



Ashers In Africa

Medical and Technical Advisors to Christian Health Association of Sierra Leone

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Prayer Requests:

- Comfort for the Pierson family in the loss of Ruth Pierson
- Swift and efficient installation of solar power at Panguma Hospital
- Safe travel and productive time for the medical students, physicians and church teams coming this year
- Patience and wisdom as we learn our new role as the advisors to CHASL.

Medical Supplies, layettes, sewing cards and bandages can be mailed to :

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Our Return to Sierra Leone

I can hardly believe we have been here over one month already. We arrived on the same flight as Rebecca Gaunt, M.D. She was a medical student with us over four years ago. Now she has returned to work with CHASL and the Ashers for six months. Although it wasn't medical work, our first order of business was to clean our house to make it livable. I must admit, that I dreaded this. In Kamakwie, each year when we came back we would have to scrub the entire house top to bottom, wash every item of clothing and every dish, book, table and basically every item in the house. The new Grafton house has a different type of window and even though we were gone for the entire rainy season, we didn't have mold on everything. The walls didn't need scrubbing. It was wonderful. In 24 hours we had a clean house. The next item of business was getting our resident visa's straightened out, Rebecca and both Dr. Ashers registered with the medical and dental board, and making sure the car was registered and insured properly. We even applied the CHASL logo to our vehicle and the other CHASL vehicle to make passage through the security checks easier. I must tell you a small funny on myself. I had cut these vinyl stickers on my cricut at home in the US. When I cut them, for some odd reason I cut an odd number. Well since all vehicles have two front doors, I wasn't sure what I was going to do with the extra one. When I went to apply them, I cleaned the doors of the Chasl land cruiser and our land rover. Then I applied the stickers to the Chasl land cruiser. I was just about to apply them to our land rover when I was called into the office. I came back out and applied the decal to the side of the black vehicle. Problem was, our vehicle is dark grey. I had just applied the stickers, all 12 square inches of them, to someone else's vehicle! Then I looked over and saw our vehicle sitting next to the one I had just applied the stickers to! Believe me, I cleaned them off as fast as I could and found out why they tell you to clean the vehicle with rubbing alcohol prior to applying the stickers. They came off easily. I wonder if whoever owned that vehicle wondered why the drivers door was now so clean. It was good luck that the car was dirty, it kept the stickers from adhering and kept me from getting in trouble with the owner. Well anyway, I used the odd sheet of stickers. I guess God knew I would mess up. But on the bright side the stickers look good, and they make it very easy for us to go through the check points.



CHASL logo on the right car

Our First Surgical Resident Arrives

A week later we went to the airport to get Dr. Josh, the surgical resident from St. Vincent's Hospital in Toledo, Ohio. The Port Loko road is finished now so we were able to drive to the airport. From our location in Grafton it really makes sense to do this. It saves ferry fees and takes less time. He and all his baggage arrived without a problem. Thank the Lord. He was carrying over one of the new ultrasound machines, among other things. The very next day we started our work at Kissy UMC hospital. We had scheduled this week with them over 8 months ago, and talked to many people there, but for some reason someone decided to remodel the operating room, the week before the surgeon arrived. It was not done so all surgeries were being diverted to the government hospital. When something like this happens, it is hard not to be discouraged, we had a surgeon here with more experience than either Tom and I had and we couldn't do surgery.



Dr. Josh, surgical resident at work



A newborn before and after surgery

Check out the website. It has all been recently redone. Including the blog.
www.waemm.com

But it worked out well. Josh was able to do some of the lectures he had prepared. The doctors rounded on all the hospital patients with the staff from Kissey and this gave Dr. Rebecca and Dr. Josh a chance to review the limited and often old fashioned meds we have, and the diseases we see so often. Dr. Rebecca was able to work with the nurse midwives on infant resuscitation and Dr. Josh was able to see a patient with acute appendicitis and transfer him for surgery at Connaught Hospital. This opened the door for lectures on how to approach the acute patient and the need for timely intervention. The CHO's and nursing staff said they learned a lot from the lectures and hands on case management, the man with the appendicitis survived and is doing well and the infant who needed the resuscitation may not have survived without Rebecca's intervention. In all, not what we planned but a productive week.

