

Greetings to my sponsoring churches! And thank you to the churches who have sent their contributions to my travel fund for my home assignment in July and August. My travel agent - that would be me - has been making the necessary reservations. I'm looking forward to seeing many of you.

I am still in Liberia. Last month, I didn't have the space to tell you about our Easter service at St. Luke's Lutheran. The service lasted 3

1/2 hours! But that included a procession of acolytes, three choirs, three pastors, two deacons, about twelve evangelists, a powerful sermon by Pastor Moses, the baptisms of 150 children and adults, the confirmation of a large group, and Communion. And it was very hot and very humid. But it was Easter and He is risen indeed!

I have been continuing with work on the Cancer Initiative. There are a lot of components that will need to be in place before this can work, and they all take time. Before someone can be treated, they have to be diagnosed and that takes pathologists, and Liberian doctors who want to train in that specialty. During the past month I have met with a number of pathologists and I'm convinced that we can work it out.

My friend, Dr. Sara, arrived from India for a four week stay thanks to the ELCA Global Mission and funds from Calvary Lutheran in Solana Beach CA. Sara is recently retired and the previous head of the Ida Scudder Low Cost Effective Unit at CMC. She came Liberia to help look at community health programs, our Lutheran hospitals and the Cancer Initiative. We did some touring of Monrovia and visited the medical college and several hospitals. We visited the Missionaries of Charity.

The Superior is from Kerala, India, who has been in Liberia for eight years, loves Liberia, and talks like a Liberian. Outside of Liberia, people ask her, "Sister, what language are you speaking?" They have a full house and the government wants them to take on 70 more patients with TB. One of the sisters who was from Kenya was quizzing me on Lutherans and she was amazed that our beliefs are similar to those of Catholics.

Three pathologists flew in for a visit to assess the pathology needs and see how to help with the Cancer Initiative plan. Sara and I revisited the Catholic Hospital and went to JFK Hospital, the government facility, and had a very good meeting with Liberia's Chief Medical Officer. I think she will be helpful. The pathologists will find some possible programs to train two young doctors and until they are ready to take over, they will try to recruit volunteer or paid pathologists. That is what I hope, anyway. The pathologists were pleased with their visit and so was I. We have some options.

Sara is having a good visit too. She has seen Phebe and Curran Hospitals, worked with community health folks, and we visited the maternity hospital in Gbarnga - the nearest town to Phebe. The hospital is clean and well run but they do not have the equipment or training to deal with babies born before 32 weeks. We are hoping to do something about that. She's had tours of towns met a whole lot of people. You can read about her experiences in her blog, <http://sarinliberia.wordpress.com/>.

I got a chance to greet the newly elected Bishop of Liberia, Bishop Jensen Seyenkulo, who went to seminary at Luther in St. Paul MN with the pastor of one of my sponsoring churches - Stephen Blenkush at Zion in Milaca MN. And the same day he was elected, my boss, James Gonia, was elected Bishop of the Rocky Mountain Synod.

Remember Martha? She is the nurse who went to dental training in India so she could do simple fillings and extractions at Phebe, and now she is getting the equipment she needs to do fillings. A new community college is being built in Gbarnga. Progress is happening but, as always in Liberia, it isn't easy. Please remember me and Dr. Sara, and all the people of Liberia in your prayers. Prayer helps change people who help change things. God's work, our hands. Peace, John