

On Call

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Dave & Becki Thompson are medical workers serving at the Bongolo Hospital with the Alliance. Rachael is also serving at Bongolo with the Alliance helping to school MKs.



Dear Friends,

In late August, the mountains of northwest Cameroon are shrouded in mist, lushly green from the seasonal rains, and shimmering with waterfalls that free-fall hundreds of feet to the verdant valleys below. Mbingo Baptist Hospital, one of the two hospitals I (Dave) visited in Cameroon, sits at the head of one of these valleys. I spent two days at Mbingo and was pleased to see that the hospital continues to expand its services and glorify Jesus by its service to the sick and the poor. There are currently nine PAACS residents in training at Mbingo, under the leadership of surgeons Steve Sparks and Jim Brown. This program, like our hospital in Bongolo, was just recently accredited by the College of Surgeons of East, Central and southern Africa for five years of training in general surgery.

Before I left Cameroon I travelled for 3 hours on a steep and twisting road through the mountains to Bansa Baptist Hospital, where two of our graduate surgeons are working. We are praying that in the near future God will provide two missionary surgeons to open the PAACS program at this beautiful hospital.

Morning staff devotions at Mbingo (6:30 am!)



Bansa Baptist Hospital's new outpatient dept



From Cameroon I flew all day to Niger on a regional airline. The flight stopped in four African countries along the way, so it took 12 hours. The sun was setting when I stepped onto the tarmac in Niamey, but the temperature was still over 100 ° F. The next morning a SIM Air pilot flew me to the SIM-Galmi Hospital in a Cessna 182, powered by a “diesel” engine that burns jet fuel, since avgas costs \$20 a gallon! Niger’s short rainy season had transformed the country’s usually parched plains into green fields and dotted them with hundreds of muddy lakes.

A visit to the SIM-Galmi Hospital is always a memorable experience, and this trip was no exception. A newly energized missionary and national SIM team is rebuilding the hospital, adding a second well (the hospital provides free water to the entire town), and significantly improving their services. My visit moved the hospital and its two surgeons, Joe Starke and Yacoubou Sanoussi, one step closer to opening a new PAACS program in August 2012.



Surgeons Sanoussi and Starke 5 y.o. girl prior to arm amputation Joe Starke examines a child

The surgeons at SIM-Galmi Hospital are performing 5,000 operations a year, many of them children. The 5 year-old girl above broke her arm, but had to have it amputated after a village bone-setter splinted it too tightly and cut off the blood supply. The small boy that Joe Starke is examining (above right) fell into a well while trying to pull up a bucket of water that weighed more than he did. He fractured his skull but survived after skillful surgery. Both of these are common injuries in Niger. Our prayer is that by opening a PAACS program at this hospital we will make its services even more available to the poor of the region and introduce many more to Jesus.

Two weeks later I was flying to Egypt. There are no direct flights from central Africa to Egypt, so I had a 24-hour layover in Addis Ababa before flying on to Cairo. At 1 am, Cairo’s 25 million inhabitants are considerably calmer than at 1 pm! The driver from the Anglican Diocese who met me at the airport whisked me to the guesthouse in just 20 minutes, instead of the usual 90. A few hours later I met Bishop Mouneer, the head of the Anglican Church in Egypt, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa. We greeted each other like old friends, since we had spent time together last December when Becki and I visited the church’s two hospitals to discuss the possibility of opening a new PAACS program. The Bishop’s driver drove us to a large and well-appointed conference center in the desert about 2 hours away from Cairo.

The conference that brought me to Egypt was hosted by a Christian medical organization that is directed by Arab Christian doctors. Nearly 500 Christian

medical professionals, the majority of whom were under 35 years of age, attended. While most were doctors and medical students, there were also nurses, nursing students, pharmacists, and dentists. Their energy, enthusiasm, and love for Christ was heart-warming and exhilarating. I was one of about six plenary speakers, and there were at least 10 others who led workshops or gave medical lectures. Over the four days of the conference I was privileged to speak 3 times, give one medical lecture, and lead 3 workshops. The program started each day at 7:30 am and usually ended around midnight (one night it ended at 1:30 am), though in the afternoon we usually had a 2 hour break. I quickly learned to use that time for a siesta!

