

Greeting to my sponsoring churches! As I conclude my days in Liberia - for this year - I continue to meet more interesting and helpful people who are doing good things for this country. For instance, I met with the head of the Dental Department at the JFK Hospital in Monrovia. She is a returning Liberian - she left during the war years and even though she had established a dental practice in the US, decided to go back and help Liberia rebuild. She may be retired but is very energetic and determined. She is trying to do something about the oral health of her people as well as doing her part in addressing the corruption and complacency that have resulted from the years of violence and terror. A small but growing group is working on local training and development of Dental Clinics - we hope for one in Phebe soon and Curran later.

I am still working on the idea of getting Religious Sisters who are also nurses to come to Phebe. One of the reasons I am so passionate about this is that the people here have lost so much. Years of war have affected wells of compassion and I trust that the monsoon of love that Religious Sisters would bring could replenish those well.

My church here - St. Luke's - had such an amazing worship service on Palm Sunday! We processed in waving palm branches and singing something in Kpelle. There were three choirs - all good - and dancing pastors and a fine sermon from a Methodist seminary professor who is married to one of our Lutheran pastors. He teaches at the Gbarnga School of Theology which is still where Lutherans go for their theological degrees. It was very hot during the service and I was able to offer a cup of cold water - in Jesus' name - to the poor preacher who was wearing a suit and tie!

Easter morning was sultry as well. The service was good but not quite as inspiring as the Palm Sunday worship. I preached a sermon about expectations and surprises. The people expected their Messiah to be a king and they got a humble savior. The disciples expected the usual Seder meal and got their feet washed. They expected a last minute rescue or miracle and got a crucifixion; they expected a dead body in the tomb and got a resurrection. And they expected the authorities to come and arrest them but they got a visit from the risen Lord. God is a God of surprises!

One of the young men who works at Phebe is going to be going to school in Ghana to become a Biomedical Engineer. The he will be able to maintain and repair hospital equipment. That will make him a valuable asset to the hospital! The program is awaiting accreditation.

I made a couple of trips to Monrovia to meet with people about the dental clinic and to meet with others about starting a Masters in Nursing program. When I am there, I stay at the guest house of the Lutheran Church of Liberia but I like to go to the Royal Hotel pancakes at breakfast time and pizza the rest of the day. We are making some progress with the Masters in Nursing program and have received a positive nod from the Ministry of Health and the Clinton Foundation as well as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) - they may be able to provide the funding we need. Now I have to recruit faculty. That won't be easy but it feels right. I've had some positive responses from people who really want to help. We hope to have this program ready to go in August or September of 2010.

As I write this, I am in Tanzania and will be visiting Kenya too before I go back to India. I will be back at Phebe in 10 months but will continue to work on these programs via email and maybe a recruiting trip. Please keep the people of Phebe and Curran Hospitals in your prayers and also the dental clinic and masters program we hope to begin. And don't forget to mention me! Your prayers are vital to my work.