

Amazing Ministry Opportunities in Calabar

Development of the Society of Christian Scholars

One of the great blessings that I have enjoyed in the last year or so is watching the growth of the fledgling Society of Christian Scholars. This is the most recent expansion of Global Scholars. Though we have been toying with this idea for perhaps ten years or more, about five or six years or so ago, Dr. Keith Campbell got the vision of really leading this initiative. He put together about a three-and-a-half-year research/consultation plan with about 30 Christian scholars around the world to come up with a plan that would address the needs of Christian academics in the various universities around the world. The program was rolled out about two years ago as an on-line service for Christian academics. It provides 14 specific services such as linkages with academics with similar backgrounds, assistance with editing, a digital library, on-line search engines, small grants for research and other projects, webinars, a digital platform for classes and consultation and, perhaps the most important, a platform for discussions, interaction, fellowship and mentoring. The organization has been growing slowly since that time. We see this as more of a movement than an organization.

It has been exciting to me to see how this project has developed in Africa. Prof. Osam Temple came to us a few years ago with a vision similar to our own and a hunger to get involved. He became one of the 30 consultants and, in fact, has become the chairman of the board of this new body. He has been pushing very hard to bring together the various members who have signed up around Africa. I would guess that we have about 40 to 50 members from Africa so far. Starting perhaps six or eight months ago, Osam started having on-line meetings. I think in the first meeting we had 21 participants. After several meetings, it was on 26 February, at 7:00 AM Atlanta time that I had the privilege of inaugurating the Africa-wide executive committee of the Africa Society of Christian Scholars. We have officers from Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Ghana and the Gambia, I believe. That was the same day we left to return to Nigeria so I returned to Nigeria with a full heart and a lot of anticipation for what God was doing through this body.

In addition to the Africa-wide body, Osam has also been encouraging the development of a Nigeria Society of Christian Scholars. We have members at the University of Jos, the University of Calabar, Ahmadu Bello University and I am not sure where else. One of the members from Calabar, Dr. Alexander Timothy, won a small grant to do an awareness workshop at the University of Calabar a few months ago. It was partially on-line so I was able to speak for that event. I am always amazed at how good these on-line projects are. Dr. Timothy was disappointed that he had only eight in-person participants. However, that event laid a good foundation and he and his colleagues at the University of Calabar decided that they would have a bigger event, an in-person academic conference to promote the Society of Christian Scholars and the philosophy and types of ministry that we have developed and tried to promote during the years of IICS/Global Scholar's ministry. I was in on several of the conversations that planned the event but not all of them. It is so wonderful to be able to just turn these types of things over to other people and watch them do a better job than you would do.



Dr. Luka Dinshak and Prof. Osam Temple
Leaders in Society of Christian Scholars

Invitation to Speak at the Society's Maiden National Conference

About four weeks ago, I got a call from Osam that I had been anticipating but was actually dreading a bit. He said that the committee had agreed that I should be one of the speakers at what would be the first-ever in-person meeting of the Society of Christian Scholars. The next day I received the official invitation letter which read in part:

We trust that this letter meets you well. We wish to invite you to the maiden National Conference of the Society of Christian Scholars holding in Calabar from 7th to 10th April 2021. The theme of the conference is "Faith and Scholarship Integration in Tertiary Institutions". We would like you to make a presentation on how to identify, craft and manage the nexus between the Christian faith and academic disciplines.

We acknowledge your pioneering role in the birth of Global Scholars, and by extension, the Society of Christian Scholars. With your wide experience in the Christian ministry as well as academia, we think that your presentation will provide a definite direction and inspire deep reflections and discussions on the evangelistic and redemptive mission of the Christian academic.

With my history in the organization, I certainly was not surprised that they asked me to speak.

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Society of Christian Scholars Conference

The conference had actually started that Thursday morning. I was very happy to see that there were about 60 participants, from at least three different universities. Two of my colleagues from the University of Jos had come by road to Calabar the day before. When I got there about 12:30, the person giving the keynote address was speaking. He was the chaplain of the Protestant chapel on campus. After his presentation a man who was the former dean of the



Lunch Time at the Society Conference;
Note the poster behind the ladies

postgraduate school gave the "lead paper." I was quite impressed. He made a lot of good points that we make in Global Scholars. After that there was a session of questions and answers and positive interaction.

