

Feb 25, 2009

Greetings to all,

Deb and I reached home late Monday on Feb 23. Trip home was very long but uneventful. Thank God! We both were a bit drained and spent Tuesday unpacking bags and going through 2 months of mail. We both went back to work today (Wednesday).

During those long hours flying home started the process that continues even today of evaluating what has happened during the last 2 month. Thinking what I should do differently next time; and man, there are a few of those, but without question it was a productive trip. Praise God!!

Deb, Barb, and Sandy did a wonderful job putting together the teacher workshops. The teachers took so much home from the classes.

Jim, Butch, Joe and Carl did a great job helping to roof St John's Lutheran Church, complete some necessary repairs to the church parsonage, rebuild 2 homes for Curran Hospital, install a new water pump giving the hospital a dependable source of water, and doing some necessary maintenance at the hospital. Having so many jobs at different locations logistics were difficult, but we persevered.

The last few days in Liberia were very busy but thankfully in a much more relaxed way. Every year I get caught up in this compulsion to push the jobs as hard as I can to complete as much work as possible during our short time in Liberia and every year I find myself looking past some of the most precious things that are right under my nose and every year I promise myself to change and see inside the people more and the buildings less, but alas I keep falling back. I guess this is my version of the all too soon forgotten New Year's resolution.

After a final inspection at one of the homes we rebuilt, Deb and I walked back a dirt road that skirted the edge of a large marsh, a trip I had done dozens of times. But this time, freed from the pressure of production, my mind was awake to things around me.

Deb and I spotted 5 young boys fishing along the edge of the water and we walked their way to greet them. They were excited to show us their catch for the day and wanted their picture taken holding up their prize catch of some 4 fish about 3 or 4 inches long. I asked what they were going to do with their fish and they quickly told me they were going to eat them. I have no doubt that mom was going to add them into the next meal's soup. We talked quite a bit as they shared their secrets of how to secure a bug-a-bug (termite) onto the hook to catch the big ones. Their fishing tackle was nothing more than a 4 ft long wood stick with a length of string nailed to the end holding their hook. They worked very hard to pull in a big one to show Deb and me what they could do, but that prize fish evaded the cook pot for yet another day.

It was just so cool to listen to these young fellows describe what they were doing while we watched them intently go about their fishing. It was just like a Liberian Huck Fin and Tom Sawyer tale lived out in front of us. Thank you Lord!

With the busyness of every day work these moments, like the boys fishing, are all too rare. Time for another resolution.

Thank you for your prayers during our time in Liberia. Please continue to lift up Liberia and its people in prayer healing the wounds of war.

Still in His service.
deb and gary