

Dear IHM,

July 9, 2013

Greetings from Kumbo! It has been almost two weeks since we arrived in Cameroon, and every day has had its own joys and its own challenges. I will be teaching Physics at St. Augustine College (a boarding secondary school), but as the school year does not start until September, we have some time to clean house, settle in, and get to know the culture and the life here.

Kumbo is said to be at 6,000 ft elevation or so, but our house is probably higher than that. Kumbo itself is really a conglomeration of several towns/villages, spread out upon rolling hills and deep valleys. Most people keep to their village unless they have business elsewhere. The climate is nice, though everyone here thinks it is cold. It does get chilly at night, but daytime temps are very nice. It is the rainy season, so it has rained every day, though not continuously. Everything is green and lush. People often ask if I am cold or if the children should put on a pullover, but I just tell them that it is warm for us, that where we come from we get snow.

It is the growing season, so every spare acre is used from crops. Right now everything is corn and beans, and they are harvesting the beans. You can also find in the market potatoes, onions, cassava, tomatoes, groundnuts (peanuts), and several kinds of greens. The fruit here is delicious, with local bananas, mangoes, avocados (called "pears"), plantains, pineapples, and several fruits I have never seen before. Most of our food is prepared from scratch, and some ingredients that are common in the states are hard to find here, or expensive. One thing is certainly unavailable: green and red chile. Hopefully we will be able to grow our own chile plants from seeds we brought with us, a gift from Gerard and Diane Kendall (Thanks!). The first batch of seeds have been planted, we'll see how they fare. Any advice about growing chile is most welcome!

Shopping in Kumbo is certainly a different experience than heading to Smith's or Metzger's. Most vendors operate out of stalls that are shacks, at best. Most have a theme, be it produce or hardware or school supplies or clothing, but it is not unusual for the clothing vendor to also sell pears from her backyard tree, or for the guy from whom you get your baking powder and lightbulbs to also sell credit for pay-as-you go phones. Some things here serve a similar purpose to what we have in the states, but look very different. Instead of Snickers bars, you can get bags of boiled ground nuts for a quick snack. Instead of a drive-thru McDonalds for a burger and fries, there are vendors that

sell a kind of meat kebab called soya along with grilled plantains. There is something like a mall, more a maze of vendors grouped roughly into sections: seamstresses here, shoes over there, electronics the next aisle over. It's like the Tesuque flea market, but bigger, more crowded, and much, much dirtier.

Some things that were conveniences in Los Alamos have become a chore. We have electricity and running water, but either can go out without warning. If you don't have water saved up in barrels, buckets, or jugs, you run into trouble when you need to flush, or wash clothes (by hand of course), or cook something. We filter all our water. Bathing is by cold shower (if the water is running) or a bucket bath. Even though most people speak English in this part of Cameroon, it is as a second or third language, so there are still language and translation issues. Sometimes you have to go through a number of synonyms before you hit on the right word or phrasing that the other person will understand. We will soon begin some language training in the local dialect (Lamnso) and the market language (pidgin).

We miss many things about home, especially friends and family, but are happy to be here and happy to be starting our mission. We are meeting people, we are growing as a family, and despite the many challenges, we are grateful to be here. Thank you for your continued prayers, be assured that we are praying for you, too. We would love to hear your news! Email is a good way to contact us as we are able to get online, though not from our house.

From Cameroon With love,

Eric and Logan Horne

with Helena, James, Max, Isabelle, and Sally