After that it was time for Osam to make his presentation. I have interacted with him a lot but this is the first time I have ever seen him make a presentation other than on-line presentations. I was very impressed by his presentation. It was excellent by anybody's standards. He really understands the Global Scholars/Society of Christian Scholars philosophy and presented it just about as well as it can be presented. Thank God for people who buy into your vision and then do a better job with it than you do.

After that I did my presentation. I gave my presentation the title: “The Christian Academic: God’s Intellectual Warriors.” This was a pretty straightforward presentation about our responsibility to fight the battle for truth in our public universities. I had put it together a PowerPoint presentation which was projected on a large TV screen rather than the kind of projector I normally use. It worked fine. I thought the presentation was received quite well. To be perfectly honest, I thought Osam’s presentation was better than my own. However, I brought a good bit of history and passion with my presentation and the two went together very well. God always arranges things very well.

I thought this conference was a very good beginning for the Nigerian branch of the Society of Christian Scholars. There was some first-of-its-kind disorganization. However, to get 60 academics together for such a new conference was outstanding in my opinion. I was very happy with the conference and trust that the other participants were equally as happy.

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Linking Up with the Presbyterians

I had agreed with the Presbyterian committee that after I finished my conference, I would join them late on Friday afternoon. So about 3:00 PM, I called one of the committee members. She told me that I would be staying the Channel View Hotel. Dr. Timothy arranged for his son to take me to this place, which was obviously a well-known hotel in Calabar. When I got there, I met two of the planning committee members. They arranged for me to have this huge suite that had a living room as well as a bedroom. They also invited me to go with them to a choir competition that was going to be starting about 5:00 PM and continue until about 8:00 PM. As much as I would have liked to have gone and witnessed that, I decided that I need to get a little rest and finalize my presentation. So, I kicked off my shoes, got comfortable and spent the rest of the evening in my room.

I slept well but got up at 5:00 AM. Most of the time when I am preaching on a particular day I will get up at 5:00 AM to make sure that I go through my sermon one more time while my mind is fresh. Often there are new insights that arise from the fresh mind. I usually take advantage of that time to mark up my presentation with a yellow highlighter. So, by 7:00 AM I was ready with my presentation which would be given later on that Saturday morning.

About 6:30 I went down to the dining hall and order an “English breakfast.” This was an omelet with sausages (more like hotdogs), baked beans, mushrooms and tea and bread. I was told that they would deliver it to my room in 25 minutes. After 40 minutes, the phone in my room rang. The person in the kitchen said, “Sir, please exercise patience. We do not have any bread so we cannot make the English breakfast for you.” I asked them what options I had. They said that they could go get some bread but it would take 20 more minutes. I told them to go ahead and get their bread. About 15 minutes later they called me back and said that the bakery did not have any bread. They wondered what else I might eat. I asked them what was available. They said they could fry me some plantains. I told them to do that but add a few potatoes in with them. So about 25 minutes later, I finally got a breakfast of fried potatoes

and plantains. By the time it got to me I was very hungry and it all tasted very good. We really get good plantains in southern Nigeria. And these were good.

The 175th Anniversary Celebration of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria

I was told to be ready by 9:30 AM on Saturday morning. Right at 9:30, the vehicle arrived to pick me and another person who was the moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. I later had a very good visit with him. It took us about 10 minutes to get to the Hope Waddell Training Institution where the celebration was going to take place. There is a very large church on campus that would be big enough for this celebration. We were first taken to the pastor's office. I was impressed by the hundreds of books that he had in his office. It is pretty obvious that he must have studied in the US or the UK. Practically everyone there had on a robe. If I would have known, I would have brought my academic robe. However, they did give me a stole to wear which had been especially prepared for that occasion. Fortunately, I was not the only one who wore the stole without a robe. It was quite colorful.

The Processional

About 9:50, all of the dignitaries went around to the back of the church to process in. Two different choirs led the way. Then various officers from the least important to the most important were arranged in the procession. Getting people in the right order is an important part of the protocol. The last person in the line was the prelate and moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. I was directly in front of him. The choir sang "The Church's One Foundation" as a processional. When we got about three quarters of the way to the front of the building, the people in front of us all stepped to the side and the prelate moved to the front with me right behind him so that we were actually the first ones to step up on the platform.

