

Mission Liberia 2022

Celebrate sent our second delegation to visit Liberia March 23-31, 2022. The purposes of the trip in March 2022 were:

1. To visit locations where we've had work completed and meet the people, inspect the impact we're having, and rejoice with those impacted.
2. To assess the situation at ELWA Hospital, where the church has just sent funds for improvements to their water and power systems. To meet the leaders and the people impacted and fully understand the work to be completed.
3. To discover other areas of need and determine priorities.
4. To understand possibility of multiple trips per year and what physical work we can join locals to accomplish.
5. Continue to build our relationship with the local World Hope team in Liberia.

Celebrate Team Members:

- Brent Norgaard, Celebrate COO
- John Kagey, Celebrate Adult Ministries Leader
- Nathan Kasselder, Celebrate Member
- Meggan Cardona, Celebrate Member
- Jackson Gbelai, Celebrate Member, US Citizen, Liberian native

It would be easy to look around Monrovia and conclude the situation hopeless – easy to say this is just the way things are and have always been. Surrounded by incredible poverty. Incredible mess. Incredible struggle. Yet, when you meet the people and hear the stories, there's incredible hope and profound faith in Jesus. Everywhere we went, everything we did, we heard over and over, "In Jesus name," spoken the distinct Liberian-way. It became our trip's catchphrase, our motto and always left us smiling.

We were prepped on what to expect before our departure, but I don't think any of us expected to see endless poverty. It just never ended. We never drove out of it. It is literally a state of near permanent poverty. Unfinished and decrepit buildings. Abandoned buildings. Burning trash and mountains of garbage. Poorly maintained roads, massive potholes, and shoddy construction. When something breaks down, there it sits – maybe forever.

The team visited the three Wesleyan schools where Celebrators sponsor 125 children. Our pooled sponsorship funds wholistically impact all 677 students enrolled in the schools through tuition funding, uniform and school supply distribution, child protection programming, and teacher training and salaries. Tremendous growth was seen at the schools from our visit in 2019 until now, through the renovation of the classrooms, installation of wells, latrines, and solar panels and provision of desks, chairs, and laptop computers. Equally, if not more impressive, was the students' ability to articulate all that they have learned through protection programming which educates them on abuse, safety, child labor, hygiene, and development. Sixth-grade class president, Grace, stole the show with her positive advocacy for the ongoing needs of her school and her classmates, as well as her abundant gratefulness for the improvements that have already been made.

From the depths of the jungle in Nimba County in rural northern Liberia, we enjoyed the laughter of children playing hacky sack for the first time with us, holding our hands as we walked, looking at us with

beams of light in their eyes, eyes filled with hope and a future. Just three short years ago, these eyes were filled with pain and misery due to chronic water-borne illnesses that caused ongoing diarrhea and stomach diseases that stole their health and happiness and often, their life. But God, through the generosity of the people of our church, and the hard work of the World Hope Liberian Team, they now have clean, safe water to drink from the deep water-wells we dug in their villages. The transformation was amazing to witness! And their gratefulness, oh their gratefulness, is never-ending, and was on full display as they sang and danced for us, saying Thank You, Thank You, Thank You over and over and over again.

For too many Liberians, every day when they wake up, many of their first thoughts are, “Where am I going to get clean water? What will I find to eat? Will my children make it to school? Will my loved one survive this illness? When will help arrive?”

We are God’s earthly calvary, and it is our responsibility and duty to respond with love and resources to those in need. He is watching. The world is waiting. Our response is making a difference.