



WAEMM

WEST AFRICAN EDUCATION AND MEDICAL MISSION

Medical Missionaries to Sierra Leone

March 2018

Prayer Requests:

- Prayers for our volunteer pastors as they train to care for their "flock"
- Continued strength and insight and compassion for those working in the CHASL hospitals
- Patience and wisdom as we continue to work in Sierra Leone
- Healing for Dr. Karen from the current hip replacement and for the next one also
- The scholarship students as they complete their educations

Medical Supplies, layettes, sewing cards and bandages are no longer being accepted. Please send these items to other missions that can use them

In this issue:

Disappointed but we are secure that God has a plan

It has been so long since we wrote a newsletter and many changes have occurred both in the personal lives of the Asher's and in the mission work. I will try to explain these situations as well as I can.

Since the beginning of our work in Sierra Leone, God has kept us focused on the need to help the people become independent and self-sustaining. Two and one half years ago, WAEMM started assisting Panguma Catholic Mission Hospital with this goal clearly spelled out to the community board, the executive board and the hospital staff. We helped them make hospital budgets and convert their accounting to QuickBooks. We helped them build small businesses that could bring in an income to support the hospital. We donated toward a huge solar system to provide 24 hour power, We assisted another donor in putting in a water bagging plant to provide safe drinking water to the community and to bring in a small income. We started a computer lab where the hospital employees give computer lessons to other employees, their family members and community members. Each month we made a transfer of money to add to the money they brought in so that staff salaries could be paid. In September 2017 WAEMM had a board meeting. The board pointed out that although they had been given all these tools, their income from them was very inconsistent. We were still sending nearly all of the \$6,500 each month to cover salaries. The board decided that the hospital needed to be encouraged to make these businesses work. They determined that since we had committed to working with them for only another 2.5 years we should gradually decrease the amount we would send to force them to tighten their budget and work the businesses to bring in more income. Tom and I went to Sierra Leone in September. I had a three day board meeting with the executive board and Tom took care of the hospital and outpatients. No one was happy to find out that they would be receiving \$650 less for three months and then \$1300 less for the next three months continuing until the 2.5 years was complete and no more funds would be donated. But the executive board understood it. They worked very hard to trim the budget and find ways to increase the business's incomes. We worked for three days. They learned how to do a business plan for capital improvements. We had raised money for a truck that they requested for the water business, but after doing business plans they decided that the money would better be used to put in a "cold room", a type of walk in freezer and refrigerator would be a better investment. Its expected income was \$1200 per month and the truck would have been less than \$200 due to the operating costs. Tom and I were very encouraged. They admitted that the businesses were not being used efficiently. They scheduled a general staff meeting.

I should explain that the majority of employees were totally involved with Panguma Hospital and its sustainability. However, there were a handful of employees that were government paid, that knew they would be paid whether or not the hospital could pay its own bills. They have mixed allegiance. They know that the government hospitals look the other way when the employees charge the patients bribes, steal supplies from the hospital to operate illegal clinics in their homes and do procedures that the Christian hospitals deem immoral or illegal. They had been telling the other employees that WAEMM was taking money from the hospital, and other false statements trying to get the employees to refuse to work with WAEMM. The administration had used whatever means they had to show transparency into the hospital finances to let the employees see that they needed to change to be able to stay open. But no matter what they did the employees were being fed a constant rhetoric that they should stop being a Christian hospital and become like the government hospitals. The Executive board explained the reduction in donations and their suggestions on how to make this work. Very little was said at the meeting except from these three government employees who stated WAEMM had no right to reduce the monthly transfers and instead should give them the full amount and let them decide how to use it until the 2.5 years were done and then they would try to become self sufficient then. We responded that this was a WAEMM board decision and would not change. It was to force them to work toward this self sufficiency so they could be independent by the time our presence there was finished. We then left the meeting. We were there for two more days and then returned to Freetown to return to the US. A few days later we received a letter addressed to the WAEMM board that stated they didn't want