After we were successful seated on the platform, the Boys' and Girls' Brigade brought in the "colors"—11 different flags, including US and Canadian flags. I was not quite sure why these particular flags were chosen; perhaps it was because these were where the Presbyterian missionaries had come from. The teenagers were led down the aisle by a young man who appeared to be about 18 who was shouting out orders like a soldier. When they got to the front, there was an "officer" in front of the steps. The young man shouted out a request for permission to place the colors on the platform. He was given permission so each of the persons carrying a flag would march forward and hand the flag to the adult officer. He would turn around and climb the five or six steps and hand the flag to one of the church officials. That person would turn around and hand the flag to another person who would take the flag back to the back wall of the church and then place it properly against the wall. I would guess that this whole process took about 15 minutes. The flag bearers then slowly turned around and marched out of the church to the drum beat of a marching band. It was all very colorful.

The Main Program

After the flags were placed, there was a call to worship with the hymn "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing." Next there were a series of prayers and then the dignitaries were all introduced. After that, there was a song from the band, which was a more contemporary style of singing. The lady leading that group was outstanding. The next item was the address of the prelate and moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, His Eminence Nzei Nsi Eke. His speech was written and included in the 88-page program. I thought it was an excellent

speech. In fact, he said several of the things that I had planned to say. I was already a little tight for time so since he mentioned those things, I could omit them from my presentation.

The next item on the agenda was a series of goodwill messages from various leaders, mostly from outside of the Presbyterian Church. These included the moderator from Cameroon, the general secretary of the Christian Council of Nigeria and what was apparently the most important traditional ruler in Cross Rivers State. These speeches all said the right things. We then sang another congregational hymn which was “Thou Whose Almighty Word.” I did not know this hymn but it was beautiful. The first verse says:

*Thou whose almighty word
Chaos and darkness heard
And took their flight,
Hear us, we humble pray,
And, where the gospel day
Sheds not its glorious ray,
Let there be light.*

My Presentation

After that the principal clerk, Rev. Dr. Miracle Ajah, introduced me. He made me sound like I was someone important. At that point, I was introduced and mounted the pulpit. I had been allotted 20 minutes on the program for my keynote address. I knew that I was going to be a little longer than that and that would be OK in this context. However, I wanted to keep the speech in the 25-minute range. The main language in that area is Efik I began with an Efik greeting which is something like “Emesiero.” As soon as I gave that greeting, the place just erupted. Apparently, they were not expected to hear a white man speak their language. The prelate is an Igbo from a different part of the country so I turned back and said, “And for our prelate I will say Ndewo.” There was another roar of approval. I continued, “And for our visiting moderator from Cameroon, Bonjour.” That was a little over the top because he was actually from the English-speaking part of Cameroon but it was a pretty good ice-breaker. It is nearly always good for a public speaker to have his audience smiling at the beginning.

I then made another one sentence short statement and it was immediately obvious from their reaction that they did not understand me. The PA system had a combination of a booming and mushy sound at the same time. I knew instantly that with my American accent, I was going to have to slow down and speak very distinctly. I did and I don’t think that there were any more times when there was any serious lack of understanding.

They had obviously asked me to speak on the theme of the celebration which was “from glory to glory.” I began with a couple of observations—some words about the meaning of glory and also some observations about the way God works on this earth. 1) He works through human beings and 2) he works the hard, slow, difficult, painful and progressive way. In other words, God does his work from one degree of glory to the next. I then showed how this was done with the kingdom of God. God had said to Abraham that he was going to build a great nation. However, we had to go through eight books of the Bible and 1000 years before that promise was fulfilled. Next, I used the illustration of Jesus. We first learn about Jesus with the promises of the Old Testament. I then went through the glory of Jesus’ incarnation, birth, baptism, transfiguration, cross, resurrection, ascension and second coming. Finally, I did a brief survey of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, from the predecessors of the church to the planting of the church in Calabar and the various stages until the present. I finally

turned and look toward the future and challenged them to learn from the mistakes of the past and also to not be afraid to try new things. I think I finished my presentations just a few seconds shy of 25 minutes. It was not the greatest speech I have ever made but I think it was appropriate for the occasion. I did get some nice complements afterwards. The prelate thought it was just ideal for the occasion. If the prelate was happy, I was very happy.

