**Jos 2014**

Friday 18 July 2014

Cardiff to Jos in just about 24 hours. Left the house soon after 2pm on Thursday to catch the National Express coach to Heathrow; arrived there in good time; experienced business class for the first time, out of necessity because none of the economy seats were available with Airmiles; slept a little in their sliding down seats, practically missed breakfast, got myself ready for landing at the last minute; off the plane and through customs pretty quickly and had to wait – it was still dark at 5 am – for the driver to arrive, Ibrahim Magaji. Too risky to set off for Jos in the dark, so we headed back to a Catholic retreat for a rest and breakfast. He wanted to delay departure for Jos until after 9, in order to avoid heavy traffic in the city. And then we were off!

Pretty overcast, so that kept the temperature down. Through Abuja quite quickly, through the sprawling township of Nyanya that lines the motorway north, turn off at Keffi up to Barde junction, then across country to the foot of the hills that introduce you to Plateau State. It is a lovely drive at this time of year: the rains had come and everything looked lush and green. The sun poked through at times and lit up that lush green and the deep red earth. Past the teak plantation; teak trees have very large leaves and are thus very distinctive, but each branch sported a feathery gold crown, which the sun catches. On to the foothills of Plateau, past a touristic waterfall that we never have time to visit, past a bend in the road which throws out a most marvellous view down a valley and across to mountains, up a steep winding climb and eventually emerging on to the plateau itself. It is a most beautiful landscape; fresh light green as far as the eye can see, fringed on all sides by a ring of mountains; past the tall thorny cactus hedges that the roaming Fulani cattle don’t like and that thus protect their market gardens; then there are scattered trees and enormous rocks that seem to have been impossibly piled up on each other, and look as if they are about to fall but never do. And so to Jos, and to the Nigeria Bible Translation Trust, by about 2.30 – yes, just about 24 hours’ travel. It all went very well and I am very grateful to Ibrahim and to the Lord Himself.

Nice surprise; I have a nice room in a lovely house in the NBTT compound. There are two other men using the house at the moment. There is a big kitchen, a large living cum dining room, two bathrooms with running water (including hot I’m told – I had obviously not waited long enough!). A small phone for guest use when it gets charged up and has credit. The house and a couple of others are managed by American Wycliffe Associates! The residents gather here in the evening for a meal, so it was good to meet a good number of other people around the table too. Tortilla with a delicious meat and veg mixture; very nice indeed!

Last time, I was in a little room, with a tiny space for toilet and shower base, with no facilities and I had to borrow just about everything I needed. This time I have come fully equipped, even with an electric kettle, and it doesn’t look as if I shall need any of it! And I don’t have to go and pump up buckets of water this time either!

Time now for an early night. We had a tremendous downpour with thunder, which has left the evening cooler than I expected.

Saturday 19

A good long sleep, although woke up in the middle of the night feeling distinctly cold.

Nice, quiet morning, with quiet time and time for correspondence. NBTT staff have a day retreat, and so all is quiet on the campus/compound. Explored it all; it looks in very good shape. Fresh paint, cut grass, everything looking neat and tidy; at lunch able to compliment the director and the estates manager. Lunch with the staff; a good meal of jollof rice, coleslaw, beans and a rather tough piece of chicken.

Weather absolutely superb; warm, bright sunshine, with a slight breeze; makes you feel good and well! It rained again in the middle of the afternoon.

News of BH atrocity at Damboa leads me to prayer and a plea to God, “How much more?” Thoughts turned to Habakkuk, who faced a similar perplexity: so much violence, so little justice, militias acting with impunity and at will, leaving scores of ordinary people dead and their homes and buildings destroyed. Will there never be an end to such violence? God tells Habakkuk that He has a plan, which the wicked are unwittingly fulfilling, and then they will be punished for their violence. Habakkuk has to wait patiently surrounded by devastation until the time comes, and it will come in God’s appointed time, and then will not tarry. He, as a righteous man, has to live by faith.

Then Fred came, a righteous man indeed. We had a wonderful time of fellowship together; he has to go to Port Harcourt on Tuesday and will be away for two weeks, and will see an eye specialist again. He has good sight in one eye, but practically nothing in the other. He has been taking medication for hypertension for a long time; I just wonder whether his eye problem is a consequence. He brought me fruit; I gave him money and the little yellow book on prayer.

Pizzas for tea, home made, followed by ice cream because of the long NEPA break in power. I did all the washing up to show my appreciation, but it turned out to be two days’ dirty dishes. Oh well, if they look after me like this, I’m not going to complain!

Well, a good, quiet, happy day; and I thank the Lord.

Sunday 20

Up at 6.30. Mark did omelettes, and I did the washing up!

Read Exodus 35 and my heart was touched by what Moses said about Bezalel and Aholiab: God had filled B with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship (expertise, skills, abilities) … and He had put in his heart the ability to teach, in him and A … He had filled them with skill to do all manner of work …

I pray that God would fill my heart with His Spirit and put in my heart the ability to teach. What a reading for the start of teaching phonetics at NBTT!