... to work toward sustainability. In fact, they demanded a salary increase, that we build multiple buildings on their hospital campus and hire more people and other demands that were totally ridiculous. The WAEMM board considered this with much prayer. We wrote a letter back to them explaining again that this money was not a handout but rather was seed money to help them become self-sufficient. Although we would like to continue to help them, if they would not send us a letter within 30 days confirming their desire to work toward this goal, we would withdraw our support. Then we waited and prayed. There was no response. Dec. 15, 2017 came and went. We wrote to them that we would send money for December 2017 but would no longer support the hospital in the future. I am sure that you can understand that this broke our heart. At the very same time we found out the government had decided to charge us \$5000 to release our container that had been there since October. These were all donated items to help the people. They were doing this as it was election time and they needed "more funds for the campaigning". Some of the other NGO's who wouldn't pay the fee had their containers dumped in the ocean. We paid it but the board then voted to no longer ship any supplies to Sierra Leone as we couldn't afford those corrupt fees and we had no place to ship to in the country now that Panguma Hospital would not work with us. At this point all we can do for the hospitals and clinics is continue to pray for them. Ultimately, only they can change this situation.

So what does WAEMM do now?

The board has met and assessed the work in Sierra Leone. We had five arms of work in the past 1. the hospitals, 2. taking teams and medical personnel over, 3. shipping medical supplies, 4. scholarships for medical personnel and 5. the 14 community churches in the northern district and 1 in the Panguma area. The following decisions were made by the board. We will no longer be working with the hospital or shipping supplies over. We have a few things in the warehouse which we will be giving to other missions. Karen has had some medical issues (open heart and two hip replacements) which will prevent her from traveling for most of this year. We realize to be good stewards of your donations we need to oversee any work done there. Currently we have some of our scholarship students managing the programs. We hope to have teams assist with supervision in the future. But nothing has changed with the scholarship students or the churches! Many of you have asked how you can help going forward. Of course we covet your prayers for both Karen and for Sierra Leone. Our scholarship students are doing very well in spite of the hurdles the government puts in front of them. The SECHN (nursing) students have been hit with a government mandated change that may require them to go to school longer to graduate. The CHO (physician assistant) students were worried this entire year would not be given credit as their instructors were on strike twice because the government would not pay them. The students feel the sting of the corruption and deceit that is so much a part of the culture in Sierra Leone. But the students themselves keep pushing toward the goal, their grades are good and they do not lose hope of becoming good nurses and CHO's. The community churches continue to grow. We have 22 volunteer pastors who attend the pastors training program, sponsored by a church in Ohio, every month. In addition waemm raised money last year to put 20 of them whose test scores qualified them into the distance learning program to get their teaching certificates. This will enable them to get a salary for the teaching at their community schools. Currently they get no pay, only a bag of rice 4 times per year and whatever the community they serve can pay. Please pray for them. This is hard on them but also on their families. These teaching certificates will help make the churches more sustainable. They continue to ask us to raise money for latrines for their schools and church buildings for the remaining 13 churches, and tuition for the pastors which will be due in November again as it is a three year program.

We are so thankful for the people and churches that continue to support our work. The work has changed but the designer of the work has not. Tom and I have come to the conclusion that missionaries have been in Sierra Leone for over 100 years and yet they are still a third world country. We can not change the problems in Sierra Leone, but Sierra Leoneans can. Educating Christian students who have values and supporting the growth of these churches who are determined to teach and live as scripture has instructed are the best ways we can help Sierra Leone to change. The current population of Sierra Leone is over 70% under the age of 35. God has a plan for these people and this is the best way we can help them toward becoming the county they can be. Thank you for being willing to help them. Below is a summary of the funds we will be trying to raise in 2018 and beyond for this.

1. \$1500— Pays for construction of one latrine for the schools. We are starting with the two junior secondary schools and then the 15 primary schools.
2. \$3500— Pays for all the pastors for one year of teaching certificate distance learning studies
3. \$4000— Pays for food, books, housing and school fees for the students in the medical fields. Currently we have 4 students
4. \$8000— Pays for the materials to construct one church and furnish it. The labor and locally available supplies like mud blocks and sand are provided by the community. Currently we have 13 churches that need buildings.

Perhaps your church or your family would want to sponsor one of these projects. If so drop me a note and we can discuss the specifics. Either way please continue to pray for the people in Sierra Leone. Ask for those that can stand up against the sin and corruption to have the courage and wisdom to end this crippling of the

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

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