After my presentation, there was another round of band music and another round of prayers.

175 Awards

The planning committee had done a very interesting thing for the next section of the program. They planned to give 175 awards to various Presbyterians, one award for each of the 175 years of their existence. When I saw that on the program, I smiled. I knew that this was going to take a while. The awards were divided in to several categories:

- Exemplary Christian Service Award (81 of them)
- Legal Awards (2)
- Ecumenical Bridge Builder Award (12)
- Distinguished Leadership Award (10)
- Women Desk (6)
- Men Desk (11)
- Youth Desk (10)
- CGIT (10)
- Frontier Champion (10)
- Fathers of the Faith (9)
- Service Award (175th Synod Moderators) (10)
- Presbyterian Beacons (4)

This did indeed take a while. While there was a little break in the action, I used that time to send some texts to my family about how the service was going. Here is a series of texts from that period:

- 1:53 PM: Speech over – 25 minutes . . . Now they are giving awards to 175 Presbyterians in honor of the 175 years of their church's existence. Nigerians love to honor people.
- 2:11: Up to 81 now
- 2:35: Up to 111
- 2:56: Up to 133
- 3:21: Last one being given now

The process was just a bit chaotic. It was obvious that they originally wanted to just read the names and the people would come forward and collect their awards, as they could. However, after a while, there were two people reading the names, the first one to invite the people to come forward and then the person giving out the award would read their name when handing it to the recipient. In addition, perhaps eight or ten of the recipients gave short speeches of thanks and in some cases, made a thanksgiving offering for the award. It seemed tedious but it was actually interesting. I had nothing else to do for the rest of the day so it was interesting to sit there and watch these good people be honored for various positive things they had done.

Concluding the Service

After the awards ceremony, there was an offering and a vote of thanks by the planning committee. We sang the closing hymn which was “Now Thank We All Our God.” The prelate gave the benediction. The youth came marching back in to get the colors. It took about 10 or 12 minutes to be handed them in the reverse order and then march out of the building. The people on the platform came down onto the steps and took an official photograph. We then all recessed but instead of going to the front door, we went down on the floor and then around and through the back door. I think we got back to the disrobing room right at 4:00 PM. The service had lasted six hours. To an American, that sounds hopelessly long and tedious but it really wasn’t. It was an enjoyable and blessed celebration. Any church that has existed for 175 has every right to celebrate for six hours and they should enjoy every minute of it.

Reviewing the Boys’ and Girls’ Brigades

As we were milling around in the back, someone came up to me and said, “Are you ready to go back to the hotel?” I said, “Well, I am ready but are there any more activities that are going on?” They assured me that it was OK to go back to the hotel. However, about that time the prelate came along and asked someone, “Where are the boys’ brigades?” Someone told him that they were out on the soccer field. Apparently, there was going to be some activity that involved the boys’ and girls’ brigades. The prelate at first thought about walking back there but finally decided that we should all ride so he confiscated a few vehicles and we all piled in them and drove around to the soccer field.

Out on this huge soccer field which was big enough to be a polo field, there were eight squads of girls’ and boys’ brigades lined up in a straight line facing us. There were probably about 25 in each group. In addition, the color guard was there. The band started playing and the young man who was obviously the leader of the group started marching toward us. He was holding a sword. He would hold the sword up to his mouth and then shout out orders in such a way that it was almost impossible to hear what he was actually saying. However, soon the color guard started moving. They marched over to the center of the field and then marched part of the way toward us. They lowered all of the flags except the Nigerian flag and then played the Nigerian national anthem. The boy with the sword came up to us and shouted some requests. He apparently was asking the prelate and his entourage to review the boys’ and girls’ brigade. He turned and started marching toward our left. There were about eight or ten dignitaries there and we all fell in behind him. He marched up to the end of the group and then we turned and started walking right beside each of these eight groups. We reviewed them all the way to the end of the group and then turned left and marched back through them. They had been divided into two groups so on the way back, we were marching between the groups. We got up to the end and then turned left and went back to the center of the parade ground where we had been before. I was pretty tired by that time and thought that we could now go back to the hotel. However, they were just getting started. The boy leader marched back to where the groups were, shouted at them and then they turned and started marching toward the left. The group on the far left turned and marched toward our side of the field and then when they got out to about where we were in relation to the edge of the field, they turned and march toward us and then past us. Each of



