

Elma's e-musings  
January, 2015  
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I bring you blessing for the New Year 2015. Indeed I am still alive, begging your pardon for being silent since October 2014. Writing to you now, I can understand why many of you have sent me emails of love and concern. I'm so sorry for being negligent. I will try to be concise with my news but let me tell you first that I reached the half century mark. I am 50 years old! I praise God for His goodness and faithfulness. And I am thankful that on such an important milestone of life, I have you. You are God's gift to me.

November 2014, I was in the island of Maui attending Haggai Institute (HI). It is an intensive training for Christian leaders from 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries. There were 52 women from 16 countries. We were divided into 2 groups and had to be in class by 7:45 am till 7 pm. However, 1 classmate was sent home after 4 days because she had a different agenda for coming.... shopping! It was a blessed time to be in a prayerful environment while learning more of God and empowered to evangelize. I was challenged to actively pray and reach out to the Muslims around me, invest my time and efforts to the next generation of the church, and spend more time in personal prayer. At our graduation, I was voted by my classmates to give the convocation speech. I came back by earning 50 new sisters and a fresh awareness of God's command to proclaim the gospel at all times, to all peoples.

I was asked how I can be away from work for the whole month attending HI. It was favor. Though I am the only Pediatric Surgeon in my hospital, the chairman of the department and the Hospital Director gladly gave me permission to attend HI. While away, my chairman stood for me and took charge of emergency pediatric patients. So when I returned, the long list of

elective cases for operation was even longer! So I had to double the effort to go through the list and operate on as many as possible. One mother even begged me to operate on her daughter during Christmas. And the emergency cases were constantly coming.

Meet this 6-month-old baby: She was admitted at a provincial hospital and was being treated for gastroenteritis for 3 days. With no improvement, she was transferred to us. We immediately diagnosed her as having an acute surgical condition known as Intussusception. It's when the small intestine goes into (telescoping) the large intestine. By the time we got her, the hemoglobin and electrolyte were done. After correcting and optimizing we opened and had to cut the non-viable portion of her intestine and rejoined the ends (resection and anastomosis). She lost weight but went home improved. This picture of her, wearing her Christmas colors, was taken on clinic follow up.



December was also when I officially graduated in Pediatric Surgery after having submitted my completed research paper. This was my 8<sup>th</sup> time to graduate: Elementary, High School, College, Medical School, Medical Internship, Residency training in Surgery, Haggai Institute and Fellowship training in Pediatric Surgery. It was a joyful and proud time for my mother who walked up the stage with me. Mother also turned 80 years old last December. Also, 2 of my missionary friends who are still serving in Nepal came over to visit. Rianne is from the Netherlands and Carrie is from Northern Ireland. Both are teachers and first timers in Southeast Asia. My pride in showing off my beloved country was rewarded by their loving everything about it. That included the horrendous traffic. There were days they had to explore on their own using public transportation because I don't own a car. It's a plus that the temperature was pleasant and the typhoon season just finished. When Carrie and Rianne returned to Nepal, it was time for me to speak at a conference-wide, UMM-sponsored Aldersgate Gathering. It was held outside the Manila area. I was there less than 24 hours, yet, I was able to operate on one of the deaconesses. The "MacGyver" in me always brings a surgical blade with me. My next speaking engagement is in February during our church anniversary mid-week service. Please remember me in prayer.

In my last newsletter, I advised you to look for an active missionary to support. And I thank and praise God that many you have expressed that you will continue on and wait until I get my suitable assignment. While I was in Haggai, I got an email from GBGM telling me I have the option to deactivate my Advance #, send out letter of gratitude to covenant churches with recommendation to support another missionary, and withdraw my biography from GBGM website on Jan 30, 2015. I think I am not in the 2015 Prayer Calendar anymore. But they said they will give me a new Advance # when I get reactivated again. I fully understand GBGM and I believe it's how it's supposed to be. But

when I got the email, it felt heavy on my heart. It felt like the door is being shut. The thought of losing you, my praying friends, is disconcerting. But I want to come clean with you. I'm starting my 2<sup>nd</sup> half time. I am taking my 2<sup>nd</sup> year on sabbatical. My spirit is mended and I felt I was ready to return to the mission field. But it was not to be. Not yet. As Methodist we think and interpret our faith practice through what is commonly known as quadrilateral: Scripture, reason, tradition and experience. Please help me to pray about this. So for the time-being I will be working at my current job in the government hospital. I will continue sending my newsletter and asking for your prayers. But also start looking for an active missionary.

What do you know? The Pope came to visit the Philippines for my birthday ☺ It's true! Well, Pope Francis is here in the Philippines on a Pastoral and Political visit. His homily was based on John 21:15. Pope Francis said that all pastoral ministries are borne out of love. It was a good reminder for me. My ministry as a doctor, as my mother's daughter or as a follower of Christ is borne out of love. God loved me first, so much that He sent His Son to give me life eternal. And I follow Jesus Christ because the more I know Him, the more I love Him. I thank God for the opportunity of serving Him and the added bonus of being connected with you. Thank you for your loving prayers. 'Till next newsletter... I will endeavor to write every month.

God bless us.