

Greetings to my sponsoring churches! Last month I wrote to you from Padhar, India. The reality of leaving is surely sinking in - for me and for my colleagues. It was a sad time - thinking about the change ahead, but it was also a time of excitement mixed with some apprehension and uncertainty, thinking about the new experiences ahead.

After Padhar, I traveled to Kolkata and one of the things I did there was to visit the Missionaries of Charity Mother House - the original house founded by Mother Teresa. I got to meet with the Mother General - Mother Prema. They were offering a blessing for two Sisters traveling to Brazil and South Africa and they said the blessing could be for me too. Mother Prema came out for that blessing and then sat with me for some time. It was very gracious. She thanked me for my work with the Sisters and asked me to pray for her. I did and then asked for her blessing. It was very special. Here's a photo of Mother Prema with their statue of Mother Teresa.



Back in Vellore, I had a problematic tooth pulled, had my laptop reformatted, and started packing to go to Liberia. I won't be back in India until sometime in 2013, so there was a lot of sorting and giving away to be done. The Palliative Care Team gave me a going away party and that made for a very nice evening. Great fellowship, great food, and nice sentiments from various people. I was asked what I would miss most. I will miss the relationships that I have in so many communities and groups- the team, hospice staff, church folk and the kids, Suren (my driver and handyman), Basha (drugstore owner), and the Swiss folk, Fr. Xavier and breakfast in the morning, the beggar woman outside CMC who isn't looking for my money but a smile and a wave instead, the fruit vendors that I see every day, shoe repair people, news stand. Yikes - that's a lot of missing. After people, it is food, of course. That list is long too! Put ghee roast masala dosai and rasam on the top. One of the gifts I was given was a collage of photos from my history at CMC's palliative care and it was done in the shape of the College Chapel. Another was a collection of letters and notes from various people in my life and who have touched my life. That was extremely touching and made me laugh and cry when I read them.

The journey was basically uneventful - long - about 32 hours from Chennai to Mumbai in India to Nairobi in Kenya, to Accra in Ghana, to Monrovia. The food on the flights was good - I like Kenya Airway's food - they tend towards Indian cuisine. I found myself without a place to stay - due to a misunderstanding. I ended up in a hotel room which was a bit expensive for my budget. Then with former Methodist missionaries and eventually I was able to get a much more reasonable room at the Lutheran Church in Liberia (LCL) guesthouse and it has A/C and 24 hour electricity, mostly. During my stay in Liberia, I will be back and forth between Monrovia, Phebe

Hospital, Curran Hospital, and other places.

While in Monrovia, I visited the school where the students are working to earn their Masters in Nursing Education. The first class will graduate in late August and I will be there for that great occasion after my home assignment when I will be visiting many of you. I am looking forward to that graduation and those visits! One of the things I am working on during my stay in Liberia is to try establish cancer treatment in Liberia. If money becomes available, we would like to have a cobalt machine for radiation treatments in Monrovia. I have some plans for training of personnel. The saying in Liberia remains the same. "It isn't easy."

While I'm at Phebe, I have a room in my old house. No A/C there, but there is a fan for when the power is on. I had a very warm welcome when I returned to St. Luke's on Palm Sunday. My sermon was about our palms and cloaks not being enough" I talked about the necessity of laying down ourselves and thinking beyond ourselves and being servants - as Jesus was. There were service every night of Holy Week, but the best was the Maundy Thursday service when St. Luke's Pastor Moses, the Vicar, and I washed the feet of the congregation. It was a very relaxed and very satisfying experience.

The people of Liberia need your prayers and I do too. Please remember them and remember me. Peace, John