Steve and Sonia Dettweiler had invited me for lunch and I asked them also to take me to church with them. They duly arrived at 9.30 and took me to ECWA Plateau church, where I had been once before. There was a congregation of about 700 or 800 for the service that began at 10 and finished at 12. Quite a lively service, but not over the top as things could be: clapping, hand raising and body swinging, lively melodies from a dance kind of orchestra, at full blast! The sermon was quite good on the theme of honouring God’s pattern for marriage: Genesis 2 and Ephesians 5. The choir was away, but the few who remained sang powerfully; the lead singer had a rich powerful resonant voice, sounding pretty professional and confident, like Mary Angelou; when they sang the old Hallelujah song, I found it very moving. The lead singer of the small youth group was very impressive too. In fact, they had planned a seminar on bringing Kingdom of God values into the entertainment industry, because a number of their singers had gone into the entertainment business without due counselling. The worship leader closed with a very moving prayer about family life and values. It was good to be there.

Lunch duly followed, which was very welcome, because I don’t know what I would have done otherwise. Vegetarian and very tasty.

Far fewer road blocks on the way to church than last time – not because the security situation was easier, it certainly isn’t, but there are so many road construction projects on the go, a bomber couldn’t get very far even if they tried. But at the church itself, there was a military style block with sets of sandbags encased in large concrete pipes, which you have to zigzag your way past. Nothing is taken for granted. All the occupants of each car were checked; my hosts were well known to the ‘guards’ and so we were waved through.

It was again really beautiful this morning, warm sunshine with a pleasant breeze, but once again at about 3.30 pm, down came the rain. If it’s going to rain, it only comes in the middle of the afternoon!

Monday 21

Up at 6.30, had a dribble of a half warm shower. Had an easy morning, then joined the participants for lunch. Had a wonderful surprise to find that a friend from Cameroon, Dr John Fokwa, had joined as a participant, with a friend of his from the Bakossi people who knew my friend Robert Hedinger!! Sat in on the introduction to ICAL that John Obono gave; staff meeting at 5pm, where I met my two colleagues: Matthew Harley who I knew from before, and Tim Kempton who is a young man new to Nigeria. We had a good meeting together, and we decided on a couple of innovations.

Rain came early today, caught me out, but was under cover for most of it; good that we managed to deliver the 10 volume Kittel dictionary of NT Greek just before it poured!

Tuesday 22

Up at 6.30, mango and honey on toast for breakfast. But oh dear nothing much more than that for the rest of the day. Battled with diarrhoea; thought I got over it, but no; and again and again. Good job I brought my Tesco re-hydration sachets. The cook took pity on me this evening, and made me a single tortilla with a thin spread of butter. Well, we’ll just have to see what happens tomorrow.

But otherwise, the day has gone very well. I did two lessons today, and they both went well, even though I was struggling with my problem. A bit of a challenge! But then there is that promise that I often fall back on: My grace is sufficient for you; My power is made perfect in weakness. I’ll go to bed early tonight; glad that Tim had agreed to take the lesson in the morning.

It’s been cloudy all day, seeming to threaten rain but only a few spots. Relatively cool.

Wednesday 23

Up at 6.30, but only very slowly. Boiled egg for breakfast to try and conquer the dreaded dreadful diarrhoea. Had to resort to Immodium eventually, though! Managed to sit in class as Tim Kempton taught, and then Matthew Harley led the follow up session. Team meeting over (tea and) biscuits.

Had to take the rest of the morning and afternoon quietly, because I felt quite weak. Did a hand wash of soiled clothes. Used the afternoon for prayer and meditation, but an hour’s lie down did me good. Managed to do some important correspondence. Invited out for tea/supper; wonderful spread, but had to be content with a small plateful of rice!

Went to bed early, but not before witnessing a historic scene: the final step in the preparation for the printing of the whole of Mark’s Gospel in Margi South. Quite a moment for the two translators and my colleague Randy Groff.

Thursday 24

Up at 6.30, felt much better. Boiled egg again with toast and honey. Attended the devotions at 8 for the first time. Sat in on Matthew’s class; helped organize the follow up session. Tea and puff-puff; that is deep fried and may have triggered off the undesired effect! Immodium again this afternoon. Attended the staff meeting, sorted out the Phonology teaching programme, came ‘home’ and prepared my lesson material for tomorrow.

Had a bit of tea/supper with Deborah Barlow, who works in recruitment for Wycliffe Associates USA. Leant that banana is good for people in my condition, so that was good news!

It’s been overcast all day these past two days; no rain for a couple of days, but a heavy downpour from 5 to 6; cold enough for socks and sweater. Couple of mosquitoes have announced their presence!

Friday 25

Up at 6.15, feeling better after a good night’s rest; hardly woken up by all the different types of activities of the near neighbours: singing, male voice choir, all night prayer meeting, preaching, traffic; only the Moslem call for prayer woke me up, usually sometime before 4, I suppose. Boiled egg sandwich again, still playing safe. ICAL devotions at 8.

