

January 2010

Dear Friends,

2010 is off to a FLYING start after having a wonderful Christmas with family. New Year's Day Shirley dropped me off at the Northwest terminal to catch a flight to Togo for an unexpected two week visit to our hospital. Our surgical colleague and friend, Dr. David Kuehler, made an emergency trip home for a funeral of a close friend and family member who died suddenly at Christmas time. Leaving home was complicated with Shirley having a fairly severe viral infection and Jackson, Josh and Nannette's baby, still having feeding problems. The dust of the Harmattan season in Togo during this time of the year was also a concern for someone with asthma. But there was no doubting that God was asking us to step out in faith to help in a time of need in Togo when no one else could go on short notice.

God was taking care of all the details. First of all, the dust in Togo was unusually light and was not a problem until right after my departure. Thank you, Lord. Second, God provided lots of great help from Todd DeKryger, our amazing surgical PA, and Dr. Ruby Maybury, a very gifted surgical resident from John Hopkins who stood in the gap doing an outstanding job helping in surgery and seeing patients. In addition, God had arranged for a world-class Spanish pediatric surgeon, Dr. Jose, to come and help our peds doc, Russ Ebersole, care for 30 plus children that needed his special skills because of their complicated surgical problems. There just happened to be a physician strike in neighboring Benin so he came to help us because he had heard of our children's needs. He was another one of those extremely gifted surgeons God sent to help restore health to many babies and young children. I feel like I have just had a mini surgical fellowship in peds surgery! He was also searching for spiritual truth and faithfully came to morning devotions and listened and asked questions in numerous personal conversations. Although he has not yet made a decision, pray that as he reads the Scriptures and *Mere Christianity* he will come to a personal faith in Christ. We are grateful that other wonderful missionary physicians have been planting the seeds of faith in his life.



While in Togo I had the unexpected privilege of seeing the construction progress of the new Wendell Kempton Medical and Ministry Center 250 miles to the north. What a great location, literally across the road from the municipal airport, on a beautiful 65 acre parcel that is slightly sloped and otherwise flat and right on the outskirts of town. The new guesthouse and duplex walls are nearly up (see above) and ready for trusses

and a roof. They will house future volunteers to work on the hospital over the next few years and then to provide housing for short term doctors and nurses who come. The roads on the campus are under construction. Again, God provided a source for latterite (a gravel-clay combo perfect for road construction) adjacent to our property and sand nearby for making cement and blocks for only a few dollars per load saving hundreds of dollars.



One of the highlights of this visit to Mango was to make some house calls. Since my previous visit a few years ago, there was a noticeable positive difference in the friendliness of people since our missionaries have been there bringing love and hope to this city. One special visit was a patient of mine from last year who fractured his hip after a fall. Tim and Esther Neufeld, our senior missionaries in Mango, took us to his place. Because they had taken the time and effort to help him get to our hospital 250 miles to the south to have surgery they now have an open door to regularly come to visit and talk about Isa (Jesus) with him and his family.



I was impressed at this man's gratefulness at being able to walk again but with a limp but without significant pain after a simple operation removing the fractured head of his femur. Helping folks in this town has opened many doors to making friends. We can only imagine the future impact in this region of a hospital that God uses to touch many lives every day.

I'm at 37,000 ft., returning home in about an hour as I write this. What a special, unexpected beginning to 2010. I realize that I could never do what I do without Shirley's great help taking care of everything on the home front while I am away. I always look forward to coming home to her beautiful smile as I exit the baggage area. God has given her some special ministries in our church with Puggles teaching kids, doing several Bible studies with ladies both in person and online. She also hosts the medical wives Bible study, Side by Side, whose husbands are in residency training here in Ann Arbor. We have been praying for several new wives who are looking for answers to life. Our home adult Bible study is now in Romans and we see God at work in our lives and drawing our friends closer to knowing Him.

As I look at 2010, I am humbled to think that God wants to use all of us to bring his Unspeakable Gift to many more in this world. Last Sunday I listened to a stirring message by a dear friend, Assogba, a young African pastor now in Kara, Togo a few hours south of Mango. He came from a remote Togolese village to attend Bible School at the hospital site in 1998. He has a passion for God and for people to know our God. He exhorted us to "make 2010 count for eternity because; 1.)¹ Times are changing- leave your past failures of 2009 behind, make things right with God and others so God can accomplish his purposes through your life in 2010 2.)² Time is short and fleeting and we don't know how much more time God will give us to serve Him, and 3.)³ Make every day count, redeem the time, because we live in evil days and God wants us to shine brightly so others can find their way out of darkness." Great advice for 2010 for all of us.

May God richly use you and bless you in 2010!

Bob and Shirley

PS: For family news, please see the attachment or go to <https://docs.google.com/fileview?id=0B5CU-AypIMzINTA3NWY3MTMtYTNkZC00YzJhLWYyNDktNzQzYmZjYTQxNWY0&hl=en>

¹ Eccl 3:1-8

² Ps 144:4, James 4:14

³ Eph 5:16, Matt 5:14-16

Praise and Prayer Prompters:

Haiti Earthquake:

Pray for the victims of this massive earthquake and ABWE 's desire to help. Our help is being focused on working with sister churches in Haiti which will involve relief supplies and reconstruction efforts. Three, one week relief teams are being mobilized. Check the ABWE website for updates at www.abwe.org. The project receiving funds is Compassion – Central America/ Haiti Earthquake account #0717121.002. Gary Crawford, gmcrawford@abwe.cc is heading up ABWE's relief work if you need more immediate information.

The Wendell Kempton Medical and Ministry Center in Togo:

We are grateful for the generosity of God's people over the Christmas season! There is now over \$4 million toward the project. Pray that the remaining \$1.5 million needed for the project will be provided in the near future. Pray that God will call out more career staff to join both our southern and northern hospitals.

There have been some significant actions taken by high level government officials to help us achieve exoneration from the high import taxes. Pray that the National Assembly will pass a bill in the near future granting this request.

Those interested in joining a construction volunteer team for Mango Contact us at <http://www.abwe.org/serve/construction-project-details/hospital-construction-project/>.

The Ndungu Kebbeh Health Center, Gambia, W. Africa:

We are rejoicing that Sarah Damick, RN, from SW Michigan now has full support and joining the Gambia team in a few weeks. There is still a critical need for short term and career physicians and could use several more Nurse Practitioners.

Memorial Christian Hospital Renewal Project:

We are rejoicing that nearly all of the needed funding has now been committed and that good progress has been made in preparing the site of the new hospital. Pray for the myriad of details now involved in working with a national contractor and getting construction off the ground.

Global Health Conference in Louisville, KY Nov 12-14, 2009 was a special blessing. God moved in many hearts and brought many old and new faces to our exhibit inquiring about short term and career missionary service. Pray for us to be an encouragement and give good counsel as they prayerfully consider God's leading in the future.

Travel and conference opportunities:

As we look back on 2009 we praise the Lord for the privilege of seeing many of you in medical mission conferences or in our supporting churches and praise God for your wonderful encouragement to us. We are looking forward to seeing many others of you in 2010. Thank you for your faithfulness in prayer and support.

Medical Missions Interface 2010, June 11-13, ABWE Headquarters, Harrisburg, PA:

If you are a healthcare professional interested in missions, we hope you will consider joining us this summer. This promises to be another excellent program with Ron Berrus being our special guest speaker. CME credit is also available. We are honored to have Dr. Tina Slusher, a highly acclaimed missionary pediatric professor, and Dr. Claire Sanger, a plastic surgeon from the University of Kentucky be our featured faculty. Look for more details soon on our website, www.healthcareministries.abwe.org.