



Grey haitian skies, high humidity and loads of mosquitoes reminded me recently of a poem that I wrote a couple of years ago. It was a poem inspired by such weather and a poem which came to mind as we experienced Haiti's rainy season just before Christmas. In case you haven't heard it before, here it is now.

Clouds like lead
 Hang from tropical skies
 Like rebellious angels
 Dismissed from paradise
 Afraid to touch Gods sacred earth.
 Dismissed from glory their sighs exhale
 Fevered humidity
 And summon from their routine slumber,
 Biting, blood-sucking
 Demons who come to lustily
 Draw their feast through the
 Clammy flesh of righteous and
 Unrighteous men alike.
 So I beg you fall, fall blessed rain,



Upon the same,
 Wash this nation; cleanse it, cool it
 And set it free,
 from empty bellies
 and disease,
 And empty lives,
 And withered crops
 And parasites.
 And early death
 and grieving mothers

With the purity
 of deceptively tepid
 saltless tears
 I beg you fall, blessed rain
 Until those vagrant angels disappear.

Well, the clouds have just about disappeared now and we're beginning to experience an increasing amount of sunshine. The flood waters have dried up and fresh greenery is beginning to cover the ground; a sign of hope indeed!, But hardship for many is ongoing in this, the poorest country in the western hemisphere.

Over Christmas – which seems an age away now – we had an amazing 5 week break, visiting family and friends and actually enjoyed soaking up the cold weather for a while!

We celebrated our Ruby, (40th) wedding anniversary, Carol's 70th birthday and we *were* hoping to be at home to welcome our new grandchild into the world, due on 12th Jan. But being a girl she was late, of course, and arrived on the 25th, 5 days after we left the UK!

But she's healthy and beautiful, just like her grandad, and that's the most important thing. We give all glory and thanks to God for little Imogen Stephanie Dwyer!

Arriving back here felt like we'd never been away, having a whole batch of new problems to solve, old ones to continue solving, and loads of volunteer applications and data to process. All this was made all the more pleasurable by the most wonderful team of work colleagues we could wish for, greeting us warmly back into the fold!

We did come back to one or two minor tragedies however. One of the many disadvantages of the rainy season is the ease at which disease spreads among livestock that forage for their food among the flood waters. During our absence, we found that we'd lost quite a few of our chickens to various bacterial infections. Fortunately, Chris, a friend who lives not too far from us was able to come over and administer life-saving antibiotic injections to many of them. We are now down to about 30 chickens and so will hold back from selling any more until the numbers pick up again.

Life is going to be busy for the both of us over the next few months, as we receive over 20 volunteers and medical elective students to the village.

For Andy this means both organising rotation schedules for the medics, and small construction projects for volunteers who want to come and help out with the development and improvement of the hospital complex as well as any other non medical related tasks.

We are both involved in the management of the “Village” accommodation complex and so have to make sure all our staff are prepared for their extra responsibilities while our visitors are here. The most taxing thing of all though, is the organising of the weekend trips to the beach; it’s a tough job but somebody’s got to do it!



We’ve had a few visitors over the last few weeks, including HHA’s CEO, Carwyn Hill and Dr. Cheryl Battersby – an HHA trustee and neonatal paediatrician. Cheryl spent valuable time in the Neonatal Intensive care unit, where amongst other things, she worked with staff to ensure the survival of a pair of twins whose mother died in childbirth. This particular mother leaves behind 9 other children under the age of 15 - such is the scale of the tragedy in Haiti. Cheryl also did some great work conducting staff training sessions in neonatal care and clinical governance.

We also have with a wonderful lady called Gemma from Isleworth who is here as a volunteer for the next 2 months. Gemma has come with a willingness to help out wherever she’s needed and so far we have taken full advantage of that. For the last 2 weeks she’s been working on data collection with Cheryl, who’s been revising data collection methods, filling in spreadsheets and painting the outsides of our village buildings!



Cheryl and Gemma enjoying evening cocktails

Another of our visitors and long time supporter of HHA is Rob, a male nurse from London who specializes in trauma care and management. Rob has a real heart for the hospital and has been spending a lot of his time here in the emergency department, encouraging improved practice in trauma care and efficiency in trauma registration methods.

Among our other recent visitors have been representatives from the Swiss Paraplegic Foundation who have been planning the construction of a bakery within the hospital grounds. This is a project which will provide employment for patients from the spinal rehab department of hospital. The bakery will be located close to the entrance of the hospital and will provide coffee and freshly baked bread and pastries to users of the hospital, and those passing by the hospital gates. The profits from this enterprise will be channeled back into the spinal rehab department of the hospital. Andy has had the great privilege of being asked to oversee some of the construction work of this exciting new project.

So as you can see, there is a lot going on at the moment. We are looking forward to quite busy but very fruitful days ahead. Watch this space!

PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Give thanks for the safe arrival of Imogen Stephanie Dwyer!
2. Give thanks for Gemma, who’s been a big help as she eases the workload in a variety of areas.
3. For extra measures of good health and energy. as we prepare for an influx of volunteers over the coming days and weeks.
4. Pray for the hospital staff, that they will get to grips with the data collection methods vital for the efficient running of the hospital.
5. That we will reflect God’s patience as we deal with situations which often cause great frustration.
6. The provision and standard of good healthcare continues to grow at the HCBH hospital, benefiting many more Haitians.
7. Continued strengthening of friendships with work colleagues and other hospital staff.
8. Continued progress with Creole language.

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