

January 2011 newsletter

Thank you for all the lovely messages I received over the Christmas period. It was good to receive your news and catch up with you and your families.

The Hospital Christmas party was held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December. It began with food. A cow (bull) had been bought and slaughtered, and we had rice, beans, matumbo (a soft mashed banana/potato mix with the intestines of the bull), roast meat, and “soup” (a meat and carrot stew). Then there was a banana and a soda. There were about 300 people fed that lunch time.



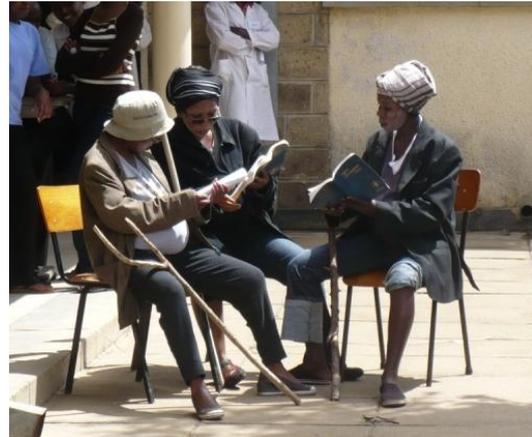
After the meal, there were some speeches and then games. There were races of different kinds,: 3 – legged race, a sack race, and 100 metre race in different age groups. Amazingly, I came 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 100 metre dash for the over 50’s – I have never before won any race of any kind, maybe middle age is favouring me! The C.E.O. asked me to help him to cut the cake, which was then served to all the staff by various Head of Department.



In the School of Nursing, we were busy administering exams up to 24<sup>th</sup> December, and then tried to get the marking done; of course it was not finished before New Year.

On Christmas Eve, the students went round the wards singing Christmas songs and telling them about God's love, and praying with them. They then proceeded around the staff houses and sang "We wish you a Merry Christmas" to all those who were still within the hospital compound.

The students performed a Nativity play on Christmas day morning for the patients. Every year is different. This year Joseph was very vocal throughout, to the intense amusement of the patients watching. The shepherds were the most animated we have seen for many years, doing a traditional style dance as they left Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus. The teachers of the law and elders called by King Herod were very much like some of our local "elders".



After the Nativity play, 9 of us from different parts of the world had a turkey lunch together. It was a lovely time together, with Nancy having one of her sons with his wife and 2 children here (USA); Helen (Ireland) with us from Tharaka; and Rachel, a German volunteer for 6 months. As well as turkey (bought frozen in Nairobi in November), we had some of the usual trimmings (but no Brussels sprouts). I make the sage and onion stuffing from raw ingredients (no packets or ready made from the supermarket for us) and also the bread sauce is made from a loaf, Nancy's daughter-in-law brought cranberries from Washington State. Then we had pumpkin pie (courtesy of Linda and Nancy Cutshall).

In



the evening, Claire & I hosted a party for the students who had not been able to go home. The majority of students had gone away for the Christmas weekend, but there were still 40 in Maua, either because they were on duty, or they could not go home (either for financial reasons, or because it was too far for a short time). We did various games with prizes and then they played a game to win a Christmas present.

In Kenya, there was no extra Public Holiday for Christmas and Boxing day – we were straight back to work on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> December, and as New Year's day was on Saturday we did not have a PH for that either.

With all the examinations we have been doing in the School of Nursing, Mr. Mbaabu and I have been able to begin to teach Isabella Meeme how to become the Examination officer. In a few months, that will mean that I can begin to teach Mbaabu how to do the rotas. Both these jobs are very involving and require a lot of concentration and attention to detail.

I was re-elected to be the Patron of the Sports and Social Club. Every year the students elect their own officials. The outgoing officials were very active and made a number of improvements to the club, which I hope the incoming officials will continue/further



On Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January, we had the Hospital Covenant service. Because some staff are unable to attend a Covenant service in their own churches due to being on duty, we have our own service each year. It is always very special and good to recognise that we are one family as we work in Maua Methodist Hospital. I always find it a challenging and uplifting service. About 200 staff took Communion that morning.

Thank you for all your good wishes for 2011. The year has started off so tragically for many people in Australia, Sri Lanka, and Brazil. Unfortunately, the La Niña effect usually means that in Kenya our rains will be very poor, and so we are expecting drought this year. Do pray with us that the Government will be able to put measures in place to mitigate the impending problems. Of course, we can pray for a miracle and ask God for good rains this March. Why not?

Much love,

Barbara