

Greetings to my sponsoring churches! I am in Liberia as I write this and will be here until after Easter. My time here has been divided between Phebe Hospital, Curran Hospital, and Monrovia. It seems I am moving from one to another every few days. It makes it hard to get accustomed to the electricity schedule, but that isn't really a bad thing because the electricity schedules keep changing!

One of the things I did this trip was take Dr. Lew - a dentist from Global Health Missions - on a dental tour. We rinsed and spit our way around my known Liberian world - Phebe, Curran, Ganta, and Monrovia.

We visited the dental clinic at JFK Hospital in Monrovia and Lew met the dentist there and she showed him some photos from a recent dental camp.

One can be a little blown away by what we saw and heard. We did a little tour of Monrovia and then we were off the Phebe where Dr. Lew met Martha the dental nurse - an RN who took dental training at a school in India so she is able to do fillings and extractions. He had a chance to look-into a few mouths and see what kind of dental problems are around.

We went to Ganta for the day - it was an hour and a half of so-so bad road, but the dental clinic there is new and nicely set up. They have now welcomed a new dentist and are hoping for another - all from CMC's sister hospital in Ludhiana. Our last visit was to see about setting up a clinic at Curran Hospital and then I took Dr. Lew back to Monrovia to fly out.

Then it was time to get ready for a visit from my bosses from ELCA headquarters in Chicago. Rafael, Global Mission's Executive Director, and my other bosses Jim and Viking arrived on Saturday and Lita on Sunday. Rafael preached at St. Peter's Lutheran Church (Monrovia) the next day. Jim brought me the Kindle I had ordered online and now I can carry a lot of books in a tiny space as I travel. We were off to Phebe for a meeting and I drove part of the way so we could talk which seemed like a good idea until a dog hit the car. Yes, the dog hit the car and not the other way around!

He looked dead, but then rolled over and got up in time to miss the next vehicle. The people in the other car said he walked away looking okay, but he must have had at least a headache if not a concussion! After Phebe, the group went to Curran and were impressed by what they found there - a young and energetic administrative staff, promising plans for the future, and a hospital that looks clean and new. Then we were on our way back to Monrovia for the Lutheran Church in Liberia Convention.

Phebe has a new X-ray technician - an American who is married to a Liberian. They moved back to Liberia early this year. She really knows what she is doing. I am trying to get the portable X-ray machine working for her. If you remember, one of its wheels had broken and we got it replaced and we got its other problems fixed but now the other wheel has broken and it has a battery or charging problem too. I'm also trying to figure out a drying rack for the X-ray films.

We have two Danish medical students who are spending time at Phebe and I took them to Curran for a visit. We hope to get medical student to come to Curran on a regular basis. It is good for us and also good for them. They get a lot of experience here and they get to see a different part of the world.

In addition to the traveling back and forth, I worked on a paper for my course at Cardiff. The assignment was about how to handle out-of-hours care for hospice and palliative care patients, and I wrote about how our palliative care team at the Christian Medical College looks at the care of a dying patient a different way. The professional medical team is not the core of the patient's care. The core is the patient's family and community. The palliative care team's purpose is to prepare that family and community to care for their loved one and the team's job is to back them up and make sure they are well prepared.

Out-of-hours care applies to the family, not necessarily only the professionals. If the family needs out-of hours help, there are options including in-patient unit at Sneha Deepam.

Keep your prayers coming. They do more for me than you can know.

Peace, John