

January 22, 2018

Dear Friends in Christ,

My thoughts today focus on Romans 8:28

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,
for those who are called according to His purpose"

Instead of my usual newsletter, I would like to share the experience I had Saturday, January 6 :

Today I had another African experience...humbling, strengthening. I think of it as my continuing education class in Togolese life. This morning I discovered that some of my little neighbors had decided to decorate the cement posts of my front entry gate with colored chalk. I appreciated their efforts, but their efforts were not my idea of pretty, so I wanted to wash the gate posts. I went out with a bucket of water...and as I bent down to put the bucket on the ground, the wind blew a strong harmattan gust and the heavy metal gate came closed on my hand. ouch. It didn't really hurt that much, but I could see the bone, so I knew this was more than I could treat on my own. I went back in the house to get a towel, and call another missionary for help??....but my phone was in my sack, which I couldn't open! Thankfully a couple of my high school kids were here, so I went to ask for help. With their aid, we tried calling all of my fellow missionaries here in Dapaopg, but alas....because of the political march taking place in town, the phones didn't work. Thank you UNIR !!! I tried calling a zed man I know...nope!! So off I went, with my hand wrapped in a towel, to find a zed man (taxi moto). Thankfully, the surveillant (medical assistant) on duty in surgery at the hospital is someone I have confidence inbut of course, after the consultation, I had to go out to buy what was needed for treatment, . .and I still had the towel wrapped around my hand. I went to 3 pharmacies, still didn't find the nylon thread for suture ...went back to the hospital, which was getting more and more crazy with accident victims from the march. When the surveillant got back to me, he was able to come up with the suture from another medical assistant in surgery...so we went to the treatment room. I sat on a stool...he and his assistant went to work. I got pretty dizzy, but he kept encouraging me,,,,,discovering that not only was the cut to the bone, but probably the bone was broken. He got me sewed up, and then asked me about laying down on the table. I pretty much had passed out. A female worker ran to get a plastic sheet, and they got me on the table as my legs didn't support me. Aie! As I hadn't eaten much, the surveillant sent for a sucrerie (soft drink)...While I resting was on the table, another young woman was brought in with an injury to her leg from a motorcycle accident. I was semi conscious, and the surveillant kept asking me how I was doing, while he was cleaning her wound and sewing up her leg. When the sucrerie arrived, I was able to sit up and drink. When he finished working on the young woman's leg, he turned back to me, and wrote the orders to go to x-ray. It was necessary to return to the caisse first to pay (thankfully still enough money). When I got back to radiology, the tech wasn't there, but he'd left his phone number on the door. I called- he was in maternity, and would soon be back. Perhaps 15 minutes later, he came and did the x-ray. While waiting for the results, another accident victim was carried in, moaning and groaning and accompanied by a lot of people. Soon, a "man of importance" came marching in. The injured was one of his chauffeurs. There were plenty of political tee shirts on those who accompanied the injured fellow! I was asked to move a bit and wait. Finally the tech gave me my x-ray...broken finger. Back up to surgery where the surveillant was talking with the surgeon (who was in his shorts, but had come in because of all of the

activity.) The decision was to band the broken finger to the next finger,,,ok, so I went back out to purchase the pediatric elastic band, which I found at the hospital pharmacy, Back upstairs to be banded...but a wait as the surveillant was with patients. Finally, he prescribed medication and I was off to the bank, hoping the guichet would work, and then to the pharmacy. (at times, the atms don't work when there is a lot of political activity.) After about 6 hours, and many sorties, I was able to go home. Thankfully it was my hand, and not one of my little ones here. The finger would have been cut off. Thankful also it is my left hand. I can function...slowly. God is good, all the time. I am thankful that it was not worse, and that good care was given. It is good to experience life as my Togolese family knows it. I've been treated several times at the hospital, but never so extensively. I've helped many friends and students with their medical needs, and visited those in the hospital. However, in this situation, I really did need urgent care, and it was given. I was able to share my faith in God, who is the Master Doctor, and show Jesus' love and care to the harried workers and other people in need. All during my time at the hospital, I was thinking of Romans 8:28, and knowing that God would use the experience for good. . .whether for me, or someone else, I do not know. I leave that decision to Him.

In a few weeks I will be back in Turlock for a short visit. Following my visits and health care last July, the doctor (yes, this time in Turlock) recommended a check up in 6 months. Though I am so thankful for the care I received here at the Dapaong hospital, many health care options are just not available here. I will return to more 'developed' health care for this, and pray that all is well. Whatever the results are, I am certain that God will bring good.

I am sending also several pictures taken at Christmas time. The Friday and Saturday before Christmas, I attended the Nano Sector Christmas Convention in the village of Nababongue. Members of six Lutheran churches gathered together for two days and nights of worship, instruction, singing and dancing. I did not stay for the evening and night time activities, but spent most of the two days with my Lutheran family. On Christmas Day, I worshipped here in Dapaong at Alpha Omega Lutheran Church. The youngest member of my 'household' was baptized and welcomed into God's family. As we celebrated Christ's birth as a human child, we also celebrated Norbert's new birth into Christ's family. It was a joyous Christmas!

Peace in Christ,
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