

FEBRUARY 2014



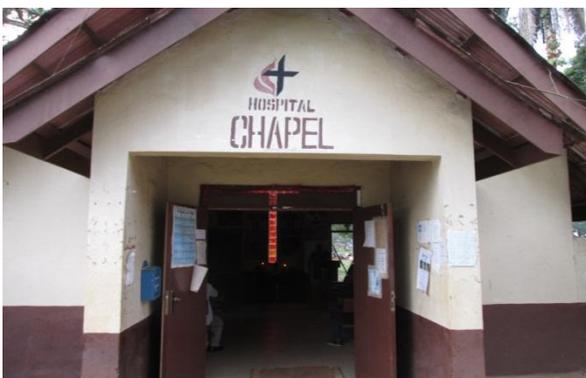
Dear Partners in Ministry,

I am Albert Willicor and I am thankful for your support which allows me serve as a missionary doctor assigned to my native country of Liberia!

Established in 1926, it is one of the oldest health centers in Liberia, and probably the oldest in Nimba County. Throughout the decades, Ganta United Methodist Hospital has been a source of relief for the afflicted. During the civil war years (1990-2004), in spite of being looted many times, with the support of a host of partners coupled with the Christ-inspired ingenuity of local leadership, its doors were kept open to provide needed services to a desperate population. I took up

assignment with the hospital during this uncertain period in 2003. I became a Global Ministries missionary in 2007. I am thankful for your support which enables my heart-felt and spiritually inspired response to serve as Surgeon and Medical Services Director at Ganta United Methodist Hospital.

As a policy of the church, no one is turned away from Ganta Hospital because of the lack of fees. How **can** we turn away the poor and those who are suffering? This is both our strength and our continuous dilemma! Ganta Hospital provides affordable (and often times charitable) medical care services for poor, rural subsistence farming families. Offering “affordable” fees is our Christ-centered response to ensure everyone has access to quality, medical care. It means we study the economic capacity of God’s people living in rural northeastern villages and determine affordable fees for this targeted general public. These fees are not (and cannot be) realistic; thus, our dilemma! Budgeting realistic fees will provide us a fair chance to sustain and develop our medical services, but, will not allow us to indiscriminately serve the very people we are called by God to serve. UMCOR Health is ever present and is a strong supportive partner in assisting us develop fiscal and resource monitoring and management systems which helps us stay true to our service calling. We are thankful for the **collective** support of local and international partners, churches, and friends that enable us honor our humble mission statement: ***Ganta United Methodist Hospital is called by God to offer and provide affordable, Christ-centered medical care for all people at all times.***



Each workday begins at 7:30 a.m. with a short morning service in the chapel. The ward rounds are next, if they are not interrupted by emergency surgery. Night (emergency room) calls are an ongoing necessity and routine for me. They are almost always a complement of the daily chores.

Rural hospitals struggle with adequate staffing. I am the only experience surgeon, with three junior doctors working with me (who I am training in surgical procedures). Rural areas are not attractive to many doctors. In the cities, doctors have a full time job at a medical facility as well the flexibility to operate a clinic. This allows for two incomes. In the rural areas, the general public does not have

the income capacity as in the cities....so, operating a clinic in an area where a hospital exists is usually not fruitful.

The resident doctor/surgeon in a rural hospital must be versatile. He/she encounters disease conditions in all disciplines. Errors in judgment and improper techniques are not permissible. A very high standard of care is maintained,

even within the hospital's resource poor situation! This is a daunting task, but it is being well served through the Lord's guidance and with the help of partners like UMCOR, UMC Germany and other German partners, supporting conferences and churches, volunteers in mission, American health related organizations, Liberian Ministry of Health, and others.

Due to confidence in our work, the government sends junior doctors here to improve their skills before taking up assignments in the provinces at other health centers.



Head injury victim in coma from road traffic accident

General ward with me and staff

General Ward

This ward accommodates both male and female adult patients with medical and surgical conditions. Many types of diseases are seen here, including states which are fatal without prompt surgical intervention like acute abdominal conditions resulting from complicated typhoid fever; and those resulting from accidents, ruptured ectopic pregnancies and appendicitis, are but few of them. Various degrees of fractures and head injuries from road traffic accidents are common.

