

Greetings to my sponsoring churches! When I wrote to you last month, I was in Trivandrum in the state of Kerala, about to attend the wedding of a colleague. My friend and colleague Dr. Reena George was there too which was good as she was able to translate some of the proceedings for me. Most of the service was in Malayalam, only the solemnization was in English because the minister was from Vellore so his options were English and Tamil. There were a lot of pastors involved in the wedding so there were a lot of prayers for the wedding couple. The bride was beautiful in her multiple saris - and the groom was very handsome in his tuxedo..

The wedding was a lovely break from work, but before I left Trivandrum I visited a palliative care program and did a short presentation on spiritual care. The next day I was on the train back to Vellore. I spent the next week getting ready to leave for Liberia and also downloading several different palliative care medical journals for the CMC library. One of the journals offers free downloads of journals from 2009 and earlier. We need to have these journals available in order to start a palliative care specialty program for doctors at CMC. These downloads were plagued by a variety of technical problems. But I won't burden you with them! I also spent a lot of time conferring with Scott at Global Health Ministries because they were preparing to ship a container of goods to Liberia and I needed to give my input on what would be needed. As always, parts to maintain the cranky generators were high on the list. And I went shopping for gifts for friends in Liberia. And I packed.

My pastor friend JP asked me if I ever felt like a nomad. As I was unpacking after a two week trip and packing again for two months traveling in Liberia, I did feel rather nomadic. I was driven to Chennai where I caught a flight to Mumbai where security caught me with a corkscrew in my luggage! They decided I was not dangerous, they tossed my corkscrew into the trash, and let me continue on to Nairobi, Kenya and on to Monrovia, Liberia with a quick down and up in Ghana. There is a new bungalow for the visiting faculty of the Masters program and my room was very nice with an ocean view, a small lanai, and even A/C. Although the use of the A/C is limited by the limited hours of electricity, it is nice to have it as a possibility. The power is usually on 5-7 a.m. and 3-11 p.m. on weekends. Weekdays, the evening hours change to 7 p.m. - 2 a.m.

While I was in Monrovia, I had several meetings to go to and some people to talk with. I also had a chance to sit in on one of the classes of the Masters program and I think it is going very well. I had some shopping to do as well and one of the things I needed was a filtration unit to make drinking water safe. Unfortunately, the filter system does not filter out viruses or bacteria so the water has to be boiled as well. And I did some experimentation with a Kindle to see if students could use it for textbooks and journal articles. It turns out it will be a good thing for me in Liberia where books are not readily available.

Mango season is about to begin in Liberia and I think I have mentioned my love of mangoes. They are not as good as the mangoes in Vellore, but they are mangoes and so are very good. And whenever I can get pizza, it is pizza season! The first day I was back at Phebe, I thought they had 24 hour a day electric power but it turned out to be just 24 hours of power and the next day was mostly no power, but I was told that the hospital had consistent power so that was good. I enjoyed my first worship service back at St. Luke's - it was so good to see the people, hear the music, and enjoy the dancing. The new church is not done yet but it is an improvement. There is no railing on the balcony and that's where the children sit so I was nervous for much of the service!

After a few days at Phebe, I was on the road to Curran Hospital in Zorzor. The road is not as bad as it was a few years ago - that's where the potholes were swimming pool deep - but they were bumpy enough to make it a real relief to get out of the car! I spent several days at Curran talking to people about what they need and what new programs might be possible. Then it was back to Phebe on the same bumpy road. And after a few day there, back to Monrovia. That is what my stay here in Liberia will be like. I hope my nomadic travels will be useful to the people here. Your prayers are the fuel for my journey, so please continue to pray for me and for the people of Liberia. Peace, John