

Report from Nairobi

We are fine, blessed and sustained by the Lord as we continue with our journey as an interchurch couple. Our own (social and political) situation is really back to normal, but news from our neighbours has not been encouraging. Obviously folks out here were very delighted with the election of one Barack Obama, given his Kenyan roots ... of course there are those who felt the celebrations were misplaced knowing the enormous challenges our country is facing: HIV, drought, hunger, etc.

We have been involved in Hospital Ministry coordinating patients' Sunday services for Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican and Pentecostal churches for 4 years now. Each church takes turns to run a Sunday service at the University Hospital (which is Muslim Sponsored).

The Sunday services are meant to be interdenominational (or ecumenical), as they target staff and patients of all traditions. What we find most interesting working with these groups is their different ideas of what constitutes an interdenominational ecumenical service. Some of the groups we work with just do their 'thingie' and ask everybody to feel at home. Yet there are others who go out of their way to invite and welcome those of different traditions to participate, and genuinely feel accepted. We are able to identify with them as we live face our own interchurch family challenges.

Some of the leaders of the groups who know us as an interchurch couple feel we are best suited for the role as we are bound to be 'accommodating'. Once a Presbyterian minister invited everybody for Communion and had the bread and wine passed round. A patient who is Catholic and well known to us received the Communion but later come to seek counsel from us about receiving non Catholic communion. She felt guilty yet when the wine and wafer were offered she was unable to refuse. She thought it is easier for an interchurch couple to receive in non Catholic settings.

These are the activities we are involved in, reaching out to people in our own small way, in our communities and work places. In a way teaching the churches we work with, how to reach out to Christians of diverse traditions in painful sad or depressing circumstances that hospital admission bring.

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