

The Robinsons' Herald

Email version for March to June 2004

Greetings from 'Next to Heaven' in Carriacou, Grenada, West Indies!

Dear Friends,

Greetings from West Virginia! I apologize for such a long letter and for me personally not writing for quite some time. Linda has been doing a good job keeping everyone up-to-date during my illness, surgeries, and recovery. Thanks for your faithfulness, honey. However, much has happened, much is happening, and for the first time in months I feel well enough to think clearly and compose a letter. I deeply appreciate the understanding and prayers of all.

First, I am happy to report that I am finally beginning to feel better and get around quite a bit. I have been doing a lot of walking (two to three miles three or four days this past week). In fact, I am scheduled to preach at one our supporting churches in Princeton, WV this coming Sunday morning, and also preach in the church of our mission board, Holy Mount Baptist Church, the following Sunday, June 27. We had not been able to visit the latter since 1999 or 2000. Later on that same Sunday, I am also hoping to take the evening service to report to that church and mission board.

I am also excited to report that my surgeon recently gave me clearance to return to Carriacou! Thus, I am hoping to make plane reservations to fly out of Charleston, West Virginia on July 9, stay overnight in Philadelphia, and then fly on to Grenada nonstop on Saturday, July 10. As of right now these plans are contingent upon the Lord's provision. (Please read on for more details.)

I am now going to try to fill you in on what has been happening with me the last six months. Early in this past February I began to suffer some back pain that made it difficult for me to stand or sit for extended periods of time. At first I was able to continue filling the pulpit each service, hoping that with bed rest in between each service I would improve. However, the first week of March, and in addition to the back pain, I began to experience severe pain in my abdomen. I still continued to fill the pulpit and even to go for my three mile walks in hopes that the pain would eventually subside. But that was not the case.

A couple of weeks after the onset of the abdominal pain, it did ease up and even seemed to go away. However, it came back with a vengeance that made it impossible for me to sleep and made me spend much of my time groaning. I did not know if I had a kidney stone, a flare up of a specific type of colitis that had been asymptomatic to this point, a strangulated hernia, etc. I phoned my family doctor in West Virginia who suspected possible diverticulitis. He prescribed an antibiotic to see if it would help. After two or three days I

saw no improvement and became alarmed because all the possible causes could be very severe and even fatal if not treated in time.

Thus, I made arrangements to travel stateside and arrived on Sunday, April 17. I made my luggage as light as possible, and the Lord gave grace for me to travel. My back did not bother me the entire trip, and the abdominal discomfort was manageable. However, the day I arrived, I traveled to Beckley to be with my family and my back flared up big time to the degree that I immediately got into bed and mostly remained there for the next several days.

I saw my doctor on Tuesday, April 27. He detected several hemorrhoids and an easily detectable hernia. He also continued to suspect that diverticulitis had caused some of my abdominal pain, while he suspected that the hernia and hemorrhoids were causing the rest of my pain. I literally had pain on top of pain.

My doctor scheduled me for immediate lab work and began to make arrangements for me to see a specialist as soon as possible. I got the lab work done on Thursday, April 29. A day or two later, the specialist's office contacted me to inform me that I had an appointment to see him in about five weeks!

I saw my primary doctor again on Wednesday, May 4. Praise the Lord, my lab results looked very good. He also contacted the specialist again to hopefully get me on a cancellation list so I could see the specialist much sooner. A few days later I was contacted by the specialist's office again to notify me that I had an appointment to see him on May 6! Praise the Lord!

On May 6, I saw the specialist who examined me and told me that I had a bad hernia and many hemorrhoids that needed correction. The latter had kept me miserable since an onset and chronic inflammation since the second week of December 1996. (Yes, I remember the date.) Though other specialists had noted the hemorrhoids as far back as 1998, they had not recommended surgery at that time. But this time correction was recommended.

