

Greetings to my sponsoring churches! When I wrote to you last month, I was in Malaysia doing end of life workshops. My time was divided between Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu. My friend and colleague, Dr. Reena George, who heads the Palliative Care Unit at Christian Medical College, arrived to participate in the spiritual care workshops. We also consulted on a few patients and we were able to help their care-givers and the patients themselves better cope with symptoms and problems.

Between us, we have 45 years of experience with palliative care, so we ought to be able to help! One of the workshops was for a group of Chinese speaking seminary students, pastors and active parish members, so we needed a translator. It's difficult enough to preach a sermon which has to be translated, but an entire workshop? It was difficult.

Our first translator did a good job even though she told us that her Mandarin was a little rusty and she was not familiar with theological terminology. We wore her out after the first day, so the chaplain at the seminary stepped in and he did a great job. We had four different groups requests that we come back next year.

While in Malaysia, I had to see a dermatologist about a recurring toe problem and the doctor I saw looked like an Elvis impersonator! That's Presley, not Costello. He had the hair and the sideburns and the bit of chest showing above the partly unzipped white track-type suit. He recommended two weeks of bed rest. He is very popular – maybe he recommends two weeks of bed rest for all his dermatology patients? Throw in a little sun and sand therapy and you have a very nice little vacation!

I arrived back in the US on July 1st after flying first to Singapore and then to Minneapolis where my sister Susan picked me up at the airport and drove me to my sister Jan's home. She has an apartment that's pretty small, but we managed not to step on each others toes. It took a couple of days of afternoon naps to adjust to the 12-hour time change between Malaysia and Minnesota. My sister Melinda loaned me a big white pick-up truck to drive when I'm in Minnesota, so I didn't have to rent a car. It took a little adjusting to get used to driving the truck too – it's bigger than anything I've driven before.

My first sponsoring church visit was to Calvary Lutheran in Solana Beach, California. I was sure my suitcase was missing in action when I got there, but the problem was that I had forgotten to put the distinctly colored belt around it – the way I try to make it easier to recognize one of many generic black bags! I stayed in a beautiful home with very nice people who were in India this past year with the music therapy group, Resounding Joy. (if you'd like to read more about their visit, go to the newsletter archives for March of 2011) I preached at two services and had a presentation between the services. The people of Calvary took very good care of me and I enjoyed meeting as many of them as I could. I visited their Vacation Bible School and was very impressed! 150 kids and 150 volunteers to help make VBS a fun learning experience. I visited the Resounding Joy office and had lunch with some of the folks who were in India last year. I had a lot of good food and met a lot of really nice people.

Right this minute, I am in Colorado Springs, Colorado, visiting First Lutheran. You have undoubtedly heard about the forest fires around Colorado Springs. Right now, the fire is pretty much under control, but two people have died and 350 homes have been destroyed. Four members of First lost homes. I'll be doing a presentation between services and meeting some members at this sponsoring church. After Colorado Springs, I'll be flying back to Minnesota and driving back to Milaca. I'll be the speaker at Zion's July WELCA meeting. And I'll be seeing my dentist and getting a haircut too. My third visit will be to Salem Lutheran in Deerwood on the 22nd, and I look forward to that. I hear they have a beautiful church.

Then I'm off to Wisconsin for a missionary gathering and Chicago for meetings and a workshop before coming back to Minnesota for two more visits. Visiting the churches who sponsor me is fun because I get to meet people who have been involved in my work with donations and prayers, It would be great to visit every sponsoring church, but that is impossible, so I will do the best I can and hope that all of you will keep me in your prayers. You are always in mine. Peace, John