Boys' and Girls' Brigades Marching Past Church Officials

the eight groups marched past us. That took another 15 or 20 minutes. The band was playing Christian songs all this time. I was relieved when everyone finally got back to where they had started. However, that was only the first march-past. The band started playing a faster song and they then did a march past at double-time or at least that appeared to be what they were doing. They were swinging their arms much more vigorously this time but I am not sure they were walking twice as fast. However, it was at least a bit faster. That took another 12 minutes or so. After that, there was a lot more shouting and adjusting the groups. The young man finally came up to the prelate and announced in a very loud voice that the program was over. I must confess that I was ready for it to be over by that time.

We got in the vehicles and went back to the pastor's office. Once again, they asked me if I were ready to go to the hotel. They mentioned that I could eat either there at the church or back at the hotel. I had already had enough negative experiences with the food people at the hotel so I told them that I would be just as happy to eat there at the church. I think they thought that I would get better food at the hotel so they said, "No, why don't you just go back to the hotel and get your meal." I do not like to argue with my host so that is what I did.

Food at the Hotel

It was about 5:15 PM when we got back to the hotel. I walked straight to the restaurant and met the young lady in charge. I mentioned that I had seen they had a Chinese menu and asked if I could order food from that. She said, "Oh, I am sorry. The chef has already left." It was 5:15 and the chef had already left??? So, I asked her, "What can you prepare for me?" She said, "We can prepare fried rice that is similar to the Chinese rice." I said, "OK, I will take that. Just bring it up to my room when it is ready." I went upstairs and took a shower and the phone rang about 15 minutes later. It was the restaurant. The lady said, "Sir, I am sorry but we do not have the kind of rice we normally use for that fried rice. Would you be willing to take another kind of rice?" I said, "Mam, I am hungry. I am sure you people in the kitchen know how to prepare very nice food. Just prepare me something to eat and make sure there is plenty of it because I am very hungry." About 30 minutes later, they brought up a beautiful platter of fried rice with pieces of chicken, egg, vegetables and other good things. There was enough for two normal people. I took my time and ate every grain of that rice. I was finally full.

I went to bed that evening at 8:17 that evening and slept until after 6:00 the next morning. I was really tired.

The next morning, I tried ordering the English breakfast. This time they brought it up to me. However, they forgot to bring the tea. I sent them back to bring the tea. In a couple of minutes, the young man came back with a little saucer with tea, milk and sugar on it but no cup or hot water. I said, "My friend, where is the cup and the hot water?" He looked around and finally spotted a tea pot in my room that had a cup beside it. He pointed to it. I said, "My friend, would you please go get me a cup and some hot water?" He did. The breakfast was very good. It was worth the wahalla.

The Sunday Morning Worship Service

They told me to be ready to go to the church on Sunday morning by 8:15. I was ready and the others staying in the hotel were ready also. This time we drove about 20 minutes to the Presbyterian cathedral. This was the second oldest church building in Calabar. I never did quite get the date of its construction but I suspected that it was about 100 years old. We were

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about to enter the morning worship service which would also be a communion service. The dignitaries assembled in the room immediately behind the pulpit. They decided not to have a processional. Apparently, they have not been having them since covid started. We just all walked out on the platform and were seated in the proper order.

I will not take time to describe the service in detail. I will say that it started at 9:00 AM and I think it ended somewhere around 1:30. I needed to get to the airport in the mid-afternoon so I was called off the platform at 1:15. It was actually a very wonderful service. There was plenty of liturgy and plenty wonderful hymns and enough but not too much contemporary African Christian music. I later told one of their officials that I felt that they had really preserved the original spirit of the Presbyterian Church. Their congregational singing was superb. They actually sang “And Can It Be” and I think I can honestly say I have never heard a Methodist or Wesleyan congregation sing it any better. I really enjoyed all parts of the service. The preacher for the day was Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki, the general secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches. This is a group of 202 Protestant denominations all across Africa. The organization was started by a Nigerian, a Presbyterian in fact, named Sir Akanu Ibiam, whom I had met a few times before he died probably 15 years ago. This preacher was actually from Tanzania. I really appreciated and enjoyed his excellent sermon.



