

Back in the Bush Mission Letter #42009

Greetings from on the road in Liberia! Gary and I have been traveling this whole week checking on the various missions God has involved us in. Our first stop was Feleta Orphanage where Sam, the administrator, introduced us to some of the 59 orphans they are housing and proudly showed us the new classroom wing they are just finishing—praise God!

Our next stop was to the Children's Ministry Orphanage where Elizabeth, the administrator, introduced us to some of the 75 orphans they care for and then proudly showed us the new 50 acre plot of land they bought enabling them to set up a self sustaining farm and eventually move the orphans there. It is the first time I felt like I really was in the "bush" as Gary, Anthony (our driver) and I followed Elizabeth well into the jungle and were fascinated as she pointed out signs of how people had come to take shelter in the jungle to hide from roaming rebels during the war.

Our next stop was Gary's old stomping grounds at Phebe hospital where I experienced what it is like helping to register almost 600 of the 1300+ students that will be on the Tuition Sponsorship Program this year. I got to meet students that have been on the program since its inception in 2000, the excited new students just joining this year and of course the crowd of parents and students pleading with Gary to please accept them into the program. With the present economy in the USA we did not want to over reach and create false hopes for families who are desperate to have their children on the program.

Gary and I had one of our more interesting experiences at Phebe. At the end of the first day of the tuition program sign ups, Gary took me to an interesting "restaurant" on Phebe Campus. After being served a bowl of rice with bean soup (think African bean soup with a fish and hot peppers thrown in) the waitress promptly laid down on the table cattycorner to us to watch these strange white people eat lunch. We must not have been very fascinating to watch as she soon fell asleep and we had to wake her to pay our bill. I told Gary I was sure we'd be easy to find on the campus if we tried to sneak out!

The work teams at Curran Hospital in Zorzor are doing well. Joe, Carl, Jim, and Butch are overseeing the next phases of the two houses we are working on as well as getting St. John's under roof. Barb and Sandi are ably carrying on the teachers' training workshops and starting to prepare for our closing ceremonies on 2/18. We were excited that Bette McCrandall, supervisor for the Lutheran Church in Liberia School System, Bishop Harris and one of his assistance came to see how the workshops were going and we also had a surprise visit from U.S.AID who came to see how a church organization did teacher training.

I am writing you from our last stop, the Louis T. Bowers Lay Leaders and Ministers Training Center in Totota. We are visiting with Pastor Ron Shelhammer where I had the pleasure of taking part in a worship service with the deacons and deaconesses presently in training and Gary got a chance to sit down with some of the college students home on break and watched an horror movie (we haven't seen TV in over 5 weeks let alone a

movie). We then had the pleasure of sitting down with Ron and just catching up on USA and Liberian news.

Gary and I are both overwhelmed at the growth and initiative we see in these ministries as well as with the overwhelming need we still see as Liberia continues to try and recover from the war and get its feet back on solid ground. One of the encouraging signs is that the Peace Corps is back in Liberia. They are here on an 8 month trial basis. If all goes well, the Peace Corps will be coming back to Liberia allowing their participants to do a normal longer tour--that would be great news for Liberia!

As our team heads into the last stages of our work before we head back to the United States, please pray for our health, safety and energy as we continue to share the love of Christ made possible through your efforts with these various missions in Liberia.
God bless, Deb & Gary Winters