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# VISIT TO OGBOMOSO

Dear Friends of Nigeria Faithful,

Every MK or missionary who passed through Ogbomoso in the twentieth century participates in a long history of collaboration, welcome, and good will. We are inheritors of an old path.

When Becky and I returned recently to Nigeria, I kept thinking of Lurana Bowen. In her early twenties, Lurana had journeyed in 1853 with her brand-new husband, Thomas Jefferson Bowen (the first Southern Baptist missionary to Nigeria). They traveled to Abeokuta and Old Ijaye and later Ogbomoso. It was the Bowens who were first given land by the Oba, after he instructed Mr. Bowen to "sit down" or "joko" in his town.

Shortly after burying her first daughter, Mary Yoruba, in Old Ijaye, Lurana traveled to Ibadan for a restorative visit, staying with C.M.S. missionaries. Every night on our trip, as Becky and I fell asleep to drums, I thought of Lurana. When Becky and I stepped into the courtyard of the old King's Palace in Ogbomoso in April, 2004, I imagined Lurana there. She might have sat in the shade of the old tree, established in line with the King's gate, which sheltered the hunters who founded the town. The first Yoruba pastor, Moses Ladej o Stone, and Sarah Marsh, daughter of repatriated Yorubas, kept the mission alive when Americans were absent during the American Civil War. As many of you know, the current Oba is Muslim, yet he is a great advocate of the Baptist Mission. He welcomed us in his compound during our visit.

Traveling back as I did this year and last, I have come to understand in a profound way that half of my family is in Nigeria. All of us share a Nigerian history for two reasons: Nigerians helped the mission come into existence, and we or our parents decided to plant their lives-and ours-there. I am happy to tell you that our brothers and sisters in Nigeria are still working diligently at the seminary, in the medical centre, at the leprosarium, and at the Kersey Home.

One afternoon, Becky and I traveled to Mr. Bolarinwa's compound. If any of you remember him: the head carpenter at the hospital. He crafted pieces of furniture for us, but more than that, he was a great friend and colleague of many of our parents. Last year, I had inquired about him, but no one seemed to know his whereabouts or even if he was still living. This year, Becky asked again, and Mr. Amos Adeniji, hospital social worker, made it his mission to find him. That afternoon, we waited on the front porch of Mr. Bolarinwa's house. After some minutes, a tall gate to the compound opened and through it stepped Mr. Bolaiinwa, looking to me as stately and handsome as a prince.

How long we had been gone and yet he remembered us with a joyful welcome. This is the gift that awaits any of us who travel back. Our Nigerian family remembers. They remember that missionaries came. They are touched that we remember and loved our life there. Gita Richardson Larson and her daughter are currently planning a trip for June 2005. Gita hopes to travel as far as Shaki and to climb her beloved Shaki rocks!

Participating in the Nigeria Faithful group has been for me not an exercise in giving but in receiving. I don't have enough to give to match what I have been given by Nigeria. I can, however, give something.

Before my recent trip to Nigeria, I had a dream. I was in our Ogbomoso house, the one the Was sons, Tolars, Lows, and Rays lived in (and also many others). At the end of the dream, I was in the yard, near the road, when I saw the ground was open and water was flowing clear and clean, sparkling in the sun, like a small Ethiopie River. I took the dream as an omen for the team of . specialists our Nigeria Faithful group was supporting in a fact-finding mission to Ogbomoso. They left Ogbomoso the day Becky and I arrived but we ran into them in Ibadan! (Where, nowadays, you can stop at Mr. Big's for a hamburger and Coca-Cola.) They gave us the hope of discovering a lowlying deep aquifer in Ogbomoso which may be reached by deep drilling to provide water for a long longtime.

We have an opportunity before us now that I could not have imagined when I first met with the folks at the hospital and seminary in 2003 and talked about digging a well . If our project sounds ambitious, consider Lurana and Thomas Bowen, who found the faith to believe and made a path, a path we also were honored to walk.

Peace and love,

Elaine Neil Orr