Meals seemed to be the least important item on the schedule and were scheduled for 8 am, 2:30 pm, and 9:30 pm. Most evenings, however, we ate our supper somewhere between 10 pm and 11:30 pm. I was told that this is not much different from the schedule most Egyptians keep. The one evening that I skipped the after-supper meeting and went to bed I missed some of the most moving reports from conferees from other countries in the region. The reports were from brothers and sisters who are enduring harsh persecution and standing for Christ in the face of grave danger. A young physician from another country described how Jesus found her as she studied medicine at a university where there are only a very few Christians. She told how after spending years wearing a black covering that showed only her eyes and attending services where all she heard was about how God would judge and punish her for her every infraction, she gave up hope. Then she heard about Jesus from a fellow student. When she understood what Jesus had done for her on the cross, she fell in love with him. As she described her love and gratitude for Jesus she broke down and simply wept. There wasn't a dry eye in the room.

A young medical student from another country told a similar story of how she found Jesus through a Bible that an American visitor gave to her. When she read it she understand nothing, so she hid it and left it for several years. During a moment of personal crisis she cried out to God and was then drawn to take out the bible, now covered with dust, and read it again. This time she discovered Jesus and gave her heart to him. She could hardly contain her joy, but knew that if her family discovered that she had become a follower of Jesus and that she was meeting in secret with other believers, they might expose her. The penalty in her country for converting to Christ is death. She was overwhelmed by the joy and the fellowship of the other believers at the conference, and whenever I spoke, she was the most attentive listener in the crowd. We experienced many such heart-stopping moments during the week.

I am humbled and grateful that God could use my story and my messages to bless these heroic brothers and sisters. Their kindness and thoughtfulness was always evident. I left the conference realizing that we have only a faint idea about how hugely God is working throughout the world to build his church and to bring glory to himself in these last days.

God willing, Becki and I will travel to Egypt again next February to visit Harpur Memorial Hospital in the delta area of Egypt.

SAD NEWS ABOUT WOOKIE



Our faithful little Yorkie companion named Wookie is dying of a rapidly growing abdominal tumor. He is seven years old and has been such a bright spot in our lives each day that this is affecting us deeply. If this doesn't sound too frivolous to you, pray that the Lord will hasten and soften his passing.

A PAACS GRADUATION

Bongolo Hospital has graduated its eighth PAACS surgeon: Dr. Jean Claude Bataneni. Jean Claude and his wife Christine, who is also a doctor, will be returning to Nebobongo Hospital in northeast DR Congo. Helen Rosevere, who financially supported him during his training, founded this hospital. It is remote, poor, and can only be accessed by a motorbike or in a small plane. The couple and their two young sons plan to ride in on motorbike taxis. Please pray that God will protect, strengthen and bless this couple as they return to their country to serve the poor and to proclaim Christ.



Jean Claude, Christine (also a doctor) & their boys



The graduate with his professors

PRAYER REQUESTS AND ANSWERS

1. Pray for the Bataneni family as they move back to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They are stepping out in faith and their financial support, housing, and facilities are all dependent on miracles. Jean Claude could work in any hospital in the country and earn a good living, but has chosen to follow Christ and serve the poor.
2. We praise the Father for the many gifts that have been sent in to the Alliance this year for our work. Your generous gifts have funded most of our ministry travel this year, other ministry costs, and needed medical equipment at the

- hospital. Pray with us that God will provide funds for our travel to Egypt in February, followed immediately by a medical conference in Kenya we must attend for continuing medical education to maintain our U.S. medical licenses.
3. Becki and I will be traveling to the U.S. from October 13 to November 15 to attend board meetings and speak. Pray with us for God's anointing for these appointments and ministries, for stamina, and for safe travel:
 - Oct 16 - Loudonville Community Church (near Albany, N.Y. - Dave)
 - Oct 19-20 - Nyack College (Dave only)
 - Oct 23 - Interview during the Sunday services at Allegheny Center Alliance Church (Dave)
 - Oct 26-27 - Alliance Board of Directors meeting - Pittsburgh, PA.
 - Oct 30 - Shell Point Village Church, Ft. Myers, FL (Becki will join me in Ft. Myers)
 - Nov 4-5 - PAACS board meetings, Chicago, IL.
 - Nov 6 - Westgate Alliance Church, Greensboro, NC
 - Nov 10-12 - Global Missions Health Conference - Louisville, KY
 - Nov 15 - arrival in Libreville, Gabon
 4. Pray that God will stir the hearts of many more in the Alliance to give regularly to the Great Commission Fund. If you are not giving to the GCF and would like to give towards our support, you may do so by giving to the GCF in our name. These funds will go towards our support.
 5. *Pray that God will call another nurse to join our team in Bongolo to help with the nursing school!* The school needs to grow to keep up with the hospital's need for disciplined and trained personnel, and our departure next year will make this difficult to do.

Until Jesus Comes,

Dave & Becki Thompson