Taught for one and half hours this morning, with a very brief break; it all went pretty well, but needed a good sit down afterwards. Visit from John Tati Cham, someone I knew from way back in 2005 at Billiri at a Gombe workshop; their children corresponded with our grandchildren once or twice. We’ve kept in touch sporadically, but since he was in Jos with his work he called in to see me. Good long chat, with prayer afterwards; gave him a few things that I had brought with me which might be of more use to people in Nigeria than to us at home.

Managed to get the cooker working to finish off what I left over from last night’s supper; remembered to cook it really hot, a chicken schwarma (pieces of chicken, with cabbage, wrapped in a tortilla) – delicious. Christy, the lady who comes in to cook for us, made banana cake, just right for me.

This afternoon conducted a short question and answer session for those who wanted it and then prepared myself for the test that I’m giving them all tomorrow. Met a couple of participants who had arrived late and so spent almost an hour with them, making sure they caught up with everybody else.

Then another visitor; again I could hardly believe it: Dawa from the Glavda team. He was visiting in Jos and is due to return to his new home tomorrow. Only sorry that I did not have more time with him, but I gave him the little yellow book on prayer. He told me that his house had been burnt down; Boko Haram loot the houses and then set them alight. He told me that his mother had moved to Maiduguri, and that he and his wife and children had moved to Michika, a ‘Christian’ town, south of the Borno border; not entirely safe there, but the places where they lived had been ruined, and all their possessions lost. I knew those places, his house, his mother’s place, their huge church; to think of them as ruins is very painful. He told me about the other members of the Glavda team: houses burnt down, families scattered and/or in hiding in Cameroon and other parts of Nigeria. But the team itself continues to meet for translation workshops; they are moving ahead regardless; they have a mission and they want to complete it and they will be making their way to Jos in September for another workshop.

It grieves me beyond that these lovely places with these lovely people are now forbidden territory for me; I simply would not be allowed through to those places. But God is with them in all this trial and distress. I have such happy memories of my time there in November and December 2011; and it was a particularly productive workshop.

Another chicken schwarma for tea; enjoyed it and the banana cake, but I shall be all by myself now as my other house mate, Randy Groff, left this morning for USA.

Raining for most of the afternoon; had to wear shoes for the first time for a long time!

Saturday 26

Up at 6.15, feeling OK but sticking to boiled egg sandwiches! Devotions with everybody else at 8.

Conducted the first Phonetics test; seemed to go pretty well. Then Tim took over with the next lesson. Coffee with him afterwards; nice just to find out more about him: Christian family, finally came clear as a believer just at 18 just before he went to Bristol University (electrical engineering), eventually settled in Kensington in about 2002; thinks he remembers the Careys! Did IFES for one year, then PhD at Sheffield, before coming out here 4 months ago.

Then I had to administer the test again for a participant who missed it at 9 o’clock – today is Sanitation Day in Jos, when everybody has to engage in public clearing up of rubbish between 7 and 10, and that is why she could not get here from her home in time for the test.

As soon as that was finished, had a visit from Adamu and Lydia Maga, which I enjoyed very much. Just time for a shower before I am due to be picked for the afternoon. Very embarrassing mistake; I had mistaken Rev Daniel Gula for Dr John Adive – so spent the afternoon with the Gulas. Learnt a lot about the events in Borno among the people I had worked with; all the translation team have survived and all are still actively involved in the translation project – in fact they are due to meet in Jos in September for their next workshop. Heard about the destruction of people’s houses and churches and businesses. Daniel’s Moslem relatives had spoken out against them and their house was looted and then burnt. One man was able to hide some of their stuff in an empty underground water tank, but they have no idea if they will ever be able to retrieve that stuff. The church where I worshipped in Ngoshe was burnt down and so was another which I visited in Attagara; dreadful destruction! People fled to the hills for the night and slept in caves, and came back down to cook and wash. Thousands fled to Cameroon, where UNICEF set up a temporary camp. Many have returned to Nigeria, but relocated further south; one Christian chief near Abuja donated some of his land for 45 families to set up home there. Some amazing stories of how people escaped; one family walked dozens of miles over the mountains with a three week old baby and other small children; others who had been presumed dead turned up later.

Daniel’s new ministry in Jos is in encouraging and counselling the many displaced families from their area; Kathleen’s is to co-ordinate the finances of relief; their prayer partners had raised over £14,000!

The afternoon was spent at their temporary home near Jos, which is right next door to their daughter Eli, married to Mark, with three children, a boy of 12, Kunmi, a pretty little girl called Bethany aged 9, and a far too lively little girl called Ela. She was a bit shy of me at first, but could hardly leave me alone by the end of the evening! There were two older boys and two older girls, orphans they had taken responsibility for also there; one of the girls had a little daughter called Goodness.

