

Volunteering in Nigeria

Volunteering in Nigeria – Summer 2009

Recently, several visitors from the UK went to Jos, Nigeria to spend some time helping at a Christian Bible college. Christian Faith Institute trains and equips pastors and church leaders for effective evangelism by the power of God's Spirit and for church planting in their home localities. CFI reaches out to areas all around the sub-Saharan region, and also into Egypt.



Peter Cheesman, along with his wife Val, went primarily as a visiting lecturer, but also implemented an accounting system to ensure the college's finances were fully transparent and auditable. Val's role was to set up a primary school, and during the two weeks the Cheesmans were in Nigeria, she successfully started the school, and wrote a curriculum for others to continue teaching.

David Liniker travelled to CFI to implement a library system for the college, to catalogue the study books and to facilitate a well-organised study library, making it one of very few in the region.

Dries De Coster travelled with his wife Victoria, and he lectured on modern world history, also helping out with physical training of the students. Victoria took five sessions on the principles of using television and video as a tool for evangelism. This included practical training with filming and editing equipment.

Each has written a short account of the experiences that effected and encouraged them the most – we hope they do the same for you!

Teaching and Learning in Jos!

Setting Up a School and Other Inspiring Experiences

By Val Cheesman

It was a really great privilege to go and be part of the visit to Jos. It was about a year ago that we were sitting around chatting, and I felt that I really wanted to go and see what God was doing in this place. We'd been hearing lots of stories about the college from Kent and Ruth, and so we saved up and went this summer. Just shortly before we were due to leave, we got a phone call from Ruth, and she asked me how I would feel about helping to start up a kindergarten in Jos. I thought that sounded a bit big for me to do, but said ok, and was happy to be able to help in any way.

Blessings of Toys and Books



So I put a note in the church newsletter, asking for donations of toys, books, games and so on, in order that we could start up a kindergarten. And this was the first way I was blessed, even before we went to Nigeria, because so many people gave things to us. I was away for a couple of weeks before we departed for Nigeria, and Peter my husband kept ringing me up and saying that more people had dropped round things at our house to take with us to start the nursery. And that was wonderful to see just how generous people were, and it felt like I was taking everyone from the church here with me, as if everyone was a part of what we went along to do.

First Few Days at School

When we arrived in Jos, I was asked to start a morning summer school for the children of the staff and students. On the first morning about 16 or 17 children turned up. We had agreed that the school would run from 9am-12 noon, but on the first morning, I arrived at 8, an hour early, hoping to be able to prepare, but the children were already there, sitting waiting for me. We finished at 1pm on the first day, so that was a bit of a marathon!

God Speaking to Me and the Children

I ran the school for two weeks and after a few days we got a routine going, telling Bible stories to the children every day. It was a very special experience. It was as if as I told the stories to the children, God was telling them to me in a new and fresh way. It was really quite amazing - every time I spoke to the children, God spoke to me! And it rekindled that fire of love for God in my heart, just telling the children about how much God loves them.

Looking to the Future

At the end of the two weeks with the summer school, I then met with a lady who we're hoping will start teaching at the planned primary school for the children in September. Her name is Antonia, and I sat with her and prayed with her about CFI's plan to start the school, and shared the things that I've learnt about teaching and the things that God's taught me. And that was really a privilege – it was wonderful.

Faith Alive Hospital

The second major thing that God really did for me whilst I was there is that I visited Faith Alive hospital. This is where my daughter-in-law Esther and her friend Susi (David's daughter) are working for two months as medical students. The hospital was set up 17 years ago by a Nigerian doctor. God spoke to him and said that he should try and help his own people who were suffering with AIDS and HIV. He started with a counselling service because initially he says that he didn't have enough faith to set up a hospital. But gradually, his work has grown and grown and they have a beautiful big hospital building and lots of sponsors from all over the world. The whole hospital is run on a voluntary basis, with God right at the centre.

God's Presence was Tangible

The day we visited there, we walked into the hospital, and Susi Liniker was praying with all the staff, and that really touched me deeply. We just stood there praying whilst she was praying for the staff and it was like God was really moving through her. And you could just feel God's presence in that place, and his care for everyone there, all those who were so ill with HIV. The hospital runs programs where they give people a chance to learn practical skills such as sewing and woodwork, as well as the counselling. So that was a wonderful thing to see, and to witness God moving there.



