

I spent the first few days of March getting ready to depart for Liberia, but before Africa, I had stops to make at trip to Jharkhand for a meeting of the Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church and one with the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta. Necessary stops but since it meant I had to depart for my safari to Africa from Calcutta and Mumbai, it made packing a little more challenging. I was also trying to sort out some problems before I left India. Three doctors from the hospital in Padhar had agreed to go to Cameroon this summer to cover for a doctor there so he could be on home leave, like me. I have been trying to help them get their visas and this has proven to be a gigantic problem which I am still struggling with.

The trip from Calcutta to Mumbai to Nairobi to Monrovia was a very long and exhausting one. The only real hitch was a security check in Mumbai where I was stopped after checking in and asked if I had anything metal in my checked luggage. I had to go into the bowels of the airport to open my bags and identify the items in them. The culprit turned out to be a battery charger with four AA batteries in it and ceramic water filter replacements. The small room where my bags were examined had A/C, but was swarming with mosquitoes! I could just feel the malaria!

In Monrovia, I stayed at the Lutheran Church in Liberia's guesthouse which is now connected to the Monrovia power grid which meant a more consistent power supply. The schedule called for power a good part of the day and night which seemed to be a better deal than depending on an iffy generator, but nevertheless, there were frequent outages my first day there and I was glad I had a window in my bathroom so in theory, I wouldn't have to shower in the dark, but showering was a little tricky I didn't know the ins and outs of the water supply! There was no water when I wanted to bathe. The next day the power supply was much better and I found that the water supply came on at 6:30 a.m., so I needed to fill a bucket the night before if I wanted to bathe earlier than that.

While in Monrovia I met with Sister Barbara and Edna who are working with me on the Masters in Nursing Education program. This is actually moving forward and is going to happen! We have 17 students and the house that is being renovated for them to stay in is ready for work.

I also went to the Cameroon Embassy to try and get my visa so I can go there and prepare the way for the doctors from India, but that did not go as well. The ambassador was helpful, but not enough so to just give me a visa. I am going to have to work a lot harder to get this visa sorted out.

My journey to Phebe was uneventful and there were some nice decorations on the house to welcome me. My first morning there, I was sitting in a familiar place - the porch of House 11 - in a very familiar situation - the power went out. A generator problem. Thankfully, it was not a serious problem and the power was back on that evening. It runs from 7 p.m. until 7 a.m.. My first morning I couldn't use the shower because the tubing to the wand was leaking, so it was bucket bath time again. I had some tubing and was able to replace it, so that is fixed.

I had a very warm welcome at the hospital, but the place is having serious financial problems and equipment-related problems. The network printers are not working and the copier in the business office is without a cartridge because they

can't get one. The copy machine in my old office had been taken over by rats and they are not good housekeepers. The portable X-ray machine had been plugged into an outlet with the wrong voltage and was no longer working. The neighboring UN contingent's biomedical technician came to help - I'm hopeful. And the Internet connection is no longer working. I had hoped that could be fixed the first weekend I was there, but with the technical staff being in Nigeria, that proved to be a bigger problem than I hoped and it still is not fixed. As they say in Liberia, "It isn't easy."

My first Sunday worship service back at St. Luke's lasted 3 ½ hours! The first two hours were a "rally" which is a fund raising event.

They need a roof for the church and really need the money. The people of Liberia seem to love the rallies but me, not so much! The service itself was wonderful with uplifting music and a good sermon. After that, I had a 2 ½ hour ride to Curran Hospital where I spent the rest of Sunday and the next day talking with Edna, the missionary there, some Lutheran volunteers from Canada and the new Medical Director at Curran. He is a retired doctor in his 70s who grew up five miles from the hospital and went to the Lutheran School at Curran. He came to a challenge and has done a good job of steadying the ship.

There is much to be done and little to do it with, so I ask for your prayers to help with the work. Prayer is a very important tool in the work that needs to be done here! Peace, John