Serving Communion



With the Presbyterian Planning Committee

About 1:15, someone came and took me off the platform. They told me that they wanted to give me lunch before taking me to the airport. We went up to the pastor’s office which was up on the third floor. I had a nice meal of rice and chicken. I had brought four or five of my latest books, *Lessons I Learned from a Mamma Chicken*, which I gave to some of the church officials before I left. After that, one of the pastors took me out to the airport, which was only about 15 minutes away.

Getting Back Home

The check-in at the airport was routine. I had to wait about an hour and a half. There were several people on the flight who had been in the 175th anniversary celebration so I chatted with some of them. The Air Peace flight was just a few minutes late but we soon boarded and headed for Lagos. The flight was a little bumpy but not so bumpy I had to stop reading.

Luggage Wahalla

When we got to Lagos, I plugged in my phone in a wall socket in the airport because my battery was running low and I would need my phone to get an Uber. The luggage finally arrived. However, there were about eight or ten of us still milling around when the belt

stopped turning. We immediately went to see the Air Peace young lady who was in the luggage area. She explained that all the luggage that had come had been put out. This meant that the luggage of several of us had not arrived. She explained that the plane was full and there was too much luggage for the weight allowance of the plane. Therefore, the pilot had required them to remove some luggage. She said, “You know we value your safety so that is why we had to remove the luggage.” I resisted the temptation to say that they valued the money from selling every seat on the plane more than the convenience of their customers.

When I had a chance, I explained to the Air Peace lady that I would not be in Lagos the next day when the luggage arrived. That would mean that they would have to ship the luggage by Arik Air on Wednesday, which was the next time a flight would go to Jos. She brought out a paper that we all signed, giving the details so that they could contact us when the luggage arrived. Several people, like me, were not from Lagos and were bitterly complaining. One lady said that the presentation that she was supposed to make the next day at a meeting in Lagos was in that luggage that had not made it.

I finally decided that I had better see the manager so I walked over to the Air Peace section which is a couple of hundred meters from the arrival hall. I found the manager and explained to her what was happening. She tried to call the young lady I had just talked to. I finally decided that I was probably not going to get much help from them. They did give me an email address and a telephone number of the call center that might be able to help me.

I then went out and ordered an Uber which arrived about 15 minutes later. For a while Uber was not allowed to serve the airports in Nigeria to protect the union airport taxis. However, that has changed. They now require the Ubers to come inside the parking lot which costs them 400 Naira so the airport gets a little bit of revenue from them. Unfortunately, paying the 400 Naira requires the driver to get out of his vehicle and get in a line. There were 11 people ahead of my Uber driver so it took another six minutes of waiting before we could roll. However, the rest of the trip on to Victoria Island was uneventful.



Eating Supper on Daniel's Balcony 12 Stories up in Lagos

It was good to be back at Daniel's apartment and link back up with Mary. Daniel had ordered some really good Indian food which we enjoyed out on his balcony, 12 stories up. It was cool and nice up there with a beautiful breeze blowing. Daniel's apartment is also high enough that it does not get many mosquitos so we had a lovely evening.

Later that evening, I wrote a very specific email to the Call Centre outlining exactly what I would like for them to do with my luggage. After I left the airport, I remembered that on Monday I was going to be in the Abuja airport for at least six hours. I got on line to figure out when the Air Peace flight from Calabar to Abuja would arrive and learned it was coming about 2:00 PM so if I could get the Air Peace people to put my piece of luggage on the flight to Abuja rather than put it on the flight later in the day to Lagos, I could pick it up in Abuja and everything would be back to normal. I was not too optimistic that my email would make any difference but at least we tried.

From Lagos to Abuja

Because Arik Air was not flying from Lagos to Abuja on Monday, I had to take a flight from Lagos to Abuja and then take a separate flight from Abuja to Jos. My original flight from Lagos to Abuja was about 11:00 AM. However, as I mentioned earlier, a day or so before we left to go on the trip, I got a note from Arik Air that that flight had been canceled. My flight was rescheduled to leave at 7:00 AM.

