**July 2017**

Hello everyone

At this moment, we are on our furlough in Holland. We had an interesting flight from Nigeria to Amsterdam.  The air France plan that had to take us in the evening of June 16 was unable to land because of a storm over Abuja. It became a day flight on 17 June.  First we had to stay overnight in Presidential Hotel in PH, the next night we had a few hours rest in Hotel Ibis in Paris.  Overall, we spent one day extra.

The last month was exciting again. In December 2016, Hans received the approval of a Special Citizen Status. So no more need for a visa. However, the document had to be processed by the Immigration Authority. Finally, one week before our departure date Hans received all necessary items. In the next coming years he can travel "freely ". In the previous year’s getting a visa was always a problem. We even missed a flight once because the visa came too late. The last months we had hoped to join the Jerusalem Pilgrimage from Abia State.  Somebody from Government had included us among the candidates for the Pilgrimage. The final approval of all candidates is with the State Governor. Unfortunately, the governor of Abia State was in a litigation with a rival who was contesting his position as governor.  Finally, the governor won the case, but the Pilgrimage did not take place again.

The last year has not been easy. Since 2014, Hans has been supervising/running two hospitals.  The Royal Cross Methodist Hospital at Ugwueke, a rural village about 35 km away from the Colony at Lohum, and The Nkechi Colwill Methodist Hospital at Colony Lohum. From Friday until Tuesday at Lohum, from Tuesday until Friday at Ugwueke.  In both hospitals, four Nigerian doctors have been employed. The hospital at Ugwueke has been in place since 2002. The major problems are bad roads, supply of clean water and electricity. The hospital has three old generators that cost much on maintenance and repairs. Because of the location, it is a challenge to make the hospital attractive for patients and staff. In 2008, it was agreed that a School of Nurses should be built.  Up until now, there is an unfinished hostel building. Support from the Methodist Church Nigeria for this S.O.N is much needed.

The hospital has had serious challenges with its doctors.  Some have started their private clinic. In addition, the refusal to attend patients when on call and absence during the daytime have become regular issues. Last year the former administrator resigned after 10 years of service because of age. A rev. administrator has taken over. The hospital at Colony Lohum started in 2014. The major problems are clean water and electricity.  Because of the location near Uzuakoli and Umuahia with good access roads, it has been more attractive to patients. Initially there were serious problems with the administrators.

In 2015, the prelate of MCN visited the hospital.  He said he had big plans for the Hospital.  The MCN has a University of Science and technology in the West of Nigeria.  He wants to have a medical school and teaching hospital at Colony. In the past, the Colony had been considered by the government as the site for the State Teaching Hospital but because of politics, it was decided to build it at Aba.

On a typical day, Hans starts by 7.30 with his ward round with the nurses. In Ugwueke, the doctors join much later or not all.  In Lohum the doctors join by 9 am. On Monday, there is a major outpatient department day at Lohum. On other days, he does a few hours outpatient department before he starts in the theatre. On Saturday, he only does theatre at Lohum. Most days Hans finishes theatre at about 7 pm. Then he still has to check the theatre patients for next day and the emergency patients who were admitted that day.

On Sundays, we often go to separate churches. Hans likes to attend the service at the hospital chapel in Ugwueke. The service is often in English and part of the service are the testimonials by patients. Patients give testimony about how God has healed them through the treatment at the hospital at Ugwueke. It is touching to see patients come forward, sing a praise song and then give their testimonial.  Mary goes with some baby nurses and the babies from the MBH to the chapel at the Colony.

Most of the income comes from the surgical patients. Last 2 years there have problems because of the devaluation of the naira. The prices of all products had to be increased, especially the prices of surgical operations. At times, the prices of drugs were so unstable that weekly price reviews were needed. Most of our patients are either self-employed (trader, farmer) or low-grade civil servants (teacher). In Abia State Civil servants have not receive their salaries for many months.  Many inpatients, especially surgical patients have had problems with paying their bills. The economy has since then improved a bit, but most prices have not reduced.

Until now, each hospital has had its own Board of Governors. Since last year, the Bishop has promised to bring both Boards together into one Board with a chair. The Bishop will be just a member. The Board will decide upon all decision concerning these type of payments. The history of the Leprosy Colony at (Lohum) Uzuakoli can be easily assessed. Many buildings have been left behind from this period, in various condition. Last year the water reservoir at the Motherless Babies Home was renovated.  It can supply water to the whole of the Colony. The renovation of a major doctor’s house, Dr Davies house, has just been completed.

The next major project is the Colony Chapel. In November is the celebration of a well-known Leprosy patient. Mr.  Harcourt White. He composed many Methodist hymns. He was buried 40 years ago at the site of the Chapel. Before this celebration the chapel needs to be renovated but the church has not got the money. The costs of renovation are well above 10 million.  At an early stage, the local community had promised to give about 7 million but only 1.5 million Naira has been received.

Maurice and Marcel have moved on one year.  Maurice is going to the last year of High School.  Next year he has to choose whether he wants to go to College in US or go to Holland for further studies. He wants to study architecture. Marcel will pass on to 2nd year of High School.

The Motherless Babies Home at the Colony has 15 infants/toddlers in the range from 0 to 4 years. The MBH is part of the Leprosy Welfare Department. Since last year, a new director of this LWD has been appointed. Although Mary is the matron of the MBH, the new director Revd does not communicate with her but he communicates with the person under her. Because the Revd is from the same village as the Bishop and the Prelate, it has not been possible to discuss this matter with the Bishop.

Although we are not happy, the way things are going in the hospitals and the MBH we do not give up hope. God knows what is best for us and he will show us the way forward.

We thank the WCO Methodist Church House UK for the administrative and spiritual support during the last year.