

Dear Friends,

January 2019

A lot has happened since we last wrote you! We've celebrated Christmas and New Years, and Congo elected a new president. As election approached, we deemed it wise to leave the big city and refuge at Vanga. Elections are fraught with tension and potential violence so Congo's government ordered internet and telephone SMS messaging capabilities turned off nationwide... making for a long, "quiet" month!

It rained the night before our road trip to Vanga, guaranteeing an eventful one. Steep hills on the dirt road get super slick and we got horribly stuck for two hours. Four wheel drive has limits!



Katherine helpfully offers a stick to put under the wheels.



She also chastised my negligence for not bringing a shovel. "You always need to bring a shovel!" But I deemed that on that road, any place I'd get stuck, there'd be a village nearby and half a dozen strong young men would appear; with their own tools, ready to help, for a small fee.

Road conditions turned the eleven hour trip into a fifteen hour one. Bless colleagues Tim and Kathy Rice for saving a hot supper meal for us. Our ten day stay extended to twelve because elections scheduled for Dec 23rd were postponed to Dec 30th leaving extra days to celebrate, and to work!

Katherine assisted Kathy Rice and members of the nursing school administrative team, on various issues. She visited with childhood (Congolese) friends also "refuging" in Vanga for the season. Jonathan (our son) and Tim Rice worked on Vanga hospital accounting software, smashing bugs and cleaning up data to close the 2018 books. I climbed ladders with the Vanga maintenance team, installing new windows and air conditioners on the surgery building, and visited with Ed and Miriam Noyes at the Lusekele

agricultural center, planning options for the enormous peanut seed harvest being threshed by hand, and figuring out how to start a John Deer tractor (couldn't, needs a new injector pump).



On Sunday, Pastor Malala stood us up with 'visitors' in church to bring greetings.



Medical students hosted a party for children hospitalized on Christmas day: music, dancing, gifts, and special food.



We feasted at Rice's. Dr. Tim (selfie), Miriam Noyes, Heiner Oppliger, Jonathan Niles, Ed Noyes, Kathy Rice, Wayne Niles, Katherine Niles, Tara Jones.

Congo entered 2019 with a new president, a first peaceful "transfer" of power in Congo, and internet services restored! Though not lacking in controversy, the elections and presidential inauguration day involved little violence, an answer to the fervent prayers of millions.

Thank you for your prayers, partnership, and faithful support!

Wayne Niles

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