Wonderful spread, but of course I was limited in what I could take: just the fish (tilapia) and rice and what fish I could not eat they gave me to bring ‘home’, and a piece of birthday cake – they were celebrating Kathleen’s 74th, which was actually on Sunday.

Back some time after 9 and was able to hand over all the clothing that Philip had donated.

A lovely day weather-wise too, although I spent all of it inside. The rain came very late, but heavily, in the night.

Sunday 27

Didn’t get much sleep last night! Rumbling stomach – had I eaten too much? But there was an almost endless melee of cacophony – dogs wailing in chorus, traffic, I don’t know how many Moslem calls for prayer, preaching and praying by loudspeaker, then cocks crowing and finally the dawn chorus. Up rather unsteadily at 6.30; boiled egg sandwich and got myself ready for church. Elaine’s car wouldn’t start but the Dettweilers offered to take me to church and Elaine came with us.

ECWA Plateau church again. Last week’s attendance was given as 1,060, and there were more again I’m sure today. Theme today was appreciating their pastors, led by an elder who spoke very well about material and non-material support for them. Good service, but the time of musical worship was simply overdone in my estimation; unnecessarily amplified at top volume and very repetitious, singing praises without much content. The whole service took just over two hours; one good thing is that there is no song and dance with the collection.

Dropped off back at ‘home’, felt quite weak, but finished off the fish I brought home last night, with rice, and a piece of banana cake.

Read the scriptures: Mark 1: Jesus getting up before daybreak for prayer. Thought I would read Michael Reeves’s little yellow book *Enjoy your prayer life* as a help, knowing full well that I didn’t – and don’t as a rule – get up before day light to pray. Very helpful and encouraging little book. Read the first half, but needed to lie down – and slept solidly for 2 hours! Felt the benefit of it and read the remaining part of the book. Touched by the thought of entering the fellowship of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit when we pray: to the Father, with the Son’s encouragement and the Spirit’s help.

No NEPA all day. It came on to rain early afternoon. Enjoyed the quietness. Honey sandwiches for tea, and the left over birthday cake.

Monday 28

Up at 6.15; slept well, felt a good deal better, even cheerful in myself!

Devotions at 8: Exodus 4:11 “Who has made man’s mouth?” – how God led Moses to his work, even though he did not feel adequate for it.

Phonetics session well: this is how God made man’s mouth! Plosives, glottal stop, ejectives and implosives. Then marked the test papers from Friday; three categories: excellent, good, not so satisfactory. It sees that some put in a lot of effort in preparing for the test and some did not; I gave them all extra opportunities to revise, ask questions and have extra practice. I think some are not particularly interested, because their main aim in coming to ICAL is focussed elsewhere, and not phonetics.

Listened in on Orthography session and helped out with English pronunciations with a British accent and explained how the current spelling system represents an earlier form of pronunciation.

Had to do my own cooking today; good job there is rice around and a frying pan, corned beef and an onion!

Very interesting visit as well today.

After my teaching this morning, someone came up to me and asked if I was Paul Tench. Now, do you remember seeing a book a couple of years ago called *Fearless Love* about evangelistic work in the north of Nigeria? I bought many copies and brought a few to Nigeria as well. There was an email contact provided, and since I was due to come here, I wrote to them a month or so ago, but heard nothing in reply. This man was from that organization. In fact, there were two of them, and they were interested in what we do in ICAL at NBTT, and so I took them to the course director, John Obono. He agreed that he and I should accompany them to their place this evening, but in the end, he couldn’t go, but he asked another, young, man to go with me. Their organization is called the Christian Faith Institute, and they asked me to introduce myself; so I told them about our family time in Ilorin, now 35 years ago (!). And then how I have been coming to Nigeria quite frequently since 2004, and the work I had been doing at NBTT and with the Seed Company.

And then they gave me a brief history of themselves, which I recall from that book. But then I questioned them quite closely on their theology, beginning with how they understand the way of salvation. They came up with the word *propitiation*! We talked about the death of Jesus on a cross, substitutionary atonement, the work of the Spirit and the grace of God. We began to realize that we were on the same wavelength, and they gave me a couple of books. They took me around their premises and showed me their work with ‘street’ children, and then brought me ‘home’. It sounds and feels genuine; I told them I was being cautious because of the various strange teachings from many Nigerian (so called) Christian organizations. I made no promises, except to talk things over with the director, but I can see great potential for these village evangelists taking the translated Gospels in the local languages. I also told them that like Peter and John “Silver and gold have I none”, but all I could give them was the benefit of the experience that I have had in working with NBTT and the Luke Partnership.

I read the opening chapters of both books when I got back, and they seem orthodox enough. Well, we’ll see. Yes, quite an interesting visit!

Tuesday 29

Up soon after 6. Still no NEPA, so no hot water, and the fridge is losing its coldness. Taught nasal consonants and nasalized vowels this morning. Took tea break, but they now make the tea Indian style, complete with powdered milk, but it is so weak, that I can hardly bear it! Back ‘home’ for a decent cup of coffee. Christy the cook has prepared a meal for me, baked bread and cinnamon rolls, to set me up for the rest of the week. Sarah the cleaner comes every day. I still have the whole house to myself!