Week two found us in Masonga at the hospital CHO surgical training program. It was a busy week of surgeries, including one on a newborn, lectures and patient rounds. Dr. Josh really enjoyed working with and teaching the CHO students. Two of our scholarship CHO's, from CHASL hospitals were there in the program. Dr. Karen even got to dust off some very old laboratory skills to teach the CHO's how to do gram stains. When Dr. Tom was not doing surgery with Dr. Josh, he and Dr. Karen helped determine which supplies were needed by the facility. Masonga is joining CHASL and will benefit from the supplies shipped over.

Week three we were at Nixon Hospital. We found some serious sterilization problems there as their autoclave had been broken for a few months. They had been doing surgery but only boiling the instruments. Dr. Josh was able to work with the staff to make proper surgical packs, and Dr. Karen helped them to use a coal pot and pressure canner to sterilize these packs. Dr. Josh did some surgeries with Dr. Tom. He even did a very tedious facial lesion removal without any damage to the facial nerve. They did a C-section to save a child whose twin had died in utero. And they did an emergency surgery on a child with typhoid. She survived the exploratory lap, but died the next day, probably from a pulmonary emboli. It is so hard when we lose a patient here, we never really know why. But still we grieve the loss.

Our final week was at Panguma as the Ashers needed to cover for vacationing Dr. Wai. We didn't expect to be busy as it was Christmas. This was not to be so. First a child with an acute and ruptured appendix, then a C-section and hysterectomy trying to save a mother's life, then a hysterectomy for a huge tumor, and finally the most difficult case, a traumatically torn rectum repaired and a diverting colostomy. These were all very hard cases, and we thank the Lord that he sent Dr. Josh at this time. (And will be sending Dr. Peter in March to help us reverse the colostomy and return this boy to normal.)

Sometimes it is so hard here. But I am always in awe that the Lord knows our needs and prepares visitors and supplies and medications, long before we need them to be there. Please keep praying that these doctors and residents continue to listen as He calls them to come and help. We thought things weren't going as we planned, but He had a better plan. He knew exactly who and where we needed to be to save lives.

Highlight of Chasl Clinic—Pendembu Maternity Clinic

They said it couldn't be done. To build a maternity clinic way out in Pendembu, the southern most part of Sierra Leone. It is very near the Liberia border but a long way from a hospital. But Sister Antonio, a nurse midwife from Nigeria, and her fellow sisters at the convent in Pendembu felt God wanted it done. So they prayed and they asked everyone who showed any interest to help and the maternity center which already has had 8 deliveries and had 4 inpatient admissions the day I was there, will open in another week. It isn't complete, they still need many items, but in the words of Sister Antonio, "God will provide, and it would be nice if you help Him by notifying your friends in America that this Catholic clinic needs some help!" Sister had seen too many pregnant women and babies die from lack of care. She sees all comers, whether they can pay or not. She takes her vehicle out to the villages and teaches and treats. I saw some patients with her the day we visited the center and in addition to each diagnosis and treatment she educated. From the women with hypertension who she taught about salt and Maggie restriction to the mother who's child had worms and she showed her the child's dirty fingernails and stopped and taught her how to clean them. The clinic is spotless and she never seems to tire from the work. The sisters teach at the school and run the clinic. Sisters Ruth, Rita and Happiness are such a joy to be around. Certainly, they are showing the community of Pendembu the love of Christ. If you would like to help, please send a donation to WAEMM and put Pendembu in the memo. Sister is counting on you! I will say, I have never seen one person so determined to bring a clinic to life. We were there in July and it was just a shell with dirt floors, and now in January it is operational. She gives all the glory to God as it should be, But it would make one spunky nun really happy to have some help from my American friends!



Sister Antonio gives her plea for help at the Pendembu Maternity Clinic.



We're on the Web!
www.waemm.com
 Donations can be made through the web site or by mailing contributions to
WAEMM

Every day we pray for you, our prayer and financial supporters. We are very aware that none of this would be possible without you and we are so very thankful. God bless you! Drs. Thomas and Karen Asher