

Greetings to my sponsoring churches! I am in Malaysia as I write this and in a couple of weeks, I will be landing in Minnesota to begin my home assignment. I left Liberia at the end of May and have been spending June in Malaysia doing workshops and classes on palliative care and end of life issues for nurses, seminarians, clergy and interested parish members.

My last week in Liberia, I spent some time in Ganta. Getting there was a challenge as the road is full of pot holes. The dental clinic there is working out very well and the dentist, from India, has proven to be very good. He has even done some rather intricate oral surgery and has assisted with C-sections. Hey, it's just another kind of extraction and dentists are good at that! We also visited Ganta Rehab which is for leprosy and TB. It is a government hospital that hasn't gotten much attention from the government. On the positive side, there is a German Catholic doctor there and there are Catholic sisters and they are doing the best they can.

Also in my last days at Phebe, I hosted a team from Global Health Ministries who were in Liberia to work – to install equipment and do some repair work at Phebe, Curran, Ganta, ELWA and at JFK Hospital in Monrovia. They accomplished a lot and there is still so much to do.

I was once again packing up my worldly goods to fly off to Malaysia for a month. I stopped in Nairobi, Kenya, first and spent a few days in the guest house at Nazareth Hospital which is run by sisters from the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, whose Mother House is in Pondicherry. I have stayed there before and they have adopted me into their community. And they make great Indian food! The priest is Irish, in his late 70s, arrived on the back of a motorcycle, and is very interesting to talk to. The weather in Nairobi is quite different than the weather in Liberia and I enjoyed sleeping under several blankets at night. I had some down time to catch up on emails and work on my presentations for the workshops coming up in Malaysia. The sisters cooked for me and at dinner they talked a lot about “their children,” the abandoned babies they've received over the years. These babies went to an orphanage run by other sisters.

Then I continued on to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where I was picked up at the airport by two women from Assunta Hospital and taken to the Lutheran Bungalow where I was to stay. After a short night's sleep, it was back to the airport to pick up two colleagues from the US, who will be doing the workshops with me. Two others from India arrived on Saturday. They got a short rest and a bath before we drove to a retreat center where we could discuss and plan how we would work and teach together during the seminars. Then it was back to Kuala Lumpur and the workshops began. We had more than 80 participants including the CEO and the Chairman of the Board of Assunta Hospital. My job was giving an introduction to Palliative Nursing and also Communication. I tried to use some humor in my presentations – it helps keep peoples' attention. It was great to work with Shakila and Annie, from “my team” at CMC and to work with Barbara and Gay, two very experienced and talented Palliative Care nurses from the US. We were a great team!

I met the new head of Assunta's palliative care unit and spent a morning talking with her. She took me to visit the government teaching hospital's new palliative care unit. The hospital is very clean and well run. Then it was off to the airport again and a flight to Kota Kinabalu for more workshops. I'll be there for a bit over two weeks and then back to Kuala Lumpur for more workshops before I head to the US on June 30th.

I was asked to consult on some patients and was happy to meet and make some suggestions. One woman had been through nine cycles of chemotherapy and her husband felt her health care people had abandoned her when there was no hope of a cure. I suggested that if there was nothing more to do for her cancer, maybe it was time to concentrate on what we could do for her needs as far as pain control, emotional care, and spiritual care.

With another patient, I was able to give the health care givers some tools to help deal with their patients' problems.

I am really looking forward to my time in the US and getting to meet some of my sponsors. Until I see you, please pray for me and for all who are facing the end of their earthly lives. Peace, John