

Highlights from our visit to Africa 19th April – 12th May

Hans–Georg had some surprises even before the start of the trip...

I just wanted to pick up our visas from one of the embassies in Vienna. However, the regular lady had an emergency appointment at the dentist, and so the visas weren't there. Another African lady there put a huge sum of money into my hand with the request to pass it on to her relatives in Africa. This was after she had found out I was a Christian...

Manuel and I were able to get the required visas quite easily once we had arrived in Ghana.

A few hours after our arrival in Accra, Ghana, we were on our way to Odumase in Kroboland where we were invited to an audience with our friend **King Nene Sakite II** at 8.00 am on Sunday morning (21st April). The King was very pleased to see us again and as well as our personal greetings he was delighted to receive the letter from the Mayor and the gift from my home town of Gerlingen (S. Germany). We had a long conversation on various matters which were on his mind: how are the persecuted Christians managing throughout the world? Is anything being done for them politically? What actually is 'grace'? What if I have doubts? We got on the subject of the Apostle Thomas... At the end of the audience he wished us to pray with him and for him. A little later we saw him again, with his wife, at the church service.

We were given a warm welcome at the guest house which belongs to the '**Johannes–Zimmermann–Church**' in Odumase. The hospitality there was simply overwhelming!

At the conference held in Abokobi (near Accra) we met church leaders and mission leaders from the whole of West Africa and Europe. It was such an enriching experience: the sharing, the fellowship and the great diversity of the participants. There were several challenging messages on the topic of '**Servant Leaders**' which have given me much to think about since then, on how God uses even obvious failures and unpromising people.

Afterwards we travelled many miles with the **church team from Niger** through Kumasi and Tamale in Ghana, then to **Gourma in Burkina Faso**, 35 hours in total. On one occasion the brakes on the very full minibus jammed, but the African driver knew how to put it right using the simplest of means! In the evening we arrived at the border with Niger only 10 minutes after it had closed for the night, when everything shuts down completely! We were picturing ourselves having to spend the night on board the hot bus surrounded by clouds of mosquitoes – not a pleasant thought! But suddenly someone took pity on us and waved us through! Ours was the only vehicle allowed to go. What a miracle!

In Niger we were told the **story of a small Christian fellowship** in the north of this Mo.sl.m country. Many refugees had flooded into the area from neighbouring countries. The **little flock of Christians didn't hold back**, but went to great lengths to help these poor people who otherwise have not received any help at all. Besides, they planted 500 trees along the road to provide some much needed shade in this extreme desert climate. That all these trees have survived is a miracle in itself and this has strengthened respect for the Christians there. Since then the Pastor has been allowed to move about freely again and is even protected by religious majority! God is with His people!

In August last year the capital **Niamey suffered severe flooding**. There were many deaths and enormous damage to property. The Sahel Academy (<http://sahelacademy.com>), a big Christian school for the children of international workers, was also caught up in the disaster and the rebuilding work seems endless.

There and later on in Benin Manuel and I were 'mobbed' by the Christian workers when they found out we were both electricians. **They got down on their knees and begged us** to come back and sort out the faulty electrical systems in the houses, establishments, Bible colleges, hospitals, etc. Now we are considering whether to **set aside the whole of January 2014** and go back there, so we can rewire at least one house and at the same time train up one of the local people who could then take care of the electrical maintenance and continue without our help.

DMG missionary Christa Englert has been serving in **Niamey** for many years. She showed us where she works in the orphanage, the prison, among students and in the little local church. We heard a Pastor from Benin preach a sermon there with passion, speaking a powerful message from Hebrews 13:1–6. God's Word touched us deeply and we were astonished at his courage and determination in proclaiming these verses in a Mo.sl.m environment.

A Canadian missionary pilot from SIM–Air took us to the hangar and showed us his two small aircraft. We will see him soon with his family in Vienna when they travel through.

On the return journey to Ghana by public bus to **Parakou in Benin** we were accommodated by our dear French missionary colleagues, **Alain and Christian Soudrain**. Together with the **Phillips missionary family (DMG)**, they took time to show us the various places where they work: the girls' boarding school, the big 'Bembereke' Mission Hospital, and the establishment where they train local manual workers.

Time and again we were asked about the **Radlingmayers and the Habluetzels, two 'old' DMG missionary families**. The memory of their service among the local people over many years is still very much alive!

The visit to the grave of our dear missionary colleague **Waltraud Ziegler**, who died suddenly at the age of 45 from an aggressive tropical illness, got me thinking: what legacy will my life leave behind? Waltraud was a dedicated teacher of missionary children, but also someone for whom prayer was of the utmost importance. That has left its mark on the local leaders right up to the present day.

In the remote town of Djougou (nearly 250,000 inhabitants) we met **Ulrike Heyder (DMG)** who has been there for many years, faithfully translating the Bible into the Sola language. She is the only white person for miles around and would **dearly love to have a female colleague** to share the work.

We returned to Accra via Cotonou in Benin and Lome in Togo, all by public buses.

We were sitting in the aeroplane, just about to turn off our mobile phones when there was an **unexpected call from King Nene Sakite II!** He just wanted to thank us again for the visit and had hoped we could manage to see him again. It was a lovely farewell to Africa. Perhaps there will be another opportunity soon to renew old friendships!

We experienced God's wonderful safekeeping, and so much love and provision – we have so many new impressions that are now sinking in! **THANK YOU** for all your support and for praying for us!