NEPA back after a few days, and so used the computer as much as possible to take full advantage of decent power. A tank of hot water too, and enjoyed a shower this afternoon. Sat in on Matthew Harley’s session on orthography, but it was interrupted by a heavy downpour which thundered loudly on the roof – just had to stop! That doesn’t happen in the morning, so I’m not affected.

Day has gone well. The first half of my visit here is now over.

Wednesday/Thursday 30-31

This is how the day goes now these days.

Alarm at 6 in a grey light these cloudy days, get up and make myself a cup of tea. It is a great advantage to have a gas stove and not be reliant on NEPA as I was last time; NEPA is hardly on at that time of the morning – no electricity. I have another great advantage over last time and that is that even while NEPA is off, the lights go on, because they are run from a battery, which charges up automatically when NEPA is back on. So I can get up, switch the kitchen light on and put the kettle on. Wonderful! And there I sit in bed, with my cup of tea and quietly contemplate what is ahead of me for the day.

Then wash and shave. Another wonderful advantage over last time is that I have running water; I don’t have to go to the pump and fill my bucket. And moreover that same battery that gets charged automatically when NEPA is on provides heating for water. And so I can wash and shave with a measure of comfort. Mornings are quite cold at first; it is the rainy season and we are over 4,000 ft up. However the water from the tank is tinged orange from the local laterite soil, so it’s not for drinking! Drinking water is filtered and that filter is checked weekly.

Then breakfast. It was a diet of boiled eggs for a while because of diarrhoea, but now I feel safe to enjoy the homemade bread made for me, with honey. Cinnamon rolls have also been made for me, a stock to keep me going for quite a few days. And a cup of tea, with powdered milk – can’t have everything!

Then I read Mark and pray and join the others for devotions together at 8. That lasts half an hour; it is often very good and worthwhile. Sometimes a man will break into Nigerian sermon style which I feel is a bit unnecessary with a small group of about 40 people who now know each other well, and so early in the morning!

They go off for breakfast, but I go back to my house and pick up my papers for my next lesson and just go over things in preparation. I take the first session each morning, and I gradually make my way through all the vowels and consonants that occur in Nigerian languages and in English; I have to keep reminding myself that there are two participants from Cameroon, and I need to remember to refer to their languages as well. There is a lot to do in the session and there is not really enough time to do everything as I would like to do, in a fully satisfactory way; I have to concentrate on getting them to hear differences, feel the different positions of the tongue and lips and sometimes the larynx, and then describe what is happening. As often as I can, I get them to try and work things out for themselves, but sometimes because of pressure of time, I have to intervene to speed things up. Then comes the phonetic symbol for the new sound, and a question to them all to check whether or not they can tell whether the sound occurs in their language, or not. I do this for an hour, and then we break up into smaller groups in the different languages and with the help of a facilitator, they have to work things out in their own language. At 10.35, they have a tea break.

Tea is provided Indian style, complete with milk, but it is so milky, that I only take half a cup – with the plan to have a “proper” cup of coffee soon, back at my house. But I stay for the biscuits and, especially, if they have cooked puff-puff, flour mixed with water and then fried. Very tasty, but a bit risky when I had you know what!

Back at the house, I prepare for my next lesson, reading and preparing materials. I try to improve on the teaching material each time I teach it. The library does not have a great deal of material on phonetics, but I found what I had previously donated! This work brings me up to lunch time about 1 o’clock.

I just wonder if I caught something when I last had a meal with everybody else; perhaps I took too much coleslaw, and my stomach wasn’t ready for it if the ingredients hadn’t been washed adequately. Other people were alright, but maybe their stomachs had already got used to it. So for a little while I was being very careful what I ate, and how much, and was content to eat in my house. That is the pattern that I have now established. There is another reason for this. An evening meal is prepared for us (or just me, now that the others have left), and it is often just too much for me for one meal, and so I keep the remainder in the fridge for the next day’s lunch. The system works pretty well, except when I’m invited out in the evening, leaving me with nothing prepared! But there is rice, there are eggs, there is tinned ham and corned beef, and onions, and so I can manage.

A bit of a rest after lunch. I catch up a little with the news; it is sometimes so appalling that it makes me turn to prayer. A bit of reading, or emailing.

I have been attending the afternoon sessions on orthography to see how people here look at the problems of creating a spelling system for different languages. It is not a straightforward matter and includes issues about where you leave spaces between words – it’s not always obvious. We’ve got used to it in English, but when you are developing a new writing system, it is by no means always obvious when the language and its words and grammar are so different.

