

Back in the Bush Mission letter # 62006

Greetings to all,

Things are coming along fine here. Thank God!!

Our area of renovation is totally under roof and we are just finishing up some painting, tile work, electrical, plumbing, and other odds and ends. I will have some extra time to run a team of carpenters building roof trusses for phase 2 of Curran's restoration.

I can tell we are getting close to the end. The building doesn't look like a disaster from a civil war, but rather a really nice bush hospital.

I was busy working in the hospital the other day and an older gentleman came up to me and started speaking Loma, the native tongue in this area, pointing to parts of his body. I had no idea what he was trying to tell me. I asked one of my workers to translate for me. It turned out that the man thought the new hospital was open and wanted to be treated. Makes you wonder what kind of treatment he wanted when he is sharing his symptoms with someone holding a circular saw. We directed him to the Curran clinic that has been functioning right behind the hospital.

During the day, so many people stop as they pass the hospital, stare at what is happening and say thank you. The other day two ladies got my attention by saying "Poppy! - - Poppy!" As I looked their way they said -- "Thank you - now! --- Hear?" I smiled and said, "Thank God!"

I kind of wish they would not call me Poppy or Old Man, my daughters will get a kick out of this, but here in Liberia these titles are a sign of respect.

I love the walk home from church on Sunday. Walking the dirt streets of Zorzor with nearly everyone gathered in front of their dirt brick houses selling anything from fresh bread to dried fish. The sights and smells are wonderful, well sometimes the fish are a little tough to take. Little children running up to you yelling "White man - - White man" wanting to touch your hand. I usually buy a small \$5.00 LD [about 9 cents] bag of peanuts and share them with the kids. This all defies description. Someone has to experience all this to appreciate it.

Edna Johnson, an ELCA missionary serving here at Curran, told me an old Liberian tale shared with her by Barkolleh Joekoi, community outreach supervisor here at Curran Hospital. The story is called *the dancing trees* and it is such a great parable of how we can all better weather storms that enter our lives.

Americanized, it goes like this:

It was the dawn of another brand new day with the morning light just starting to penetrate the canopy of heavy foliage in the bush. The sun's rays just starting to burn off the heavy dew left by the cool dampness of the evening; another day anew. But on this day though, the winds start to blow, small at first, but ever increasing with the leaves waving in the breeze.

A storm is approaching and the trees start their dance as the winds steadily gain strength.

As the storm reaches its peak, the trees that survive the punishment are the ones that bend and dance to the tune of the winds; and the trees that remained rigid to the changing winds lay broken on the jungle floor, useless.

What a wonderful story reminding us how we should be open to new ideas and concepts and not ridged and unbending to others. It is especially meaningful for me right now, doing this job. You never want to come here with the idea that you know everything and that your way is always the right way. We always have so much to learn from our brothers and sisters in their own environment.

Whenever I am pushed or blown in a different direction from where I think I should be, I try to look at the situation and say "OK - God, --- what are you trying to show me? --- Do I need to change -- or bend?"

Thank God I am still "work in progress" in the potter's hands.

Please continue to pray for safety and productivity in our work. Pray for the continued healing of Curran Lutheran Hospital, as the building is only the first step in putting back a functioning hospital, all equipped, staffed, and ready to heal the sick.

In the care of the Masters hands - gary