Likewise, it was not until this November past that I began to suspect a hernia. For the previous several months I had noticed a little discomfort after being on my feet for a couple of hours or when lifting. However, the discomfort gradually worsened and became more pronounced over the last six months. It was not until I began to feel strange sensations when I coughed, sneezed, blew my nose, or even lay on one side back in November or December that I began to really suspect a hernia. Even then I thought I could tough it out until our planned furlough in 2006. Yet, the pain in my side made

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me suspect that the hernia had gotten at least partially strangulated, which can be a very serious condition! In any case, on this day the specialist confirmed that I had a pretty bad hernia that also needed immediate correction.

I wanted surgery as soon as possible. He scheduled the hemorrhoid repair for that coming Monday, May 10 and the hernia repair two weeks later on Monday, May 24. He initially wanted to do them a week apart, but I believe the Lord intervened so that at least two weeks passed after the hemorrhoid repair was done. One week after the first surgery (OUCH!) I was not ready for another surgery, but I was ready after two.

Both procedures went off without a hitch. I was not put to sleep, but made pharmacologically drunk so I did not mind and later remember what they did to me. The first five days after the first surgery was very rough (somewhere between 'ouch' and 'oh me'), but God gave grace. The first three days after the second were equally difficult. But eight days after the first and about ten days after the second the pain was beginning to be more tolerable and I was able to wean away from the pain killers.

Now, nearly six weeks after the first surgery and nearly four weeks after the second, I am already feeling better than I have for years. I guess those ailments had been taking more of a toll on me than I realized. The abdominal pain seems to be nearly gone as well. Yet, I still have had some lower back pain, which we are still looking into. I have been taking some muscle-relaxers that seem to be helping.

I really want to return to Carriacou. I miss Linda and Jeshua very much. During our thirty-one years of marriage, Linda and I had never been apart for longer than four weeks. Also, my fiftieth (the big FIVE - O) birthday just passed with little fanfare. I also miss the flock of Windward Bible Church and my home in Carriacou. It has been nice spending time with my family that is stateside, but I believe the Lord is leading me to return home. In addition, we have a team (the third from this church) from Danville Bible Baptist scheduled to come to Carriacou and conduct a Vacation Bible School for us. They are scheduled to arrive on July 10 and conduct the school from the 12th through 16th. Even though I believe all would go well without my being there, it is usually a lot of work, and Linda needs my help. So, please pray that I will know the Lord's perfect leading and see His provision as I seek to return home and to our work.

I recently looked back and realized that I have traveled to the States some five times for health problems since 1998. I was in the States for one month in 1998 (hemorrhoids and prostatitis), twelve months from April 1999 to April 2000 (I was recovering from a stroke while Linda had major surgery), eight months in 2001 (January to August recovering from

surgery to repair my leg injured in an accident), and one month in 2003 to have the hole my heart repaired (August).

Altogether, I have been stateside some twenty-seven or twenty-eight months since 1998. Many missionaries take furlough every three to four years for twelve months. We took our first furlough in 1996 and it was only for six months. Thus, we have been off the field and in the states for about thirty-four months over the last thirteen years, which is about par for the course for many missionaries.

One in my extended family suggested that I consider returning to the States for good because of my health issues. Some others could be wondering if we are thinking of giving up. For any that are wondering such, the answer is no.

Trials, tribulation, discomfort, and suffering are an ordained part of the life for servants of the God of all comfort. It is such times that we experience God's marvelous grace and mercy in ways otherwise unknowable. God is good. He has always been good. He will always be good. And as my son, Jeshua reminded me on the phone night before last, "God is going to take care of everything. He has never left us high and dry." Jeshua said that though he has been suffering with a finger injury he sustained back in February that has not yet healed (possible fracture or joint damage).

In either case, what Jeshua said reminded of something that David said; "I was young, now I am old (probably more than 50), and I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor their seed begging for bread." Last night I needed to hear that. Thanks son, for the reminder.

