

# Mashiah Foundation News

Mary Beth & Bayo Oyebade—Missionaries in Jos, Nigeria

Dear Friends,

July 2020

I must apologize for our long silence...we have simply been swept away with a busy season of life in Nigeria.

## Covid-19

We are experiencing the pandemic with the rest of the world. Our plans have been shut down and shattered, but in the midst of it, we are picking up the pieces and learning to do things in a different way. All international flights to and from Nigeria were suspended at the end of March. The international airports have not opened up yet. However, there have been some evacuation flights, which various governments have chartered to fly their citizens home—if they desire to leave Nigeria. I would guess that about 95% of the Americans I know in Nigeria have decided to stay in Nigeria for the time being.



## Feeding Program

Although Covid-19 cases are rising in Nigeria, we have had far fewer cases than the U.S. The government has been quite stringent with various lockdowns ranging from 3-6 days. When we are on lockdown, we are not even allowed to go out and buy food. The total lockdowns were lifted by the middle of June. Now we are just concentrating on hand-washing, social distancing, and mask-wearing.

There are so many people in Nigeria who are dependent on daily wages in order to survive. The lockdowns really make daily survival extremely difficult. Bayo has been so concerned for the people who buy their food on a daily basis. At the end of March, he started a food basket program for families who are in great need. Each week he contacts a few pastors in Jos to ask if they have any families in need of food. The answer is always a resounding "Yes!" Bayo asks the pastor to bring those families to Bezer Home at a certain time, then he and his staff provide bags of food for about 30-40 families each week. The people are always so excited. It feels like Christmas when they receive these food packages. We are very grateful to donors who have given money so we can provide this food. Bayo has found great joy in these weekly food distribution times. He currently only has enough food supply to do this for about two more weeks.

## Mashiah Hospital

The Mashiah Hospital has been running 24/7 for many years now. It is a fully functioning small hospital headed by a full-time doctor. Many babies have been born there—even some by Caesarian section! We are anxiously awaiting a shipping container filled with medical equipment from Supplies Overseas in Kentucky. Due to Covid-19, it is not yet on the sea, but it should be shortly. The Mashiah Hospital will be able to provide even more services when that equipment arrives. We are pleased to be able to provide basic medical services at subsidized rates. We look forward to being able to do more in the near future. The hospital has been anxiously waiting for the school to move out of one wing of the hospital so they can have all of their rooms—that will become a reality before long.

## Foundations Academy

We have been building a secondary school for a while now. Within a few months, it will be at a stage where the school can move in. It will still be far from done, but we will manage it in that condi-

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tion in the meantime. We have been able to make good progress on this building due to some very generous donations from our supporters. We are



incredibly grateful for this support, making this school building a reality. More than 300 of our students are orphans or vulnerable children. About 80 of those children are on full scholarship under Mashiah Foundation. The other children are sponsored by various organizations in the Jos area. Our total school population is more than 800 children, including students from the community who pay tuition. We have 200 staff who are working at the various school sites. Another 50 staff work in other areas of Mashiah Foundation.

I dedicate the majority of my time to heading the school sites. I work with a number of very competent administrators and principals who oversee various parts of the school. It's a big job and overwhelming at times, but I see the Lord's hand guiding me through all of those situations. We desire to provide the best education possible to the children in our care. At the same time, we are developing our teachers to be the best they can be. It's truly very fulfilling work.

I also work part-time at Hillcrest School teaching 9<sup>th</sup> grade English. That does stretch my time quite thin, but it helps us pay tuition for our own children's school fees at Hillcrest.

## **Need for Purchase of Laptops/Tablets**

Prior to Covid-19, Nigeria's education was not where it should be, and now with nationwide mandatory school closures, it could be another setback

to education in Nigeria. At Foundations Academy we made some very quick adjustments at the end of March in how we educate our students. We provided packets of work for our students and then followed up with messages and videos on the WhatsApp platform. With the start of the new school year coming soon, we would really like to provide some of our teaching staff with small laptops or tablets that they can use for online, remote instruction. We anticipate that we will have a hybrid program for the next school year where we will be in class if possible; but when we can't be, then we will use Google Classroom as our educational platform. All of our staff members have their own personal smart phones, but it is very difficult to adequately teach remotely from a phone. We can purchase good laptops or tablets right here in Jos for \$300-400 each. If you are able to help with this need, we would really appreciate it.

As you can imagine, our students also need to have a way to access the Internet. Most of them do so via a family phone while some have a laptop/tablet in their family. In June, a generous donor provided 10 brand new tablets for our children in Bezer Home so they can keep up with remote instruction. This was a wonderful gift, which is keeping our Bezer Home children connected to their teachers.

## **Sewing Program**

Our women's sewing program continues to press on. We are very grateful to Rafiki Foundation for their large orders, which they then sell in the U.S. This is truly a God-send because we have not had enough of a market in Nigeria for the items our women are producing. Our partnership with Rafiki is vital in helping to put food on the tables of our women. Please visit this website if you would like to purchase our items from them.

<https://store.rafikifoundation.org/women-of-hope.html>

Almost all of our sewing women have been making and selling cloth masks from their homes. We sure

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do have a lot of colorful, beautiful masks made from the gorgeous fabrics in Nigeria.

