

Nigeria Trip Report # 1

I am flying over the Sahara, North to South for the second time in the last 12 months. This trip is taking me to West Africa. Last year I was in South Sudan.

The first stop is Nigeria, specifically to the southeast, where there has been a great deal of instability over the past decades. For you old timers, this was once known as Biafra, the home of the Ibo people. They tried to form a new nation in the late 1960's. Much of Nigeria's oil lies in this region and the people living in the southeast do not feel they are getting their share of revenues. Rebel groups still abound.

On my 'bucket' list (things to do before I kick-the-bucket) a trip to West Africa falls somewhere below another root canal and just above poking myself in the eye with a sharp stick. Nigeria is a huge unruly place. There are some 47 countries in Africa but 1 out of 6 Africans live in Nigeria.



Your first impression of Nigeria is that everyone is aggressive, pushy, dangerous and even violent. The words queuing and Nigerian are not used in the same sentence. I have memories of walking the gauntlet on my last visit here with airport security beating cab drivers with rubber truncheons, to keep them from grabbing my suitcase. I have been held by policemen and cab drivers for hours on city streets extorting me for bribes, none of which I ever paid. There has been a definite improvement over the years. I did not have to fight through the horde of taxi drivers in Lagos. Lagos has once again achieved the distinction of being the most un-liveable city in the world!

Yet it is an amazing vibrant place with some of the largest churches in the world. The churches also have the largest names in the world. One we passed today used lots of paint on the sign... "The Charismatic Apostolic Church of the Seraphim and Cheribim." . More paint than parishioners. I would admit that it does have more cachet than 'Southside Community☺'.

There is some good history for me coming to this area. We began helping outreach to the Ibo people back in 1979, with Reverend Sunday Umune leading the program. Most of the work was done in the cities. Eventually Sunday left the Evangelical Church of West Africa which was established by SIM International mission. Partners began helping him in 1999 when he formed a ministry called TETMI. Sunday was killed shortly after this and his son David took over the work.

Many of you who read this letter will know Bev Clark, a missionary who worked many years in West Africa. Mrs. Sunday Umune was one of her disciples.



(exerpt from booklet)

The Lord gave Reverend Sunday Umune a vision to reach rural, tribal areas among the Ibo (specifically the Edda sub-group, approximately 2 million people) that received little government assistance and less attention from the church of Christ. These were areas of intense spiritual darkness and controlling powers of evil. Some of the first missionaries to these areas were buried alive. Reverend Umune worked for three years, assisted by PI and saw little fruit.

In 1999 he was traveling in his car from his village to Owerri. A bus hit his vehicle, which is not all that uncommon in Nigeria. It was a very serious accident. His injuries were so severe that he was still recovering two years later. On the very anniversary of the day he had the accident, the doctor removed the brace from his leg at an Orthopedic at Port Harcourt. On his way back home, the bus in which he was riding struck another bus and Reverend Umune was killed, leaving his wife, Jemima and children.

His son, David Umune was already ministering in an ECWA church at this time. He sensed the Lord leading him to carry on the vision of his father to these very difficult areas under the power of the enemy. Ministry was a hard struggle with few resources and less time because of his responsibilities as pastor.

In 2003 he and the Board of TETMI met to discuss the dissolution of the organization. They were making no headway. Workers were difficult to find, funds were not available for growth and there was little fruit apart from the work among the children. That very week the work was to be closed, Brent Mitchell, President of PI Canada arrived in Owerri unexpectedly. The discussion was to revolve around whether the partnership should continue.

Yet despite the evident struggles, during the visit Brent saw the huge need in these villages and the desperate condition of the people, and the quality and commitment of the TETMI Board and leadership. He was convinced the Lord wanted the ministry to move ahead. His visit and encouragement empowered David and the leadership team and they resolved to persevere.

There was also something happening in the unseen world during this time. Stories that later emerged, highlighted intense battles happening among "principalities, powers, and unseen forces". Evidence of these battles could be deduced from the intense struggles of David and the Team; the unusual death of his father and the knowledge of the occult history and powerful manifestations among these tribal groups.

Some of the very overt manifestations of local spirits which confronted Jemima, the widow of Sunday Umune and to David himself showed the warfare underway in the spiritual realm.

One day when David was praying during one of his visits to the village, two large men, wreathed in smoke came to his door. They were so tall that they had to duck through the doorway of his room. They said "This is our territory." David replied "Well, that may be, but we're here now". He never saw them again



Early one day, Jemima was struggling in prayer in her room for the work and the opposition they were facing. At about 2:30 in the morning she felt that she should go outside. She did immediately heard a voice that said "Look to your right" and saw a huge snake coming straight at her. She spoke "in the name of Jesus, I command you to leave".

She heard an inner voice saying "Look to your left" and as she did another large snake approached from the left. She repeated her order in prayer. Then finally the same voice said "Look straight ahead". The third snake approached with the same result. She did same thing to over 15 large snakes until none came again. Later that same morning, the village witch doctor confronted her in the compound and accused her of sending their gods away from their community.

From the moment of this spiritual break-through in the ministry, things changed. Doors opened in village after village to send evangelists. Children began responding and schools started, managed by Jemima and the TETMI organization which began to see children coming to the Lord and standing against their parents when they were expected to be involved in animistic rites and rituals.

Canadians joined in and began supporting the work. People prayed and God responded. Funds came for a school building and worker support. In a few short years and after decades of struggle with little fruit, churches were planted and a ministry began to expand rapidly.

In 2008 more than 13 churches have been established with many more preaching points; 2 primary schools with some 740 kids erected and children are taught daily from the scriptures. A high School is under construction for 140 students with lots of room for expansion and growth

Suffice it to say that the rural areas are still relatively untouched and controlled by forces we know very little about in North America.

I will be flying to Liberia for 4 days before heading back to Nigeria and home.

Thanks for your friendship and prayers,

Phil Dempster

[Return to Travelogues](#)

[Ministry info](#)