

Greetings to my sponsoring churches! Good news - the computer wizard I took my ailing laptop computer to was able to do some software surgery and save the hard drive, at least for now. I will certainly back up my essential files in case my computer has a relapse!

October was a month of planning for a teaching session coming up in November with the Missionaries of Charity sisters - Mother Teresa's order. Mother Teresa said, "I am interested in persons, not programs. Programs are for a purpose; but Christian love is for a person, and I am committed to helping persons." The sisters are very capable in seeing to the care of many of the people that society rejects. That often requires a lot of hard physical work. What happens to the older Sister or a younger Sister who has some physical limitations? How do they continue to contribute? During this November teaching session - we are going to offer these Sisters some additional counseling skills. They will then be better prepared to address some of the psychosocial and spiritual needs of the people that they work with.

Also during October we have had several classes for chaplains and medical students. I have tried to emphasize the importance of pastors being present with the dying person. For the medical students, I introduced the goals of palliative care, the importance of communication, and how to break bad news.

We continue with our weekly anointing services and with the other chaplain out for awhile with pink eye, I ended up anointing, blessing, and praying for a lot of people. The chapel, after hours, doesn't have the fans running and can get pretty hot on a still afternoon.

I have started work on my palliative care course from Cardiff University in the UK. Yes, it is quite a long commute, which is why I am part of their distance learning program. They give me assignments and test and so far I am doing well. When I finish this course, I will have a master's in palliative care. The credential will be helpful as we continue to develop and offer educational programs.

I am back to preaching at Christ Lutheran Church as well. We hope to get through the services while the power is on, because when it goes off, we don't have the musical accompaniment and we don't have fans. It gets hot.

I heard a little about the ELCA's restructuring meeting. More people at headquarters in Chicago have lost their jobs and this time it includes some mission personnel losing their jobs or vacant positions being eliminated. One of my colleagues, who spends much of his time in India, was among this group. It is a hard time for the church. The church needs your prayers and continued support. Our global mission is critical to the ministry of the larger church.

The news from Liberia has been very discouraging as well as encouraging. Early in October I heard that they had not had power at the hospital for a couple of weeks - that has now become many weeks. They needed filters for the generator and I got some people in the US to help with that. They sent, via DHL and with a huge shipping charge, filters and they turned out to be for the wrong generator - the one that still needs to be repaired. That generator's needed parts were first lost and then arrived mangled in a battered box. And then I was informed that Phebe would no longer have their satellite Internet connection as the provider was discontinuing service. (That is the second time that has happened this year.) I am working on that problem now but it is hard to do at a distance and with a limited budget. Nothing is easy in Liberia. The people of Phebe and of all Liberia need your prayers. On the positive side - the masters in nursing education is going on very well. The students are eager learners and very engaged in the program.

And I need your prayers too. When I know I have them, I know I can do my job and be of service to God and to our neighbors. And you all are in my prayers too. Peace, John