

June 2016

Hello everyone. We have started our leave in Holland. There was again a problem with my visa. My residence visa for Nigeria had expired and had to be renewed. We have also applied for a special status as husband to a Nigerian wife. But the process is still ongoing. The application is at the desk of the Minister of Interior. But I was told there is still a huge pile of files on his desk waiting to be signed. Anyhow I got my visa and also my green aliens card, which I have not been receiving for many years. We are staying in Holland at our usual place until July 25.

It has been a busy year. Ending 2013 the general hospital at the Colony returned to the Methodist Church. The year 2014 and the first half of 2015 passed without much activity. But the hospital was commissioned by the prelate of MCN, his eminence S.U. Uche in May 2015. A month later I was made a knight of J. Wesley in MCN. The hospital really took off after my leave in 2015. Many collapsed buildings have been renovated. Most of the expenses could be paid by the revenue of the hospital. Until 2016 part of the costs were covered by the hospital at Ugwueke, but since 2016 the hospital has been on its own. At present I spend about 50 % of my time at Ugwueke (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday) and 50 % at Colony (Monday, Friday, Saturday). In both places I spend most of the days in the operation room. There are still many financial challenges: Renovation of collapsed wards and a doctor's house, new staff houses and security fencing. The hospital has expanded much since last year. All the existing staff houses have been occupied. The number of inpatient beds has increased to about sixty. Because of the need of water, a borehole was drilled at the Motherless Babies Home (MBH), nearby a huge existing water reservoir built by the former leprosy missionaries. The reservoir can contain more than 100,000 Lts of water. From there the water can flow by gravity all over the colony. A small pipeline has been constructed to the MBH.

A large pipeline has been laid across the Methodist seminary to the hospital. It provides water to both the hospital and the school. Before the students had to collect water with buckets and cans in the village. The hospital spent about 50,000 naira every week on water being brought by a tanker. The borehole pump is empowered by NEPA. This electricity supply has been more regular this year. Since the operating of the borehole there has been shortage of water again. In May this year the borehole was commissioned by the prelate of MCN.

Because of my work the turnover at Ugwueke has dropped with about 25 %. Unlike the colony, which is close to Uzuakoli and Umuahia, with good roads and a good water supply, Ugwueke is far from these towns and has the problem of bad roads and problems with the water supply. It has proven to be impossible to drill a bore hole at Ugwueke. The hospital has constructed a treatment plant for water that is pumped uphill from a stream at about 1.5 miles distance. If the water has been treated it can be drunk without further boiling. But the process needs a generator and the quantity of water prepared at a time is often not sufficient. Although it is clear that the Colony hospital in the future will become more important than the hospital at Ugwueke, the hospital at Ugwueke will still be important for that region. The school of nurses project that has been planned since several years ago has started this year with the building a students' hostel.

The Nigerian economy has undergone drastic changes. The costs of essential foods like rice and garri and the price of fuel and transport have increased between 50 and 100 %. Until now

we have not changed the hospital fees, or the salaries of staff. But in the near future changes may be unavoidable, as the price changes seem to be permanent.

Before our furlough we made a small photo book concerning the projects Royal Cross Methodist Hospital, Nkechi Colwell Methodist Hospital and Motherless Babies Home. We are thinking of how to make this available for those who are interested.

We are happy that there have not been any serious challenges since our last furlough. We thank God for always being with us and helping us to stay positive in this time of economic problems in Nigeria.

We thank the World Church Office for their continuous administrative and financial support.

Yours in His name

Mary, Hans, Maurice and Marcel van den Corput