

Greetings to all,

Imagine taking a safari amusement ride traveling through the bush on a dirt road that has turned to mud due to an unexpected rainfall during the dry season. Your truck crammed full of a driver, 5 missionaries and their electrical equipment slithers through the 2 feet of brown muck the road has become. You go as far as you can before the truck is stuck in mud up to its hubcaps. The driver has to get out of the car in order to lock the wheels so the truck can now maneuver in 4 wheel drive. With 4 wheels pulling you are able to drive through the mud but still slide from side to side as the road curves and banks and around any curve you can end up driving through streams of water that cascade down the hill and covers the road. It is much scarier than an amusement ride as you are not guaranteed the outcome and it was our experience as we took the Tuition Sponsorship Program (TSP) "on the road again!" (It is on days like this I am thankful for ALL of your prayers!)

After worshipping Sunday morning in the newly roofed St. Luke's church at Phebe, we hit the road to take pictures of students in the outlying schools of Bong County. Ted, Judy, Leah, Gary, me, the driver and our equipment squeezed in the cab of a pick-up truck with front and rear seats. We traveled the coal-tar road for our trip to Zanzu where we took pictures of the students already on the TSP.

After the pictures were taken, the entire student body did a small program welcoming us with speeches, songs, and gifts of tee-shirts and clothing from their school. As the program concluded the principal asked us for two things: 1) If we would look at workbooks he had created out of paper and a mimeograph machine for his students in order to give him suggestions on how they could be improved unless of course we could find a way for his school to receive textbooks? and 2) could his school please add students to the TSP?

We said we would gladly look at his books and give him suggestions and if there is a container next year we would try and include textbooks for his school. Unfortunately this year we would not be able to add more students to the TSP for due to the economy in the USA we were barely able to provide for the 1,350 students presently on the program plus we already have 300 on the waiting list. We are prayerful that next year we will be able to grow the program and continue adding students.

We crammed back into the truck and were on our way to Totota Lutheran School. The principal greeted us before we started to take pictures of the students presently on the program and asked if there was any way we could include more students from their school in the TSP? He was disappointed to hear we would not be able to add more this year and prayed that God would help send us more sponsors for next year.

After a scrumptious lunch at the local eating spot of rice and potato green soup with dried fish on top, we headed off the coal-tar and into our amusement ride adventure on the mud road to Sanoyea. When we finally arrived a little muddier than when we started out, we were warmly greeted by Pastor Edwin Flomo, his wife Philomena and their young son, Miracle. We arrived just as they were celebrating Sister Carrie's birthday, one of the missionaries responsible for helping to build schools in the area, who

happened to be visiting at the same time. It was quite the feast and it was great to re-visit the parsonage and church we helped rebuild last year to see how well they were being up-kept and to visit with the people we have come to love.

Pastor Flomo had a surprise for us as not only did they have the 23 children already on the TSP waiting to have their pictures taken; he had a whole classroom of children he was hoping to sign up then and there for the program. We had to tell him “not this year” and he in turn had to tell the children. All these heartbreaking moments are what inspire us to strive forward growing the TSP.

After a fond farewell, we traveled to Salala to visit a new school the Foster’s through Grassland’s Trust are building. It was good to see some of our work team from last year and the principal asked to speak with us. This new building already has over 200 students ready to walk through its doors and he was hoping he could sign some up on the TSP?

It has been a blessing having Ted, Judy and Leah Gregoire with us. It has been fun watching Judy doing everything except stand on her head to try and get the children to smile for their photo (for some reason the tradition here is not to show their teeth in a picture). Leah joined in right away helping our team of Liberian workers and Ted manned the computer and helped us think through how we could improve the whole process.

We can’t believe our time here is almost up. We have been blessed more than we can say this year meeting graduates from the TSP thanking us for the education they have received and telling us of their ability to go on to University and the jobs they have subsequently been able to get working in various vocations throughout Liberia.

This year will be a crucial year for Liberia as their presidential elections will take place in October. We pray they will be peaceful elections for all involved.

Thank you for your prayers and support, they are greatly needed and appreciated.

In His service,
gary & deb