I say this because things are really tight right now for us as a family and as missionaries. We have been under-supported for many years, but it has recently gotten more critical. In November of last year one of our faithful supporting churches sent us a letter to let us know that they could not send us support right now because of economic problems. Then in February we learned that one of our other supporting churches that had been sending one large support amount to us at the end of each year for the last three years was not supporting us any longer. Needless to say, we had been hoping for that nice amount because we needed it. These two churches had been supplying over 10% of our remaining support. We were already under-supported by 30%. Thus, we are now under-supported by 40%.

To help each be better informed on our needs and how to pray for us, I need to explain how expensive it is to live on Carriacou. Food purchased in grocery stores is typically two to three times more expensive than in the US. Electricity is also about three times more expensive (\$.25 per KWH while in West Virginia it is typically about \$.08 per KWH.) We have been paying nearly three dollars per gallon for gas since we arrived in Carriacou in 1991. I will not even mention our

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Internet cost (which for us is an absolute necessity and not a luxury). We do not have television cable.

Please do not misunderstand me. We are not complaining. We are very thankful, first to the Lord, and second to our friends that faithfully support and pray for us. As I understand it, we are not the only missionaries that have recently seen their support levels drop to the point that they need to raise additional support. Yet, the Lord does sustain us in ways that are truly amazing. He is indeed faithful and merciful.

As you may imagine, we did not have funds for this unplanned trip for urgently needed medical treatment and the incurred expenses. Yet, I have received some special gifts and a promise of special gifts that have helped.

Before I return to Carriacou, I need to purchase parts for our old car (1987 Dodge Colt Vista 4WD Station Wagon with 140,000 miles plus) to get it back on the road. It has been down since March. The radiator in our old bus (1991 Toyota HiAce 18 passengers with ~340,000 miles) is worn out and the bus needs metal welded in to repair serious rust. Both vehicles are worn out from transporting people back and forth to services. Yet, we have not been able to replace them. New vehicles in Grenada are 67% more expensive than what you buy in the US because of import duties. Used vehicles over four years old are 150% more expensive for the same reasons. Thus, we have no choice but to keep patching and repairing for the time being. However, parts for our car are becoming sparse because the model was discontinued about twelve years ago.

The folks in our church on Carriacou do help with our bus maintenance by their giving. However many of our folks are unemployed teens and children, while the adults work in jobs that pay well below US minimum wage standards. Also, I understand that unemployment on Carriacou is some 30% to 40% which is five to six times higher than in the US. Thus, our folks are currently not able to help anymore than they do.

Yet, our folks have remained faithful and we have seen our attendance grow some 30% to 40% since the later part of 2001 after we returned after having my broken leg repaired. This time Randy Cornelius has been faithfully filling our pulpit and the numbers have remained good. Praise the Lord!

Though we are praying and looking to the Lord for continued guidance and much needed provision, we are encouraged and looking forward to the days ahead.

Please pray with us about the following:

1. Diagnosis, treatment, grace, and resolution of the pain in my back.
2. Complete healing from both surgeries.
3. Supply and guidance for my return passage
4. Linda and Jeshua's continued safety and health
5. For stamina and wisdom for Randy Cornelius who continues to minister in my absence.
6. For money to repair both vehicles that are desperately needed in our ministry on Carriacou
7. For the complete healing of Jeshua's finger
8. For the upcoming VBS with Danville Bible Baptist Church on Carriacou for Windward Bible Church
9. For other churches to be led to support us even though we will not be able to visit them until our planned furlough in 2006.
10. For me as I feel like I am catching a cold since Thursday night. My throat and sinuses felt pretty rough while I composed this email.
11. For the Word to be effective and me as I travel and preach in Princeton, WV on Sunday morning, June 20, and in Kingsport, TN, on Sunday morning and night, June 27.

Thanks again for being there, and for lifting us up before the throne of our Father in heaven. Thanks also for touching our lives with yours.

Still looking up for Him,
(Signature Omitted)
Walter Robinson II

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