That lasts an hour and is quite a lively session. Then back for my afternoon cup of tea – and yes, it’s time for a cuppa right now! I carry on my work, until about 6, and fetch the meal from the fridge that the cook prepared earlier, and enjoy that. There is a nice variety, including potatoes the other day, what local people call “Irish”. There is sometimes a bit of cake also; I’ve just finished the banana cake that was made especially for me in my condition. Apparently, bananas are good for stopping diarrhoea, and so I had a good supply of banana cake! It was nice to have the company of the other men who were staying here, but they have now gone and I have the whole place to myself, but I can be quite content to be by myself.

Evenings are spent with work or reading or emailing, but I enjoyed my visit out with friends last night; a change of scenery and company and food, but I have to be fetched and brought back since there is no transport for me.

I usually begin to think of closing the day around 9.30 or 10. Careful to use filtered water for my teeth, careful to light my mosquito ring for the night and spray the corridor outside my bedroom and the main living room against mosquitoes. Not there are many around, but one is enough and very annoying when it buzzes past my ear.

Things have gone pretty well so far. I’m busy with things I can do and I’m happy to try and answer all the questions the participants come up with.

Friday 1 August

Spent Thursday evening with Adamu Maga and his wife Lydia. Unfortunately, they don’t have the facilities I have here, and so without NEPA we had to manage with torch light. He has invested in a small solar powered table lamp, but he hadn’t left the panel out long enough that day, so there was very little light. They gave me my favourite Nigerian meal: chicken and rice with plantain; I ate rather too much and felt very full when they brought me home. Adamu took me to their neighbours who I met last time; the parents went to the church at Gura Top where I preached last time, and I promised then to bring a copy of my Transcription book for their daughter who was studying linguistics. So I was happy to give her a copy this time.

There is a lot of road construction going on in Jos right now. It appears that the former Governor of Plateau State was dismissed for corruption, and the new Governor seems to be trying to make up for lost time, by starting all the new road construction plans all at the same time. Some of the major roads are closed, and so this causes major congestion in parts of the city, but of course just as water finds its way through everything so do taxi drivers, and then everybody else follows too. The roads that have been completed are superb, wide smooth dual carriageways, and once you are on those you can soon pick up speed – until you come to the spot that hasn’t been finished yet, where everybody catches up with everybody else and challenges for any empty square metre. Great fun, unless you are in a desperate hurry! Some drivers take to the adjoining fields and so the road gets wider and messier.

There are police checks everywhere; they slow everybody down, but they don’t seem to take much action; they don’t seem to be taking bribes either. Sundays are bad, because the police checks are increased, and you really can’t plan to travel far.

It rained heavily in the night; it hadn’t rained in the afternoon which is unusual, but it was still quite grey and cloudy first thing this morning, and pretty chilly.

I took my final full session in the Phonetics programme this morning, and it was very encouraging to be thanked heartily for all my efforts. Very touching. They said kind things despite the warning that I gave them that I was giving them a test first thing on Monday morning! I then sat in on the Phonology session that followed and I shall be helping in that programme next week. So busy all morning.

Saturday 2

Had a very enjoyable evening with the Rowbory family on Friday. David is from Scotland but has grandparents from Swansea; Julie is from Coleraine, N Ireland; they have three young daughters, lively talkative Rebecca soon to be 6, sweet active Elizabeth soon to be 4, and little Abigail 18 months. Settled in Jos since 2007, living in the Mountain View compound, where I have often stayed when transiting through Jos on my way to a workshop location. My colleague Tim Kempton fetched me and brought me back; he is obviously a firm favourite with the girls and who is always required to make custard! So custard we had for dessert together with mango stored in syrup – very nice, following tortillas with chicken and various complements.

And Julie knows Corrie Weaver through Girls Crusaders! Small world!

Lazed in bed this morning until 6.25, and then my usual routine. Went up to the Hall of Praise for the devotions at 8, only to discover that they are not usually held on Saturdays. So time for my own hymn singing, reading and prayer. Then some preparation for Monday’s Phonology class.

Just after 10, the visitors I was expecting arrived, Rev John Fokwa from the Meta’ translation project and his friend, David Ngole from the Bakossi translation project which had been led by Robert Hedinger. Excellent time together; learnt how the Akossi people had developed their literacy, and what the Meta’ have done since March when their New Testament was dedicated. I’ve written a separate report. We had tea and coffee together and had a lot to share – they certainly enjoyed the cinnamon rolls that had been made for me! It took us two hours to cover everything.

Made myself lunch: fried rice, onion and corned beef.

Worked on all the phonology material this afternoon; good fun! Enjoyed myself!

Strange day weather wise. Only the briefest appearance of sunshine all day. Drizzle in the morning, as if it was still a hangover from the night, but it has been pretty cool all day; needed socks and a pullover!

Lovely evening with the Hollman family. Lizz is Ivor and Sylvia Green’s daughter; Ian’s parents work in Jos as missionaries too; three children, 9, 8 and 5; very nice time with them all. Mango crumble this evening, with yoghurt, preceded by a kind of shepherd’s pie. I take what vegetables I can in opportunities like this, because they will have been carefully prepared.

