

PAM'S PAGES**18****September 2020**

‘..he is like a man building a house, who dug deep, and laid the foundation upon a rock.....’ Luke 6:48

Dear Friends, Family and Supporters,

You begin to realise it is time to write another prayer/ newsletter when you get emails saying, 'long time!' and 'where are you?' So, here is an update and an apology for the delay!

I arrived in Sandema on 10th July after a much needed, two-day practical lesson on how to read road surfaces and drive in northern Ghana. Thank you to Stephen Babani, who works in our Accra office, for your patience! I have been putting your lessons to good use over the last six weeks and even enjoy the three-hour round trip to Bolgatanga (Bolga) and the nearest ATM that works with my UK bank cards!

I self-isolated for my first two weeks in Sandema, having moved from the coronavirus epicentre of Accra to the virus free Upper East Region. I used the time to finish decorating and preparing my new office, and then being re-orientated back into life in Sandema. A local furniture maker made a beautiful bed/settee and a desk for the office, I found local sources of more basic foodstuffs so that I don't have to travel to Bolga so often. Madam Immaculate sells bread and cake flours by the bowlful from her container store behind the grinding mill, just off the main street. She also sells margarine and eggs she tells me. Sandema people are so helpful. You ask them where something is and they take you there, and if they do not know, they find someone who does, and they take you there. It is part of the Builsa's historical openness and welcome to the stranger.

I have been learning more about the history and culture of the Builsa people, particularly from Pastor Nicholas who researched the history of Sandema for his long essay at college, and from Vivian his wife, who gave me more insights into how large and often polygamous families relate to one another. 'It's complicated!'

It has also been interesting to observe how the local children play together. The ground just outside our fence has been a popular gathering place, as it is one of few areas of ground with no growing crops.

It has been the local market as the older girls practiced their selling techniques to passers-by. They were selling rice and beans, two local staples. Then the younger boys came with their *lorijis* (cars) made from the ubiquitous yellow containers used to carry all sorts of liquids from water to cooking oil and petrol in Ghana.

For the last couple of days, boys and girls have been working together to mould air-dried bricks from mud, clay and sand, and build small versions of local houses. According to the girls the women mould the bricks and the men build, but a passing adult said normally the men mould and build while the women lay the floors and plaster the walls producing a smooth waterproof finish. Unfortunately, according to a cultural survey by the *Joshua Project* in 1996, these traditional mud brick houses often only last a few years and then collapse in heavy rains. My colleague, Yvonne, co-ordinates the SIM Ghana Flood Disaster project (project No. 94021) which helps those in need rebuild homes with concrete foundations and more solid walls.

Observing the housebuilding tied in with that day's reading from, 'Our Daily Bread', entitled 'The House on the Rock'. The passage was Luke's short version of the story of the 'Wise and Foolish Builders' (Luke 6:46-49) where Jesus likens those who hear his words and do them, to a builder who digs down deeply to solid rock to lay the foundation for his house. When the flood and the stream break against his house it is not shaken because it has been well built. Not so the foolish builder, who also hears Jesus' words, but chooses to ignore them. He is building without a foundation, so when the same trials and temptations come against his house, it falls apart.

This spoke to me about the Malachi Clubs we are hoping to introduce in Sandema. They are not just clubs for children. With the Pastor's support the Family Club encourages and trains parents to build spiritual foundations in their children's lives, so that the home becomes a place of Christian discipleship for parents and children together. With them, a child's Christian discipleship is not just for one hour each week at the Kid's Club or church or Sunday school on Sunday!



Moulding and laying air-dried mud bricks

Amongst other things, the coronavirus pandemic worldwide, has tested the strength and reality of our faith. It has shown us that the church is not the building, and Christians can, and will, find alternative ways to praise, pray, worship, witness and fellowship together. Some here in Ghana have found a new joy in worshipping together as a family in their homes, and children a new understanding of what being a Christian means for their parents. Hopefully these things once learned will be retained as churches begin to meet in buildings again.

SIM is introducing a new way for workers to report on their projects. In July Penny challenged me to think through and produce a draft project proposal for the Malachi Clubs using the new *Synergie* Guidelines. This certainly focussed and clarified my thinking about how Malachi clubs could develop, and I was grateful for all the project development training I received from TEARfund UK and the Church of Scotland Priority Areas Fund when setting up The Meeting Place @ South Carntyne. That helped me understand the *Synergie* process and speeded our discussions when Penny and I met.

It was good to have Penny and Bev, to stay for a few days on their 'Grand Tour of the North'. Three British ladies of a certain age and the discussion 'naturally' gets around to the joys of school lunches and particularly custard! For those wishing to know more about British culture, ask us!

Points for praise and prayer

Coronavirus numbers remain low in Ghana, particularly in the North. Pray that that will continue.

Give thanks that Accra international airport has reopened. Pray that colleagues and friends will now be able to enter the country or leave for their home countries for H.A.

Continue to pray for Pastors and church leaders to embrace the vision of Malachi clubs, and for suitable Club Directors to be identified for each setting.

Give thanks for zoom and other digital platforms which keep us in contact with one another and the wider world. It has been such a blessing to be able go to church on-line these past few months, and attend weekly devotionals in USA & Australia

Give thanks for the use of a vehicle. Pray that a good used 4x4 will become available for me soon.

Pray for health and safety for Yvonne as she moves North again shortly.

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