

Elma's E-musings
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(West Africa)

Dear praying friend,
Is it snowing where you are? Here in Ganta, Liberia it has started raining. The day time is so hot and humid, you'll easily become dehydrated. But suddenly the heavens grow dark and wind blows, then comes much desired rain. Fruits have also started coming. Pineapples, watermelon, avocado (called butter pear), and coming soon... Mangoes! As for vegetables it remains the same - cabbage, okra, eggplant, cassava leaf, sweet potato greens, and the thing I don't eat, bitter balls. You know I just realized that there's no cauliflower here! On my first year in Nepal, cauliflower was the only vegetable I had all year. I ate so much it poured out my ears!

This month has been really busy. We've had a successful seminar for our nurses and midwives. The UMVIM team from East OH did a wonderful job at reviewing and updating our nursing practices. We projected to have 50-70 attendees, and they prepared for 75. The response was very encouraging as evidenced by a packed room for both morning and afternoon groups. An attendee has to

complete three days to receive a certificate and a surprise gift of a stethoscope. And we had 89 total graduates! We lacked 14 stethoscopes but we will sort this out. We would like to thank the East OH conference churches, Berea UMC (Kentucky) and Central UMC (VA) for your generosity. Also, the IL-Great Rivers conference because part of their gift was used for photocopying the seminar handouts and certificates. And thank you for supporting us with your loving prayers. This seminar was the first ever for Ganta, and maybe for Liberia. Let's pray that Continuing Nursing Education will be a yearly offering.



Dr Willicor, the Chief Medical Officer, is taking his vacation leave. So I'm the Acting CMO with only one junior doctor to work with. Essentially I am in charge of the medical issues of all the patients, administrative duties for medical staff, and must still be available to take night calls. It's only for this month. Please remember me and my

junior doctor, Dr Claude from DRC [Democratic Republic of Congo].

There is a 6 y/o boy, Erikson, who was brought by his father. They live in a village near the hospital. Erikson sustained scald burns two years ago and now he has contracture of three fingers (index, middle and ring).



I was going to tell the father that he should take the boy to the Firestone Hospital where a surgical team from NY comes every month to operate on children. I stopped and started debating. I can actually do the release of contracture procedure here in Ganta. The issue I was wrestling with is that each finger will take 1 hr to do. So we are looking at a three hour operation which will eat on the other cases that need attention. And a 6 y/o

can't be on anesthetic gas for three hours, not with our present set up. But they are here and I am here. Surely God put us together! So I talked with Erikson and explained that I will do the operation by giving him a regional block (anesthetizing the hand by blocking the nerves in the wrist). He would be awake some of the time but not allowed to cry or else we might not finish fixing his fingers. Oh please, please pray for us. They are still looking for funds to have the operation, but I have started thinking and preparing my mind for it. The name of this hospital is Ganta United Methodist Hospital. It carries the name of OUR church and therefore our faith.

One Monday morning I met a woman who had been operated on by Dr Willicor over the weekend. She had a perforated uterus due to criminal abortion. She willfully went to an abortionist to terminate an unwanted pregnancy and in the process her uterus was poked too hard. She was very septic. But by God's grace she started recovering and on the 3rd post op day, she was strong enough to sit up and ask for food. At this time I asked her why she chose an abortion and where did she go to have it done. The short of the interview is that the abortion was performed in town by a person who works in our hospital. I asked her who this person was. She

named the employee. I informed Dr Willicor, the Nursing Service director, and the administrators of this incident. I believe this to be a criminal act that has endangered the life of a person while dragging the name of the hospital and the church it represents. The employee was terminated but he continues to come to me begging me to forgive him and to ask that I intervene for him to have his job back. I repeatedly told him that it was an administrative decision and I don't have any influence on that. I can't explain it in a short narrative, but the blame for losing his job somehow landed on me because I informed the administration about the incident. Maybe it was easy to have a "white doctor" be the bad person in this whole incident. I was getting upset and frustrated.

When the post came March 15, I received all these cards that cover Christmas, birthday and Valentine's Day. You can see that my good friend Sylvia included news clippings about my country. The thing that really warmed my heart was the valentine greetings by Sunday school kids from Bethany UMC (Purcellville, VA) thanking me for what I do. Thank you Shirley Welch for sending those cards, warming my heart and making me smile. Liberia Postal system may be unpredictable, but God knew when I needed to get those cards and it

came just at the right time. Thanks for the UM women who untiringly send cards to missionaries serving all over the world.



Please pray:

1. That the rest of March will not be too stressful as I start wrapping things up before I leave by the end of May.
3. For a decision where I will be sent next.
4. That my schedule of visits with covenant churches and supporting groups be organized soon.
5. For Erikson and a successful restoration of finger movements to his hand.