Sunday 3

Lazed in bed again until 6.25; grey morning yet again. Warm shower, etc. Phoned Charlotte. Went to NKST church which is not far from here, with the Rowbury’s. The acoustics were poor, and so I did not get a lot from the sermon, although I enjoyed the hymns. Walked back, about 20 minutes.

(NKST = Church of Christ among the Tiv people; they have an English service here in Jos. Much less military security than two years ago, but there are vigilantes all around the church and a metal detector as you enter the grounds.)

Had the rest of the day almost to myself: a bit of hymn singing – glad I brought my hymn book; praying and reading.

Nice bit of sunshine this afternoon, so explored the NBTT compound and found the little round house at the top of the compound that you can see from the road; hadn’t noticed it before in all the years I’ve been here. Katy Barnwell visited, and so did Elaine the house manager.

Monday 4

Up at 6 as usual; shower and breakfast. Personal devotions and then joined the group at 8. Distributed the pile of Gospel harmonizations of the account of the crucifixion, which were left over after the distribution of the church magazine; thought I should bring the spare copies here; they seemed to be well appreciated.

Held the second phonetics test, which was followed by the first class on tone, which Israel Wade took. I took the next phonology session, which seemed to go well. Busy morning, helping two teams who speak languages from Taraba State, which is where my last workshop was held. Greatly enjoy that kind of work.

After lunch I was taken on a trip around Jos to do some shopping. Because of all the road construction, we had to go a very roundabout route, which took me into parts of Jos I don’t think I have ever seen before. The new guest came with me, Jared from USA, who is a construction manager and will be overseeing the building of a new dining block at NBTT. His first time in Nigeria, but he has worked in Haiti and elsewhere in the West Indies before. We passed an area with second hand construction machines, and he kept asking questions like “How much is that cement mixer?”! I was interested in buying a few things to take home, like fabric and cards, and plants as presents for people here, and he was interested in digging machines and low loaders! We are very different personalities, but we seem to be getting on OK.

Christy the cook had prepared “shwarmas” again: pieces of chicken and all sorts of vegetables wrapped in a tortilla; two each is very filling – we hardly needed the extra chips (French fries)!

All in all, a good day; grey again in the morning; lovely sunshine in the afternoon; sounds like rain this evening, with thunder booming in the distance.

I’ve got to mark the test papers this evening!

Tuesday 5

Yesterday when we got to the fabric workshop, we were warmly welcomed, but then when a lady came in, all the seamstresses got up from their machines and work tables and broke out into a wonderful song of welcome. It was a delight to hear and it was sung with such delight and warmth, and sounded so professional with harmonies. And I joked with the lady who was welcomed, “Well, they didn’t do that for us!” And almost immediately, they all broke out into the same song for us, again with such warmth and enthusiasm, harmony and rhythm. This workshop is a wonderful little institution; it was raised by SIM missionaries and is run by one of them still. They cater for widows. Many of these women have lost their husbands through terrorism, but others have lost them through disease and accidents. There is wonderful sense of camaraderie and co-operation, a lovely buzz in the air, a happiness in working together, sharing a common lot.

Now today, up at 6; Jared had asked me to call him when I got up to make my early morning cup of tea. Still full from last night’s meal, so stuck to a couple of slices of this tasty, but slightly heavy, home made bread, with a bit of butter and jam. Elaine had brought over something called guave (?) syrup, but it was really too runny to spread on bread. She knew that I had finished the honey!

Devotions at 8; good word this morning.

Sat in on Matthew Harley’s session on tone – such a different teacher from me, but he succeeded in getting their attention. I taught later in the morning, a difficult subject, but it seemed to go pretty well. Got a compliment at the end at least!

Another surprise visitor, Dan Ben Suleiman from the Etkwen Project, the last one I did in 2012. I enjoyed working with that group, and they have done marvellously well, a team of three who have worked virtually full time. They have completed the first draft of Luke’s Gospel already and prepared the script of the Jesus film; they have also prepared some small booklets that summarize parts of the Old Testament and the New. This visitor, Ben, had compiled a hymnbook also. Glad to be able to help in a small way.

Quick lunch; then a heavy downpour, heaviest for some time. It seems to have knocked out the internet supply. NEPA was also off. Finished all my marking; four groups: those that are excellent, those that are good, those that are satisfactory, and those who are disappointing – I don’t know what to do with these; either they just don’t understand the phonetics, or they don’t know how to prepare for the tests even when I spell it out for them what they need to revise, or they are really just not bothered.

Christy the cook has made a beautiful beef stew for this evening, very tasty indeed. I have given her a plant to say thank you for all the work she has done for us; also to Sarah who cleans and who has also washed and ironed 6 shirts of mine; also to Elaine who is always ready to help in whatever way she can; they all seem very delighted to have their plants. I have a fourth one for Mariam who does all my printing for me.