## **Bezer Home**

In March 2019, eight young children from the state of Kaduna came to live at Bezer Home. Their village had been attacked by militants, and they were orphaned at that time. One boy saw his father being shot as the father was trying to escape across the river. Some other children recounted how they had to do the 'snake crawl' by pulling themselves on their forearms to escape the militants who had come to wipe out their village. Sadly, this is a very real, very tragic reality in a number of states in Nigeria—sometimes even the state in which we live—Plateau. These children have gone through trauma counseling and have started to learn English as well as the local language. They are enrolled in our school, and they are really doing well.

Sadly, we lost two of our Bezer Home children in 2020. Bidemi (age 14) died of long-term HIV complications; and John (age 12) died in a tragic drowning accident. These have been sad times indeed. We have very loving and caring staff who have been helping our children process their grief. A pastor, guidance counselor, and social worker all interact with the children on a daily basis.

## **Bayo's Projects**

Bayo always has many projects going on. He is raising quite a few animals (chickens, pigs, etc.) He is always trying to figure out how to produce things in a better way. He likes to take what he is learning and fine-tune it to fit with the needs that he sees in Nigeria. He currently has a very unique chicken project that he is developing. He is also working on a special type of block machine that produces blocks out of a sand/clay mixture. Simple homes can be built cheaply out of these blocks. This would be of great benefit to people in Nigeria.

## **Oyebade News**

We had planned to be in the U.S. this summer—especially since our Summer 2019 didn't go as planned. However, due to Covid-19, we won't be going anywhere this year. Last summer Lily's U.S. visa did not come out in time so we re-arranged all of our plans, and the rest of us traveled to the U.S. for short visits at different times. Because of that delayed visa, I finally really intensified the plan to obtain U.S. citizenship for Lily. I knew we needed to do it before she turned 18. (She is 14 now.) I just didn't know where to start. The Lord opened our eyes to something called "Expeditious Naturalization" which is specifically for families like ours who primarily reside overseas and have adopted a child from overseas. We filed for Lily's Expeditious Naturalization in June 2019, received approval in August, got a U.S. visitor's visa for her in September; and then she and I traveled to Phoenix in October for her swearing in—which had to be done on U.S. soil. Oh, what a great relief it is to have completed that important documentation! She is now a naturalized U.S. citizen having obtained that citizenship through me. We saw the Lord's hand through the whole process—even through not getting her visa in time for us to travel last year! That disruption to all of our summer plans was a real wake-up call that I needed to sort out this citizenship matter sooner rather than later. We also saw the Lord's financial provision for us to be able to go through the entire process, which included a hefty filing fee as well as round-trip flights for Lily and me. The Lord provided in an amazing way through a generous church that had not even known about our specific need. Now I need to work on processing U.S. citizenship for Bayo as well. It will be so nice when we have all of this important documentation and paperwork completed for our family.

Our son Tobi graduated from Hillcrest High School in May 2019. Hillcrest is the only school he attended for his 12 years of education. My parents were

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able to make it to Nigeria for his graduation, which made it really special.

Another miracle of 2019 was the way in which the Lord provided for Tobi to go to college. We honestly didn't know how we would be able to afford college for him. Some family friends in Nigeria encouraged him to apply to Westmont College in Santa Barbara, CA. Westmont came through with incredible financial aid due to Tobi's excellent high school record of scholarship and service, and because we are missionaries. Once again the Lord provided in a wonderful way—we have not yet gotten over it—even though more than a full year has passed. Westmont is a small school (about 1300 students total) and there are not many black students there. The city of Santa Barbara is also not very diverse. However, Tobi has put his friendly, outgoing personality to use and is quite involved in Student Government as a dorm Senator. He enjoys helping people wherever he goes. He was eligible for on-campus work-study as part of his financial aid package; but before receiving an assignment, he was offered a very unique off-campus job within days of arriving in Santa Barbara. He works on a ranchette-turned-development property as a handyman, taking care of all kinds of details around the development sites. Due to Covid-19, he has remained in California for his summer break.

David and Lily have had a different summer break than usual. Both have been involved in going to work with us throughout the summer. It's good for them to learn more about what we do and to help out in various aspects of the ministry. They have also really developed a very strong bond with the other teenagers who live on our compound. They will actually have some fond memories of this unusual summer due to their quarantine companions. David starts 11<sup>th</sup> grade in a couple of weeks while Lily will be in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. We have had a young adult named Grace living with us for the past 7 years or so. She has just finished studying Economics at the

University of Jos, and she is currently waiting for the assignment for her mandatory one-year National Youth Service in Nigeria. Grace is a big sister to our kids.

## 25 Years in Nigeria

I arrived in Nigeria as a young single teacher in early August 1995. I had signed a contract to teach English at Hillcrest School for two years. Well, the two years have now turned into 25! We are grateful for how the Lord has led us into marriage (23.5 years) and ministry together.

Nigeria continues to be a tumultuous place. This morning on our way home from church, David and Lily were enumerating how many of our family friends have been victims of an armed robbery or kidnapping in the past year. It was a very sobering list. Thankfully these incidents did not result in loss of life. As a family, we take security issues very seriously. Operating cautiously has become a way of life for us. Please continue to pray for the Lord's protection over us.

Thank you so much for your generous gifts which keep the ministry of Mashiah Foundation going. We truly appreciate you.

Blessings— Bayo & Mary Beth Oyebade

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Make checks payable to Mashiah Foundation. If you need a receipt for tax purposes, make check payable to First Baptist Church, Cook; mail either gift directly to Rick & Sandi Wallestad at the above address.

**Please make note of our current U.S. address which changed two years ago.**