

Greetings to my sponsoring congregations. When I left you last time I was about to set off to Calcutta and points beyond. Before I left, Dr.

Sarah from Delhi stopped by the office with some sweets from Delhi. I made sure we ate them right away because the last time she brought sweets, the box got put away - for safety - and by the time anyone remembered they were there, they had gone all green! Also, before I went, I went to Chennai for a meeting to plan a new association to help the 35 Lutheran missions throughout India. We hoped to start by getting some details and statistics - a data base of sorts - and then some evaluation visits will be done by teams.

After a night in Calcutta, I was off to Mohulpahari. My first morning there was the first time I skipped a morning bath in a long time. The water choices were cold and colder! I had to wash my hair as it was off in all directions, and afterwards my brain was either very awake or frozen! This is one place I visit where there is no geyser ( British English - pronounced geezer - a water heating system) and no hot water is available by hand, pot, or fire, until well after the time I would normally bathe. I guess evening baths will be the thing here!

The next day was a national holiday - Republic Day - and I went to the flag raising ceremony which included some nice patriotic music from students and staff and well as a dance. Then it was sports day. The next day I went to a wedding reception. One of the Santali tribal customs has the mothers of the wedding party wiping the faces of their children and giving them water and sweets. Then the mothers do the same for the new members of the family. All feel welcomed and nourished by parents and in-laws alike.

Then it was back to Calcutta and I was lucky to get there! I missed the train I was supposed to be on because I was caught up in a traffic jam - stuck behind 500 trucks for more than two hours. I missed my train but caught another to Calcutta which was two hours late itself and I got a lot of work done on the train ride. That's when I wrote the letters to all of you about my 2010 Home Assignment!

From Calcutta I flew to Guwahati and Dr. Iswary met me and drove me to Parkijuli where I always enjoy the food and fellowship because Dr. Iswary has his guests eat with him. His family is in Guwahati because his children are school aged and the schools in Guwahati are better. I spent most of the day in the Out Patient Department with Dr. Iswary seeing patients with him, and then we went to a wedding reception. It was Day 8 of the reception when the bride and groom come to the bride's home. After some food and socializing, we went back to the hospital and we worked on his prioritized needs list - my main reason for being there. His list is long as he is looking at building a new hospital that needs to be staffed and furnished. And Dr. Iswary was very happy to be hear that an orthopedic team from CMC (Christian Medical College) is coming soon. I can say, "I helped."

My next destination was Delhi where I held classes with several groups. One class was for nurses who are new staff at St. Stephen's Hospital, one for senior staff nurses, one for clergy, and one for a mixed group of people from different faiths. All the classes went well.

I was also able to meet with the Executive Secretary of CMAI (Christian Medical Association of India) and he happily accepted my offer of help - planning, teaching, and motivating their palliative care work. I think some very good things can happen! A few of those good things that were related to nursing were initiated immediately, so I will be

having a meeting in Nagpur and one in Bangalore to do a presentation on getting palliative care content into the curriculum of nursing programs. CMAI has good connections with seminaries and that may be our way in there too. That will be the rather whirlwind four-day, three-city trip I'll be finishing about the time I send this - first to Delhi and then on to Nagpur and Bangalore. Opinions have been offered that I am crazy, but that has not daunted me! Tune in next month and I'll let you know how that trip went and if I was, in fact, crazy!

I leave for my time in Liberia in early March, so please keep my journey in your prayers, and know that you are my fuel.