Hurray! NEPA is back on and I can at least write stuff up, even though I won’t be able to send anything until the internet is restored. Managed to complete all the revisions I had in mind for the Student Manuel on Phonetics; took me until 10pm. No doubt I will pay for it with a light night’s sleep, but at least I go that job done. That and all the marking and teaching – a busy day, but good!

Wednesday 6

As I thought, I didn’t sleep all that well last night. Working at the computer until 10 was good for morale, but not for sleep! Up nevertheless at 6 as usual. Took my early morning cup of tea seriously and slowly! Devotions at 8; a good word on prayer.

I realized yesterday that I have actually finished my teaching! It has all gone so well; I am very grateful to the Lord! This morning, I sat in on a tone session and on orthography; quite useful to learn more about these things. Helped two teams along in their work.

This afternoon, I went with Katy Barnwell to visit Dr John Adive, who used to be director of NBTT. A highly respected gentleman. He lost his wife last September, apparently after a long illness. She had been the stronger of the two when I last saw them in 2012, a lady full of vigour and hopes and plans. The family have been looking after him by moving into Jos, so that they can be close to him. One son works in Abuja, but travels back to Jos every weekend. A lovely man, still active. Their whole Ebira Bible was published a couple of months ago, and he writes Bible study notes in the Ebira language. Very pleased to have seen him for an hour; he remembered how Adamu arranged for me to have lunch at his house and for you to ring me there – that was 10 years now!

As we drove back into the NBTT compound there was Fred walking down to see me. A lovely surprise. He had been down in Port Harcourt to see Nathan and his family and to see an eye specialist. At least they were able to confirm that there is no tumour or any other serious condition behind the bad eye; he is not likely to recover sight in that eye, but his right eye is good and sound. Jeremiah and his family live in Jos not far from him, and he has members of the extended family living with him – but, alas, not the people who make the lovely doughnuts!!

As soon as we parted, I had another visit from the people from the Christian Faith Institute; so I shall be visiting them tomorrow morning.

Another nice surprise was the return of NEPA this evening and the internet.

We certainly eat well here; chicken and jollof rice this evening, with brownies to follow.

It’s been an enjoyable day; quite cold this morning, but it brightened up warmly this afternoon. Must try and get to bed early tonight!

Thursday 7

Up as usual for my last full day here. After devotions, friends from the Christian Faith Institute called for me and took me there in Bukuru, with the plan that I should speak to the whole student body, about 70 people including a few women. They train evangelists to work in the north of Nigeria, especially in the villages, where Moslem teachers don’t often go. People in the north seem ready to hear an alternative message to the one presented by Boko Haram, with all their violence and intimidation. So I talked about my work with NBTT and with the Luke Partnership scheme, and how language is a gift from God so that He could communicate with us, and us with Him; how language distinguishes us from all other creation; how God used language in creation; how God spoke to Adam; how the people were scattered at Babel, and how God promised Abraham that all families or nations would be blessed through his Seed; how Jesus was called the Word; and that whereas He was able to do all manner of miracles, He said that His primary purpose was to preach and teach – using language; how the Holy Spirit enabled the crowd at Pentecost to hear about the wonderful things of God in their own languages – the most wonderful thing of all being eternal life which is to know the Father as the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent as the Saviour by taking our punishment upon Himself on the cross so that we could have forgiveness and clear the way to Him, and to have a personal and direct relationship with Him. Had they spoken to God yet this morning? Had God spoken to them through His Word? And then I told them all about language – words in the mind for everything, grammar for all the things that happen, how they are used to create messages and how messages have to be converted into sound to transmit a message from one person’s mind to another’s.

At that moment, I wondered what they were doing! They wheeled in a whiteboard and gave me a marker pen and turned me into a teacher! It all went wonderfully well and I took a couple of questions, and so the best part of two hours passed!

Then the two men took me into a Moslem quarter of the town, where they have set up a small computer training centre; it is run by Moslems for Moslem young people, but financed by Christians as a gesture of kindness and a positive attitude towards them. No evangelism takes place there, but people know that the Christians have taken this initiative, and who knows what might eventually emerge from this venture.

After that they took me to the new centre that they are building for themselves out in the countryside; I just enjoyed the ride there and back, along good roads with occasional road checks manned so it seemed by Yorubas who greeted me “Oyibo!” but the real joy for me was to see the countryside itself, with its vast open spaces of flat grassy landscape with distant hills. It was a real pleasure to be out of Jos for a short time and in the countryside, even though the sky remained grey and overcast.

On the way back, they stopped at a bakery and I had to choose a cake to take back with me, which was very kind of them. I told them that they feed me well at NBTT, but they replied that they wanted to feed me well too!

So I hope that the visit to them might be of some value, and that they might be able to use the translated Scriptures in the local languages in their evangelistic efforts.

We had a staff meeting this afternoon, and I shared with them the big box of chocolates that I had been given just before I came away. That went down well! We also talked about how we can improve the programme in future.

Adamu and Fred came to visit me later this afternoon, which was kind of them – and of course, you known that already!

Something is wrong with the internet supply again today, so I don’t know when I can get this off.