Protecting and Loving Former Muslims

What also really affected me was our visit to see the work that a pastor who used to be a Muslim is doing around the north of Nigeria. Because of the work he does, this pastor has had several attempts on his life, including being put into the boot of a car and kidnapped, and also having been set on fire. This sort of thing has happened to him quite often, but God has kept him from being killed. So now he runs a safe house for other Muslims who've converted to Christianity and are fleeing for their lives.

Educating Teenagers

He is also involved, with his wife, in providing an education for teenagers who are converted Muslims. We heard some of the testimonies of these youngsters and the things they've been through since converting to Christianity. Some of

these young people were there simply because they needed physical protection. All were being educated and given a chance to know God's love and have a completely different life, because of this work that the Pastor and his wife are doing.

God Burning His Love into my Heart

At the end of our visit to the safe house, I was asked to pray for the young people. I felt a bit put on the spot, but as I prayed, it was like God was just burning his love again into my heart - he loves me, he died for me, he loves those teenagers there, he loves us here in England. The simplicity of the Gospel really came back afresh in my heart. Jesus died for us, he loves us – that why we love him, and that's why we reach out to others. So the time we spent in Nigeria in August 2009 was really precious to me.

Fellowship & Teaching in Nigeria

Two Weeks in Nigeria at Christian Faith Institute

By Peter and Lois Russell

In May, Peter Russell and his wife Lois travelled to Jos in northern Nigeria to a Bible school called Christian Faith Institute (CFI). The college was founded by Dr Kent Hodge and his wife Ruth, to train pastors from around the sub-Saharan region. Peter and Lois Russell were asked by the staff at CFI to take some lectures and also to interview and record the testimonies of various students and workers at the college.



Travelling to Jos

Jos is in Plateau State, which is in central Nigeria and fairly high up, so the climate is cooler than in the south – much like a warm English summer. We flew over with Kent Hodge, and landed early on Saturday morning in Abuja where we were met by Emmanuel Razack, the provost at the college. From there it was a three hour car drive to Jos, where we settled into the college guest house.

Moving Testimonies

The next two weeks were a joy and an education. Kent had asked us to interview a number of staff and students at CFI, so for an hour or two each weekday we heard their testimonies, which Lois filmed in order that we could

transcribe and collate them once back in England. These testimonies were very moving – many of them had suffered much hardship for the Gospel, particularly the ones who had been converted from a Muslim background. One pastor had been attacked and suffered severe burns, all because he was sharing the Christian Gospel – he continues to do the work of spreading the Gospel despite this.

The teaching at CFI had given the students a sound grounding in the Christian faith and now many want to go back to their home towns, preach the Gospel and establish churches there. This one of the aims of Christian Faith Institute – to equip people to go and share the Gospel with their own people. We were impressed by Kent’s vision to reach right to the north of Africa with the Gospel, and some of the student and staff are making in-roads into countries such as Egypt.

Teaching John’s Gospel

Each weekday morning Peter spent two hours teaching the students from John’s Gospel. They were a wonderful body of students – so eager to learn about the Word of God. Many of them had arrived at Christian Faith Institute with nothing except the clothes they wore. Yet their joy and commitment to Christ were a great blessing to us, and we particularly enjoyed their times of worship which were very free and spontaneous!

God is doing great things through CFI. One day we went with Kent and Razak to see the plot of land that the Bible school hopes to buy. The present buildings are rented, but they need their own land in order to be allowed to teach at Masters Degree level. Kent and the other CFI staff were also busy organising a pastors’ conference, the first of its kind in Nigeria. We met the Governor and Deputy Governor of Plateau State, and both are committed Christians and preachers – this is a rare thing for Nigerian Governors! Later we learnt that they preached to the 2000 or so pastors who attended the conference and the governors were a great blessing to all the pastors.

At the Cutting Edge of the Kingdom

We came home feeling greatly blessed and enriched ourselves. We have wonderful memories of all the students and staff, who welcomed us so warmly and lovingly – nothing was too much trouble for them. We are so pleased to be able to support and encourage the work at Christian Faith Institute, which we can only describe as being at the cutting edge of the kingdom of God. Please pray for the work in Nigeria, and that God will keep Kent, Ruth and all the students safe.