

Dear Friends and Supporters,

December in Dessalines brings dry, windy weather and the "coolness" in the breezes offers some much needed refreshment to our bodies and our spirits. But the change in weather also brings a change in peoples' health and right now many people are suffering from flu-like fevers and colds.

During the past few weeks, I've spent time observing and evaluating different areas of the hospital. While there are some internal changes that need to be made, the hospital as a whole is making every effort to deliver patient services with minimal help and a lack of supplies while the staff tries to maintain a positive outlook about their work and the stability of their jobs.

This morning as I walked around the hospital several things came to my attention.

In the nurses' station was a woman, I would say in her twenties, holding a baby and crying uncontrollably. It appeared, at first, that the baby was sick, but that wasn't the case. A young girl (perhaps 11 or 12) had come to stay with this woman and she had just found out that this young girl had gotten pregnant by this woman's brother. But what I really want to say about this situation was the compassion and concern I observed our chaplain and one of the nurses showing this young woman to help ease her pain. I left the area and when I returned a little later, the woman was sitting and talking with the nurses with a smile on her face.

Then I went over to the medical/surgical area where I saw a woman lovingly holding and caressing her elderly mother who appeared to be dying. I had flashbacks of the time when my own mother was dying and my heart filled with empathy for the daughter.

There was another inpatient, a man, probably in his thirties, having difficulty breathing. I was told that this young man had come from St. Marc (over an hour away) to our hospital because he remembered how he was received and treated the last time he was sick and he wanted to be treated again in our hospital.

There are days when we've exhausted all our human strength and resources and feel all is futile. But then something happens to remind us of God's greatness and goodness and of His promise never to leave us. When we think about situations like those above and the many people who have received physical and spiritual healing as a result of our perseverance and faith, we are encouraged and recommit to the task the Lord has placed before us. Like Esther, we are here "for such a time as this" doing all we can to facilitate health and wholeness to a desperate people.

One of the biggest concerns we have is our need for physicians. Without physicians, we don't have patients. Without patients, we don't have revenue. Without revenue it is hard to hire more physicians. Right now we have one gynecologist and one surgeon. We did have four Cuban doctors, but after a few months here, they up and left and went back to Cuba. One was a pediatrician which is desperately needed here.

It is extremely difficult to operate with just two doctors and meet the demands and needs of the people.

After the first of the year we would like to start a rotation of North American physicians and nurses through our hospital. If you would be interested in coming and working alongside of us, please let us know. Seeing that the Dessalines Hospital is a reference and training facility, we would also like to have some in-service training seminars as well. Your presence would be a tremendous encouragement to all of us.

Another aspect of the hospital's ministry is its multifaceted community health program. A vital part of community health is clean and accessible water. Through funds designated for water projects and wells, we've been able to repair four wells and dig three hand-dug wells.

We, as the body of believers, are in this together. We realize that many of you have financially contributed to the operational needs of the hospital and there are not words enough to express our appreciation and gratitude. It's because of your compassion and assistance that we have been able to remain operational these past few months. Together we are obeying Christ's mandate to care for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and "the least of these brothers" and we pray for God's continued blessings on each of you.

Proverbs 14:31b - "Whoever is kind to the needy honors God."

Gregg and Gail