

Dear friends,

Praise God. It is a while since we wrote to you, and there has been some excitement, and then also setbacks – in the normal way of life.

To start with the excitement and progress, Simon has been working with an organisation: Texans and Ugandans in Mission, to bring water to the Diocesan Land, so that the coffee can be irrigated, and in time a poultry project also set up, and a house for a farm manager. The initial survey showed that a borehole was possible, the paperwork followed: an inspection from National Water, a letter of no objection and then finally a letter of permission. So last week the borehole drillers set up camp in the field with smart green tents, and expensive equipment. The surveyor authorised the position and drilling commenced. They struck water at 17 metres, and continued again through another layer of rock until at 57 metres they came through the rock to an underground sea. The water pipe was cleaned, and the first water presented to the Bishop. Now the borehole is capped and Simon is waiting for the release of funds to put in a solar powered motor, and a water tower.

At college term goes on well. The National Council for Higher Education didn't find space for us on the agenda in January, so College is still unregistered and will have to take the students to Arua for exams which is an expensive waste of resources, but there we are. I believe that the Council might meet again in April as they meet once a quarter. We are not yet informed. The students are resigned to the inevitable and it only remains to find the money to transport and feed them in Arua. Alongside this we have some of the inevitable problems of living in a community: some small thefts within, and one night the fence was cut and a student's motorbike was stolen. (Motorbikes are the main mode of transport here for getting to church, and visiting the parish.) On the other hand we have been able to work together with some to make about six thousand bricks towards building the new classrooms. We have to try and use them before the rains set in, so we hope to dig and build the foundations before Easter.

Our third years leave in April. This is about half the college in effect. The twelve from Nebbi Diocese will be ordained in June, and others from this Diocese in November. They have become fellow pilgrims and we will miss their presence. I don't know yet whether we will take on a new first year, but we pray that God will open a way.

We have had a good run of visitors this year, including Simon's sister and brother-in-law. We are always glad to see people and share the developments in the college and on the land. There have been some noticeable changes in time we have been here thanks to your generosity and the gifts from the Presbyterian church in Korea.

The pigs are doing well. We had an interesting time recently with an invasion from a feral boar who broke in and attacked one of our boars. After trying to find the owner and checking with the authorities and feeding it for some days we slaughtered the offender and sold some pork to recoup the costs of the damage, allowing the remaining kilos to offer a 'balanced' diet to the students and staff. We are not being as successful as we hoped in selling on the weaned piglets as it is the dry season and food is not plentiful. We hope for rain soon, and then the market will pick up. Farming is more complicated than the theory would have us believe!

From time to time Simon visits the Archdeaconaries with Rev'd Opiyo Geoffrey to assess the progress of the Rooted in Jesus groups. In one recent visit they found a good number of groups with about 300 people using the Rooted in Jesus material over the three parishes. There was some wonderful testimony of deepened faith, and more consistent Christian living. The programme has taken hold across the Diocese and is making a good difference to the commitment and lives of Christians.

Thank you for your love and prayers as we continue here. We have now been here for two years and this time next year will be coming back to England, at least for six months leave. Please pray for us as we discern God's will for the following three years whether to return here, or find work in parishes in England. Pray for the students as they prepare for exams and the third years as they prepare for ordination. Pray for the release of funds from Operation Wealth Creation, or other sources so that the coffee mother garden, and plantation can be developed on the Diocesan Land. We pray for you as you negotiate the difficulties and delights of life in your places.

God bless you and give you peace

Love and blessings from Simon and Sarah



Drilling for water



New Pigs



Bricks