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ICBM Newsletter

Mission Trip to Africa

On January 5th, I, along with 11 others, left Lexington, Kentucky and flew to Monrovia, Liberia in Africa. This was a short-term missions trip led by Psalms 82:3 Missions in Lexington. Matt Lee from Psalms 82:3 gives this brief



description of their mission, "Our focus in Liberia is developing a safe foster care village and sustainable community center. The Shelter Church is the central

focus of our community center and because of that we do outreach in the community." I came along this trip because Matt Lee from Psalms 82:3 was asking me how they could help people in a blind village next to one of their orphanages. I replied, "If you don't mind a crotchety, old blind man going with you, I will go take a look."

Officially titled "Center for the Blind," people refer to it as the blind village. The following articles tell of what I found and what Matt and I would like to do.

Gifts

Gifts may be sent by mail to our address (below) or by using the donate button on our website. Thank you. In Christ, Mike Smith and Thomas Bleemel.

Bible Distribution

Before the trip, Matt received word that the blind villagers were asking for a cassette tape machine and audio bibles. We didn't get them



tape machines, ICBM purchased 100 audio bibles from Mega-voice. These are electronic bibles about the size of a cell phone. We distributed the bible to the blind people that were at the village, but others were out begging for food, so I have left the remainder of the bibles in Liberia to be distributed to the other blind people. Before we left, I could hear people listening to their bible. These bibles could be recharged by solar power. Please keep this ministry in your prayers.



Going to School

In addition to visiting the blind village, I also had the privilege of talking to the students at the school

at the girl's orphanage about the white cane, about braille and about blind people. For the most part, disabled people are shunned or abandoned, so we must do what we can to change attitudes. This involves teaching, but it also involves a lot of prayer because the shamans have much influence in the area and they believe disabled people are cursed by the spirits or have an evil spirit. Please keep this in your prayers.

Raising Cane

No, I don't mean any body was angry. The blind people in the village asked for canes. They have a variety of canes which have been damaged and wore out through years



of use in a harsh environment. We saw canes made out of wood, we saw white canes that had been broken or wore out, and had been repaired with wood, metal, or whatever they could find. We would like to be able to provide 70 canes for the villagers. 70 graphite white canes with cane tip and a set of spare cane tips at this time cost \$2,450 from Am-butech. There are cheaper canes, but I

want canes that will withstand a harsh environment. These blind people will not be using canes on smooth sidewalks or paved streets. The ground is rocky, and very uneven. A cane that is not rugged will break, that is why we have chosen these particular canes. Graphite has proven to be very tough. I also checked with one my former mobility instructors and she recommended this particular cane as being the toughest cane she has ever seen. While we were there, we measured people for proper cane lengths. We would welcome contributions to help fund the purchase of these canes. On check written for this purpose, please put in the memo line "Africa cane project."

Do You Want to go to Africa?

I would like to gather a small group to go back eventually. I think it would be wise if we joined Psalms 82:3 on one of their mission trips. I believe they take groups two times a year. One in the summer during the wet season, and one in January during the dry season. If you go, it would likely be the hottest most humid place that you have ever been. Volunteers are asked to raise their own money to fund the trip. This trip in January 2023 cost \$3,300 dollars. I would especially like to have at least one person who is trained in orientation and mobility or an accredited rehabilitation of the blind specialist or a VI teacher who teaches braille. Pray about this and if you are interested, please contact Mike Smith at ICBM to discuss more details.



Living Conditions in the Blind Village

In the blind village, most if not all of the blind people are adults. Their sighted children help them daily instead of going to school. The living conditions consist of rooms made up of corrugated steel. Their restroom is a row of toilets or holes in the ground.

They do have some foot paths of dirt and very bad concrete. There is also a narrow bridge that goes across the stream. They used twine for a hand rail. They cook by building a fire on a concrete slab and holding a pan of food over it. This job is given to the partially sighted people.

Psalms 82:3 has already renovated the outhouse and worked on some of the paths.



Remodeled Bathroom at Blind Village



A Long-Term Solution?

The people in the blind village clearly are destitute. Their major income of food is by begging. In fact, almost everything they have comes by begging. They do know a little wood working. They were working on a replacement door for one of the sheds. Both ICBM and Psalms 82:3 can help by providing materials in the short run. However, I believe that the only long-term solution is for the blind people to make things to sell. They clearly knew some wood working as mentioned above. However, they do not have a sales outlet. Nothing at this time is arranged for this area. I don't know how and I don't know by whom, whether by ICBM or Psalms 82:3 or someone else, but somehow this village needs to be moved from a begging economy to a self-sustaining economy. Please keep this in your prayers.

E-Newsletter

If you would rather receive this Newsletter by email, we can do that. However, we will need your email address. If we can get as many people as possible to receive the newsletter by email, it will save the mission money which we will use for our service projects. If you want to start receiving ICBM's newsletter by email, please email secretary@icbminc.org to let us know.