So, Mary and I were up at 3:30. At 4:45 I called the Uber. At 5:02, we left the 1004 Apartments heading for the airport. We arrived right at 5:30. I think 28 minutes is the fastest I have ever made it from Daniel's place to the airport. We were able to get checked in without any difficulty. We had an hour or so to wait in the departure hall before we boarded the flight and flew to Lagos. I got some work done on my computer which was plugged in my secret socket. The flight to Abuja was uneventful. We arrived a little before 8:30 AM.

Sorting out the Luggage Problem

I had two things to do after arriving. Because it is more difficult for Mary to walk long distances, I had her stay in the arrival lobby of the airport while I tried to sort out a couple of things. There was no good place for her to stay outside. I spoke to the security guard and told him that I would be coming to get her a little later. There was actually a nice comfortable section that was designed for people who had "mobility" problems.

The first thing I did was to go to the Max Air desk. We would be taking that flight at 3:20 that afternoon from Abuja to Jos. We had thought about taking a taxi to the Catholic Guest House which is about 15 minutes from the airport and wait there for several hours. However, the more I thought about it, the more I decided that if we could just get in one of the VIP lounges, that would work too and probably be cheaper than taking two taxi rides. However, I would need to check in and get into the departure lounge before we could get into one of the VIP lounges. So, my question for the Max Air people was whether or not I could check in now. The person who attended to me was very nice and asked me "What about your luggage?" I smiled and said, "Well, that is another story. I have one piece of luggage now but I am hoping to get another one later in the day." I then explained to him about the luggage that was left in Calabar. He said, "OK, that is no problem. I will check you in with your one piece of luggage for now and when you get the other one, I will check that one in also." He then suggested that we go together over to the Peace Air section and try to sort out the missing luggage.

We walked over to the Air Peace section and met the person in charge of the luggage. I explained that I wanted him to call the Air Peace manager in Calabar and get them to put my luggage on the Abuja flight rather than the Lagos flight. He went and got the number of the Calabar manager, spoke to him and they agreed that they would do exactly that. That was a big relief.

We passed back through the lobby where Mary was sitting and I waited there with her until Sunday, the Max Air man, took my luggage and checked it in and also got a wheel chair for Mary. He also brought back our boarding passes and we then went up to the departure lounge. I found the VIP Lounge and we checked in. The cost for the two of us, which included some snacks was 6200 Naira (about \$13). We then stayed in that lounge for well over seven hours. It was quite comfortable. I was able to get a good bit of computer work

done. Mary was able to read a bit. In addition, I stayed in contact with Sunday and Sam, the Air Peace man.

About 1:30, we heard that the Air Peace flight from Calabar would arrive at 2:00 PM. I called Sam about 2:20 and he said they were unloading the luggage at that time. He called me back about three minutes later and informed me that he had my luggage. I put him in contact with Sunday and about 20 minutes later, Sunday came upstairs with my luggage claim tag. Everything had worked out well.

Max Air from Abuja to Jos

The flight was supposed to leave at 3:20. Unfortunately, it was about an hour and a half late. However, Sunday kept telling me, “Don’t worry. I will come and get you.” He later took our boarding passes and IDs and cleared us so that when they called us to board the plane, we would not have to wait in line. And it worked just that way. When they called us to board, we walked down the two flights of stairs. We had to walk about 250 meters from the bottom of the steps out onto the tarmac to where the plane was waiting. However, Sunday had arranged for a wheelchair for Mary so she did not have the stress of walking that long distance.

We boarded the plane. It took off and we landed about 23 minutes later in Jos. When we got off the plane, it was so refreshing to be in a cool atmosphere. Andrew was there waiting for us. Our luggage came quickly and in a short time we were on the way home.

More Delays

Unfortunately, after we had left the Miango Junction and were heading for the Old Airport Junction, we ran into serious go-slow. It took us about 20 minutes to go perhaps a half or three quarters of a mile. Andrew then turned on the Old Airport Road and took some back roads to get around the traffic problems. It took us an hour and a half to get back home. We can normally make it to the airport in about 45 minutes if there is no traffic.

Home at Last

However, the good news is that we were home. It was good to be back home. It had been a good trip but it is always good to get back home. We returned home, knowing that God himself had arranged this trip. It is our prayer that God will take our weak and imperfect efforts and multiply them like he did the loaves and fishes.