



Mission Haven Update - December 2021

MY CHRISTMAS STORY 1973 -- THE POWER OF PRAYER

Glenice Johnson served in Congo/Zaire as a missionary nurse with the Presbyterian Church US from 1971-1975, living in Congo/Zaire from August 1972-December 1974. She is now the Resident Manager at Mission Haven.



When I was 8 years old, a missionary couple spoke in our church in Richmond, VA and I vividly remember hearing a voice saying that I would be going to Congo. After graduating from nursing school, I wasn't sure about that voice. Then, in the early 1970s, when I got a phone call from the PCUS, I knew without a doubt I was being called to Congo to teach nursing.

After more than a year in Congo, I was finally becoming a part of the community. I loved what I was doing: teaching nursing, working side-by-side with the Congolese hospital staff, often walking and talking in the fields with Congolese women. Then, in August 1973, I became ill with typhoid fever which slowly progressed into encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain. I remember very little about September through November of that year. However, three major things are still implanted in my memory:

- One, it was very difficult to pray anything other than "Help, Lord," or sometimes, "Thank you, Lord," when the headache pains would ease a little.
- Secondly, I remember having a recurrent dream. I was falling from a cliff and would always catch hold of a branch coming out of the cliff. When the roots of that branch began pulling away from the cliff, I would find myself cradled in the Hand of God. I came to know powerfully the wonder of being held in the palm of His hand. During those times, I was overcome by an indescribable sense of peace. I knew that I was dying and yet I was at peace. God would decide whether to provide His complete healing in heaven or to heal me on earth. And, although I knew that healing on earth would be more difficult and demanding for me, I was at peace with whatever He decided.
- The third thing I remember was that I was never alone. When I awoke from bouts of fever, or after seizures, or after times of unconsciousness or simple sleep, a Congolese friend or a missionary friend was always there. Usually someone was holding my hand, sometimes silently, sometimes praying, sometimes singing softly; but always someone was there. The community shared in my illness and in my walk with God.

When the decision came that I needed to be medically evacuated home to the States for treatment, the Mission Board alerted people all over the world to pray. We flew out on Thanksgiving eve. During that flight, prayer services were being held in the U.S. and around the world. In my family's hometown of Dothan, Alabama, an ecumenical service was held for the first time in a Black Church. Protestant ministers, Catholic priests, and Jewish rabbis joined in prayer for my healing.

A doctor and a nurse accompanied me on the journey home. I have been told that I stopped breathing seven or eight times during our travels and was frequently given CPR. When we approached Kennedy International Airport in New York City, all other air traffic was stopped while we landed and were transferred to a medivac plane for the flight to Atlanta, Georgia. When we arrived at Piedmont Hospital, my family was told that recovery was questionable, and if I did live, I would be hospitalized for months.

But God was holding me in His Hand and had other plans. I was placed in intensive care. I learned to eat and walk again, and was discharged from the hospital to be home with my family in time for Christmas.

As we left the hospital, the doctor shook his head in wonder, saying, "I can take no credit; only God and prayer are responsible for this recovery."

– Glenice Johnson

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story – when they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind." Psalm 107: 1-8

Housing ~ Hospitality ~ Clothing ~ Prayer