

...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. Ephesians 4:12

## CONSTRUCTIVE WORD

The Esala Prayer Letter--April 2006

### DEAR PARTNERS,

This is the second newsletter that I am writing for the month of April. If you missed the first one, it's because it never got sent. The line, "Life is what happens when you make other plans" has rung true in our lives as "life" has taken over. What has seemed crazy these past couple weeks has become reason so that God's Son could be glorified through it (John 11:4).

### TUESDAY, MARCH 7TH

Our family made our weekly trek to Nalerigu where we send and receive e-mail and snail mail. We had been told that a volunteer OB-GYN doctor would be at the hospital so I could get a final check-up before we traveled to the U.S. To my surprise there were actually two OB doctors at the hospital.

The doctors did an ultrasound to check things out. Upon viewing the sonogram they became highly suspicious that I had placenta previa. Twenty-seven weeks (the time we were leaving) was when things often became more critical as the placenta separates from the uterus and when bleeding becomes more likely. They were very concerned about my travel plans at that time. While it's not uncommon for the placenta to shift as the uterus expands with the growth of the baby, which would decrease the risk of the pregnancy, there was no guarantee that this would happen. If bleeding would take place, I would not be able to travel at all. Dr. Julie decided to carefully do a transvaginal ultrasound which is more accurate in diagnosing placenta previa. What we (she showed me the picture) saw was a lot of placenta virtually obstructing the view of the baby. Her advice was to leave within one week. My thought was "impossible," but after some deliberation we decided to go with her suggestion. There was now three weeks of work to prioritize and cram into four days, and this to be done with the firm instructions to limit my activity and avoid lifting (even Annaka).

We talked with people at the LBT office and they took charge of changing our airline tickets. We also began sending out requests to family and prayer partners via e-mail that we were in need of prayer, and the prayers began.

### WEDNESDAY MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup>

We spent the night at the hospital guest house so we could get initial plans underway since e-mail and phone are more accessible, and went home Wednesday morning. As we turned into our lane in Nasuan, we were met by the priest, who has been helping us with our road project. Plans were made for him to bring his stone workers the next day to train a mason and several men in our town to build run-off walls. Hopefully this would help divert the water so it wouldn't flood our place or wash away the road during the rainy season. This is something we had been trying to get done for a couple months. On one hand we were crazy to pursue this, but we also felt that God was putting the pieces in place to

get this important phase of work done.

Nathan headed to Gbintiri to attend a language committee meeting to talk about our situation with David and Valerie (no phones--we can't just call them) and to inform our Komba partners who would be at the meeting. I started assessing our situation and did some organizing, following the doctor's orders the whole time. I was amazed at how many preparations had been completed despite the fact that I'd had a nasty case of malaria the week before. God had given me some time and an urgency to get things done over the weekend. I had a deep sense of peace and that God was leading the way.

### THURSDAY, MARCH 9TH

I had expected that Nathan and I would be doing most of the organizing and packing because there just aren't many other people around who could help with this process, but Thursday morning Alex, a peace corps worker from a nearby town, came peddling up on his bike. He had heard from the priest about our situation and came to lend a hand. We'd only met him twice! I was able to give him a job and he just did it. By late afternoon I couldn't think of anything else for him to do. He'd even organized my crazy tupperware cupboard. ☺ The road workers had shown up at 6:30am and work had been progressing in this area. We were getting so much done! The Federwitz family also came by for farewells and to wrap up some loose ends with project plans. It was so good for us to have this closure and time for face-to-face communication.

### FRIDAY, MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup>

More help arrived in the form of a missionary wife from the hospital. Once again, I could give her a job and it got done quickly. Elizabeth, my good friend from town, came to help out. She also took my last yam to transform it into my favorite Ghanaian meal--fufu. What a special treat!

By the end of the day cupboards had been cleaned out, perishable foods had been distributed, toys and books had been packed away, and the road was coming along. Nathan had gathered linguistic data notebooks to help him analyze the language. He also collected resources to help give advise to the translation work via e-mail. We were ready to pack our suitcases (two had already been packed and sent to Accra a month earlier).

### SATURDAY, MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup>

This day was mostly spent cleaning and taking care

of last details. Final farewells were said, and Nathan met with several men to figure out how the rest of the road work would get done in our absence. Our car was packed and we were ready to go. Wow! We began our travels, spending the night in Nalerigu.

### **TRAVELS**

Sunday took us to Tamale by car and then to Accra via airplane. Monday we wrapped up business in Accra and Tuesday evening we were on a flight to the U.S. It had only been one week since my diagnosis. God provided what we needed when we needed it. Even our favorite guesthouse that we stayed at in Accra had space when normally it is completely booked well in advance.

### **PENNSYLVANIA HAPPENINGS**

Wednesday evening we finally arrived in Pittsburgh and were greeted by my sister and her husband. We were exhausted! I was not feeling well physically and figured that it was from fatigue. However, during the next day I was having weird heart palpitations, shortness of breath, and dizziness. Friday morning my blood pressure was abnormally low and we were advised to go to the E.R.

I had a ton of tests done at Hamot Hospital in Erie; this included 73 ultrasound pictures. The funny thing is that they couldn't determine if it was a boy or girl (if you were wondering), but the sonogram now showed the placenta had shifted to the right side of the uterus completely--in just 1½ weeks! Doctors we know are calling it a miracle. What a testimony to the power of prayer.

The test results didn't show anything significant. I

was released Saturday morning feeling a little better and rejoicing that the doctor had removed restrictions on my activities. It was awesome to reach home and actually be able to pick up Annaka again.

### **SO NOW WHAT?**

We've decided to stay in Pennsylvania until the end of April. We will prepare our presentations here and begin our speaking. May will be spent in Southern Ohio as originally planned before we come back here for the final month before the baby's birth. We plan to post our schedule online at [www.lbt.org/Esalas](http://www.lbt.org/Esalas).

### **WHILE WE ARE AWAY**

The life of the Komba language work will continue while we are gone, thanks to the Federwitz family and our Komba partners. An exciting new twist is that literacy classes will begin. After all, what's the point in translating the Bible into Komba if no one can read it?

Selected verses from the book of Ruth are being translated to use for a simple story that will help women learn to read. Pastors in this area will do further teaching to equip women to share this story with others. LBT summer intern, Karin Brandt, will be assisting with this effort. We give glory to God for this next phase in our work.

Nathan will try to offer translation help from a distance. Since we've been in the U.S. he's done more linguistic analysis and has sent it off to a consultant in Ghana. These recommendations can then be applied to what's being translated and used for literacy in Ghana.

### **PRAISE AND PRAYER ITEMS**

- Praise God for good doctors to advise us in Ghana and in the U.S.
- Praise God for safe travels to the U.S. and the numerous helping hands that assisted along the way.
- Praise God that the placenta has shifted and that the high risk nature of this pregnancy is gone.
- Praise God for significant progress on our road and water run-off project.
- Praise God for opportunities to share about His work in Ghana with partners in the U.S.—in person!
- Pray for wisdom and clarity of thought as we put together presentation materials to share with you.
- Pray for good health and peace for our family as we adjust to the U.S. again. We've experienced some nasty respiratory illnesses in these early days and transitions always have their challenges.
- Pray for those who will continue the translation and literacy work while we are away—Emmanuel, Samson, Elijah, John, the Federwitz family, the KOLIBITRAP committee, and LBT intern Karin Brandt.
- Pray for peace in northern Ghana. Tensions among the nearby Dagomba tribe have emerged again.

### **In the palm of His hand,**

*Sarah for Nathan, Karissa, Annaka and baby*

#### **Contributions and Correspondence**

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