, Uzuakoli: After being under the administration of the Government for 10 years, the general hospital at Uzuakoli has been given back to the Methodist Church, together with the TB and Leprosy hospital and all the other buildings at the Colony. Before the Biafran war the whole of the Colony belonged to the Methodist Church. It was a large settlement of more than 5000 patients with good facilities. As effective drugs for the treatment of leprosy were developed, many of the patients could be discharged. After the war, all expatriates had to leave and the general hospital and the leprosy hospital were taken over by the Government. Only the Leprosy Revalidation Department (the Leprosy Welfare Department) remained under the administration of the Church.

In 1981, Miss Rosalind Colwill was the first expatriate to start working at the Leprosy Welfare Department. In 1992, the Government wanted to return the general hospital to the Church, but because of a disagreement between the Church and some of the local community leaders about the naming of the hospital (which at that time was known as the General Hospital, Uzuakoli, whereas the community leaders wanted the name to be Imenyi) the handover did not take place. Now that the hospital has been renamed the "Rosalind Colwill Methodist Hospital Imenyi", this obstacle has been removed. An ambulance has already been donated by a philanthropist. Most of the buildings are in a dilapidated state, so the hospital will start to function in the buildings that can be easily repaired. Because our house and the Motherless Babies' Home are also at the Colony it will be easier to work at this hospital than

at Ugwueke. The hospital is near the main road and is only 20 km from Umuahia, which makes it easier to get to for many of our patients. There is currently a very good electricity supply, too.

The take over of both the general hospital and the TBL hospital at the Colony will not be without problems. There is still a problem with the local community. The land on which the hospital is situated belongs to the landowners, and many years ago the Church stopped paying the land rent. Besides payment of the cumulative rent there are certain conditions in place concerning staffing of the hospital. In addition, of course, there is the difficulty of needing to divide my time between Ugwueke, Ozuitem and the Colony. My work at Ugwueke/Ozuitem is still very busy in spite of having four Nigerian colleagues. I spend about 70 hours per week in the hospital, about half of which is spent in the operating theatre. Each of my colleagues spends only about 35 hours per week in the hospital and less than a quarter of that time in theatre. The strange thing is that all of them want to pursue a career in gynaecology, but none of them seems to be very interested in operating in the theatre, where more than half of the cases are gynaecological.

Because I believe that the hospital at the Colony has the best chances for development and survival in the long term I have decided to devote the majority of my time and energy to this hospital. With the help of God, the hospital at Ugwueke has been growing. We pray that with the help of God the hospital at the Colony will develop in the same way.

Some prayer requests:

- For the smooth handover of the hospitals at the Colony.
- For the new bishop of Uzuakoli diocese who took over in November 2012 and has since then been much involved in the handover.
- For more doctors and other staff for Ugwueke and the Colony.
- For our Wesley Guild visitors in February to March 2013.

Greetings from

The vandenCorput family (Mary, Hans, Maurice + Marcel).