

Greetings to my sponsoring churches! Last month I promised to write a little something about my vacation trip to Australia. I flew to Adelaide and stayed with Graham, a retired chaplain I met while he was volunteering in India. Adelaide is on the southeastern coast of Australia and I could see the ocean from Graham's house. Graham made sure I saw whales and kangaroos and koalas and we visited the old family farm where Graham's brother and his two sons still live and work. We visited the Australian wine country which is in a heavily German area. One small town of 3,750 had 5 Lutheran churches! We did some shopping - things were very pricey, especially compared with prices in India. But I did buy myself a very Aussie souvenir - a boomerang. I saw a couple of other friends from Vellore who are in Australia for fellowships and made a trip to Melbourne to visit another friend from Vellore. I enjoyed my time off and all the good food - mostly cooked by Graham.

After my vacation in Australia, I went for a sort of busman's holiday in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia. I stayed with a couple who are both graduates of the Christian Medical College in Vellore and I offered to spend time with their palliative care team. They took me up on that offer and I was off on home visits with the nurses. One of the nurses spent a month at Vellore so she was my "work host." She picked me up each day and made sure I got a vegetarian lunch. One day I really ordered the wrong thing! They asked if I wanted "egg noodles" and I said yes, having forgotten what that meant. What it meant was a raw egg broken over the noodles and veggies!

We saw some very sad cases on our home visits. One was a woman whose 27 year old son had recently died. She was now being cared for by her 22 year old son who quit his job to be her care giver because his sisters all had jobs that paid better than the job he had. The young man was so isolated and could have benefitted greatly if there had been some young male volunteers available to visit with him. I gave a short talk at their "Bereavement Evening" and shared a bit about the good news and the bad news of grief. The good and the bad news turn out to be the same thing - grief doesn't end. It's good because it is a sign of love and relationship. The grief keeps the person alive in our hearts and minds. It becomes "good grief" after time and some work on our part. We learn to live without, but with the knowledge that they will always be a part of our lives.

I also visited the Seminary there one day and spoke with the Counseling Instructor about maybe sending some of his students do some palliative care work and having me teach the End of Life course there. I spent the rest of the day with the palliative care doctor. He had a lot of questions and I tried to give the answers! It was a very good session.

Then it was back to India and off to Bangalore for classes with 25 sisters from The Missionaries of Charity. I was tired from traveling but the sisters were good students. They already have the spiritual part of palliative care so I concentrated their classes on pain and symptom control. You can see a photo of me with the class of sisters if you visit my web page and go to the photos of India.

After a few days to unpack, do laundry, and re-pack, I was off to New York City for some nursing educator recruiting at schools there and in New Jersey as well as a little time with old friends, a visit to my very first parish, and some good New York food. I took a day trip to Boston on the train to see people there too. Then I was off to Chicago to check in with my bosses at ELCA Headquarters and a visit to a college in Indiana. After that I flew to Minnesota and some more recruiting as well as some time with my sisters. From Minnesota, I go to San Diego and then to Hawaii for a little more down time. Then back to New York and finally back to Vellore.

I have gotten some positive answers from nursing educators and have planted some seeds with others. Maybe, with your prayers and mine, we will get all the positive responses we need to make a Masters in Nursing Education program happen in Liberia!

Yours in Christ, Rev. John Lunn