Medical conditions, which include severe malaria, meningitis, heart failure, hypertension, and other tropical diseases are every day admissions. HIV and AIDS is a serious problem since the civil war. Diabetes mellitus is prevalent. When drugs are available, affordability is a problem. We are always on the search for subsidized (donated) drugs. Many of our patients are indigent and illiterate and this reality promotes non-compliance. The consequence is grave. Our Primary Health Care (PHC) outreach program does a great job informing and educating residents of the villages we serve about these consequences. Hence, ongoing training of Community Health Workers is a primary goal of our PHC program.

Thanks to the Diabetes Unit, of which I am the overseer, a humanitarian group provides insulin and related implements to type I Diabetics (children and young adults) free of charge. The unit also supervises treatment protocols and does village outreach diabetes screening and education.

Obstetric Ward



Performing fistula surgery

With a recovering fistula patient

The Obstetric Ward is very busy! Services here help reduce perinatal morbidity and mortality. It is still relatively high in Liberia, although recent statistics shows a downward trend. VVF (vesico vaginal fistula), or obstetric fistula, is a sad and peculiar condition. It results from a prolonged and difficult child-bearing process. A hole develops from the urinary bladder into the birth canal, resulting in the uncontrolled passage of urine onto the victim with perpetual wetness, along with a pungent offensive odor. There are instances where feces from a damaged rectum find its way into the birth canal. Thus urine and feces soil this unfortunate woman throughout a sad and difficult life time, unless it is remedied by a usually difficult surgery. Thanks to a past partnership between Ganta Hospital and Cristoffel Blindenmison (CBM), I am one of the few trained surgeons in Liberia engaged in the repair of this unique condition.

Pediatrics ward



The children are most vulnerable to the ever present malaria, which is almost always accompanied by anemia (low blood level). It still is responsible for the highest percentage of all admissions. Children from neighboring Guinea make up a third of this number. UMCOR supported Imagine No Malaria is making great inroads in combatting this disease. Respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases are also common.

HIV and AIDS and Diabetes Mellitus Units



HIV unit and staff with my wife, Angeline, at far right, as the head of the unit



Diabetes Unit : taking specimen for testing

These units play important roles at the hospital. With the HIV pandemic and the high prevalence of Diabetes in our community, their services are crucial. Regular supervision and management of complications are routine engagements.

The Operating Room



Scrub Room



VIM team



Drenching wet in a hot OR

Cervical cancer presentation at the Out Patient Department (OPD) is a constant reminder that mass population pre-invasion screening is an invaluable tool for detecting and preventing the progression of the disease. A self sponsored team from the United States recently began a screening program here. I was left with equipments to continue the process while they are away. What is troubling is that most of our people do not understand the significance of the screening test, and tend to stay away. Ongoing awareness from our PHC program helps to remedy this situation.

Colonoscopy

We also have dental and eye care surgical and treatment services. We offer diploma programs in laboratory assistance and nursing assistance. There will be more about these in our next newsletter.

Upcoming Itineration

During the months of September and October 2014, I will travel to the United States for itineration. I am excited about this opportunity which allows me visit all my covenant/ supporting churches as well as reach out to churches and organizations to share how God is enabling life-saving and spiritually transforming medical remedies through the programs/units of Ganta United Methodist Hospital.

Should you desire me visit your church, organization, please contact my colleague Mary Zigbuo (mzigbuo@umcmmission.org) at Global Ministries. Mary is assisting me organize my itineration schedule.

I invite you to support me:

- With your prayers. Pray that I will be healthy and strong to do my work.
- Through assisting with my salary support so I can remain faithful to the call the Lord made on my life.
- By engaging in hand-on activities like helping with health kits and birthing kits. Write me for more info on this opportunity.
- By coming as a volunteer in mission to assist with our ongoing health care delivery.

For financial contributions, you may:

1. Use Global Ministries' website: www.umcmmission.org to send a donation for my salary support. At the bottom of the page, click on "Missionaries". Scroll to my name on the missionaries page and my profile will appear. At the bottom of my profile is a link to make an online donation.
2. Through mailing a check to your local church or conference office. Write "for Albert Willicor, #15151Z" on the memo line of your check.
3. Through assisting with my project support. The name of the project is Ganta United Methodist Hospital, #15080N.

My wife, Angeline (who is also a nurse at the hospital) and I thank you so much. Please keep us in prayer and we will do the same for you. I'd love to hear from you! Please feel free to write. My work does not allow me to respond to emails in a timely manner, but, rest assured, I will respond eventually. God bless!

Sincerely,
Albert Willicor (MD)
Medical Director
Ganta United Methodist Hospital
P.O. Box 1010; Ganta, Liberia

Email: alb.wcor@yahoo.com