

Greetings to my sponsoring churches! When I last wrote to you, I was about to celebrate two birthdays. August 15 is the birthday of India's independence from England. And it's also my birthday so I pretend the national holiday is for me! My day began with decorations on my door and birthday greetings from the young woman who brings me chai first thing in the morning. I had breakfast with two chaplain friends and their kids and then was summoned to the hospice for singing and cake with the Sisters, Father Xavier, the staff, and the patients. Then I took the rest of the day off and had a nap, dealt with some "outstanding" emails, and worked on the clergy handbook for palliative care I am writing. In the evening my chaplain friends took me to a nice restaurant. It was a very nice birthday.

I had a small, portable printer that I took along when I traveled but it died. New ones are very expensive, so I hunted down a used one, bought it, and had it sent to my sister in Minnesota. She then mailed it to me, Mailing a letter to India is cheap but mailing a printer is not and she told me the postage would be my birthday present for this year – and maybe next year as well! When I got it, it wouldn't work with my laptop, and it really needed to work with my laptop because that's what I travel with. After trying a number of unsuccessful remedies, a tech expert did a sort of motherboard transplant thing and now my little printer and my laptop travel with me and work well together.

I am traveling right now. I left India on September 5th and will return to Vellore November 5th. Right now, I am in Malaysia, in Kuala Lumpur. The journey from India to Malaysia was pretty uneventful. I didn't have the most comfortable seat in the plane, but it is only a 4 hour flight. It was an overnight flight but didn't lend itself to sleep, so I didn't get much. There were several hundred people in line at Immigration, but only four people doing the processing so it was very slow. The supervisor finally came and the line moved along much better after that.

My first day there, I met the Lutheran Bishop for lunch and then had dinner with the Anglican Bishop – both really wonderful people. Actually, the Lutheran Bishop acted as our chauffeur. The Lutheran Church of Malaysia and Singapore (LCMS) has an incredible church center. It was built just two years ago and has a nice chapel, a 1,000 seat auditorium, guest rooms, and offices for them and a couple of other Lutheran entities.

My real schedule started the next day when I spoke at the Cathedral staff chapel service. I used the text about the four men who lowered their paralyzed friend through the roof of the house where Jesus was and talked about thinking outside the box.

I am staying in a guest room in a bungalow rented by the ELCA. My room is nothing fancy but has a good bed and A/C which is necessary. Malaysia has a reputation for being pretty non-veg, but there are quite a few vegetarian restaurants and they manage to make soya look like and maybe even taste a little like chicken, pork, ham, and seafood. (I haven't had any of those in 27 years – so I'm probably pretty easy to fool!)

My first Sunday in Kuala Lumpur, the Anglican Bishop asked me to preach at what he called a "stalled mission church." It was September 11th and if you were at worship, you know the Gospel was about forgiveness. I talked about the importance of forgiveness and talked about it from the perspective of the end of life which is, of course, what we deal with in palliative care.

The next day, two of the LCMS staff took me to see some care facilities. One was run by the Little Sisters of the Poor and is for those without money or family to care for them. They don't have a large professional staff but they have 50 volunteers and do a wonderful job. Next door was Hospice Malaysia which is housed in an amazing building. They also do home care and daycare two days a week and seem well staffed.

I have some two day workshops in a week or so, and a few smaller things in between, so I am doing some final preparation. They want something to hand out at the workshop for lay-people, so I spent some time putting together a handout. When I was ready, I hooked up my little travel printer I was in business. I knew it would come in handy!

Look at a map to remind yourselves where Malaysia is, and then please pray for me as I work there and then travel to Bangladesh. Your prayers are my fuel. Peace, John