Greetings from Cote d'Ivoire.  
  
Yes, I am still alive and plugging along at the Baptist Hospital of Ferkessedougou.  "No news" is usually NOT "good news" when it comes to updates from Diane!   It has been a very difficult year for the hospital and for me, personally.  The biggest difficulty has been the hospital finances. In our 56 year history, it has never been so severe.  For the last 16 months, we have struggled in paying salaries.  For at least 7 months, our employees received their paychecks over a month late.   We are slowly catching up, for which we are grateful.    
  
Why the big financial problem?  We have more competition with small private clinics popping up, offering sometimes cheaper care, but not quality care. People are drawn to them because they may be closer to home and less expensive.   The government is also building more public hospitals and outlying village dispensaries, and providing free care for children under 5 years old and free caesarean sections.  We can't compete with free care.  Another huge factor has been the lack of finances to purchase medications.  Selling meds from our own pharmacy is our main source of revenue.  If we don't have a particular medication, we have to give the patient a prescription to buy it in a pharmacy in town.  So, we lose the revenue to buy more medications.  It is a vicious cycle.  No meds, no revenue and thus no profits to buy meds and therefore no meds to sell!  Lack of medications has also had a big impact on drawing patients to the hospital.  They trust our medications, which indeed are the same as what they can get elsewhere, but they think that because it is at the Baptist Hospital, it is better!  We do try to sell our products at a lower price than in town, for our poor population.      
  
Why keep limping along?  Why not just close the hospital?  Because we believe that we offer some of the best quality care in the north of the country.  And, there are people living in real spiritual darkness that need to hear about Jesus Christ.  There are 4 unreached people groups in the north where we serve.  I'll share some exciting projects next month that will help to bring new and better services to the hospital!  
  
The long-awaited end of my directorship of nursing has come!   Basson, my African RN colleague, finished his degree in nursing administration and took over my position as Director of Nursing on May 1, 2018.  His 2 year absence wore me out from taking on 2 jobs and at least 10 nights on call per month. Now, I will probably be working more in the clinic, seeing patients, which renews me rather than drains me like administration does.

**Basson, his wife Deborah, and their 2 sons at graduation**  
  
Due to the many stressors, this past year has been a great low in my life and caused a significant burn-out.  The stress of administration, discouragement, and fatigue often led to depression and sometimes despair, wondering if "things" would ever get better.  Why not just quit?  Because I believe that God has still called me to be here.  Joni Eareckson Tada had a great devotional today that summed it up.  "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving an example, that you should follow in his steps." (I Peter 2:21).  She points out that life is supposed to be difficult, as seen in Philippians 1:29: "it has been granted, on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for Him."  I often complain and get discouraged looking at situations through my emotional, human perspective.  I am trying to develop the reflex of first seeing through God's perspective of love, truth, and eternity, where there is hope.  He is drawing me closer to Him, and hey, I'm learning to follow more and more in His steps, strengthened by the GRACE that is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:1).   
  
Another concern of mine is related to my support level, which is only at 86%.  I currently need an additional $810 per month.  If you would like to start supporting me monthly, quarterly or yearly, or if you would be able to increase your current support, please use the following link or send a check with your support intent explained in a note to:  WorldVenture, 20 Inverness Place East, Englewood, CO, 80112-5622.  
  
<https://www.worldventure.com/give/commit.php?REFundID=4200179>  
  
Believing that God is not finished with the hospital ministry, would you consider contributing to a fund to purchase medications?  It is estimated that we need $35,000 per month to buy medications to sell in our pharmacy.  If we had outside help to pay for even one month's purchase of medications, it would help enormously to get out of our financial hole, and launch us into future ministry.  We have had $16,000 worth of donations so far!  Praise the Lord!  
  
To donate to hospital medications use this link or send check to WorldVenture, noting account # 646-2932, "Ferke Hospital Fund" or use the following link:    
  
<https://www.worldventure.com/give/donate.php?REFundID=6462932>  
  
Thank you for considering these needs and for the financial gifts that so many already generously provide.  I am so grateful for each of you.  Your prayers have been a great encouragement to me.  Thank you for bringing me and the hospital before the Lord so faithfully.  If you made it to the end of this epistle, thanks!    
  
Blessings,  
Diane Eliason  
Serving with WorldVenture  
Cote d'Ivoire