



THE HECTOR FAMILY MISSIONARIES TO GUATEMALA



Thomas, Elizabeth, Charles, and Oliver

October 27, 2023

Dear Pastors, partnering churches, and praying friends,

I want to thank you for your faithful support and prayers through this difficult season we are in. We came down sick about three months ago. We tried to deal with it in Guatemala for two and a half of those months. It started with my asthma acting up pretty bad and then led to bronchitis. Now this would not have lasted as long as it did if I didn't have allergies to steroid medication. So with the allergies, it lasted about a month and a half. About a month into having these issues, our sons got pretty sick. The doctor thought it was a bacterial infection and sent us home with antibiotics. Three days later they were worse than before. We took them to another doctor who didn't look at them and instead just said change the antibiotic. Charles began to not breath well, nor was he able to walk. This of course scared us, and we rushed him to a different hospital. There they found that he had bronchial pneumonia. He was immediately admitted to the hospital. During his stay there, I too got worse and went back to the hospital. They gave me medication and sent me home. By the next day, I too could hardly walk, and Brother Wilder had Charles and I taken by ambulance to the city.

Once we arrived, I was tested for many different things, and it was discovered that I have adenovirus, Zika, and Chikungunya. Charles had adenovirus and Zika. Charles was admitted right away due to issues with his lungs. On that same day, Oliver was tested and immediately admitted due to having critical pneumonia caused by the adeno and Zika virus. We spent five more days in the hospital. During that time, I was bit by a poisonous spider and given antibiotics which made my virus sickness worse. It made me very sick and caused me to lose ten pounds in 12 days. Thus causing me to be admitted for dehydration. After seven days in the hospital, they sent us home thinking that both boys were improving; however, we were home for less than 24 hours before Oliver's oxygen tanked. We rushed him back to the hospital where he spent another six days. They couldn't find any medicine that would break Oliver's fever nor bring his oxygen up. We prayed and sought counsel about an emergency medical flight. We almost had one booked, but the doctor said they had one more thing they could try. We prayed as did many of you which we are very thankful for. In one day, Oliver was able to be taken off of 24/7 oxygen and was able to breathe much better. We had to stay close to the hospital for a week and do nebulizer treatments as well as two other steroid medications. This was an intense treatment for a one year old, but to God be the glory, Oliver began to recover greatly.

We prayed and received counsel about coming back to the states long enough to get us healthy and see several different specialists. We returned to the states on October 8th with an original plan of leaving November 8th. This plan however was changed due to worsening symptoms for myself. My back began to hurt and kept getting worse. So bad that the pain went down my legs and dropped me on two different occasions.

I went to the emergency room where they could not locate the problem. I saw my primary, and he could not help me. For a few days it seemed hopeless until I contacted an infectious disease doctor. He knew right away what it was, and it is called Chikungunya arthritis. Basically, Chikungunya means bent back or bent over. It causes crippling effects to your body such as muscle spasms, cramps, joint pain, bone pain, etc. He basically described it as rheumatoid arthritis in your whole body. This has many downsides, and one possible good side. The downsides are extreme pain, and there is no cure. The good news is that most cases last 2-3 years. Some cases, a lifetime; however, we are praying God cures me quickly. He also ordered an MRI and is having me see a neurologist to make sure there is no long term damage.

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During this time, I also began to have a lot of chest pains; so I was seen at the ER, and they recommended that I see a cardiologist. They do not believe it has to do with my heart; however, they want to make one hundred percent sure. The Chikungunya virus can cause the muscles in your chest to spasm giving you the feeling of a heart attack without actually having one. Also with my GI problems, it may be an ulcer.

I went to my GI, and he did a stool sample and believes based on the culture that I have IBS on top of my Gerd. He made me an appointment for an endoscopy on November 29th (the soonest available he has.) In the meantime, I have to double my medication for Gerd and stop taking ibuprofen, which is difficult with the pain I am in. I can and do take Tylenol. The doctor also prescribed Methotrexate and Gabapentin. If you have used these, please let me know how they affected you and what the results were. With my many drug allergies, I am hesitant to start this new medication. Which brings me to the last issue we had recently. We went to Longhorn Steakhouse, and I ordered a steak. Little did I know they changed their seasoning. I began to have my tongue swell, my face swelled and so did my throat. I immediately took 50 mg of Benadryl, and we went to the hospital. With my allergy to prednisone, they gave me another 50mg of Benadryl and another antihistamine. My food allergies that we know of are three different spices. One of which they started using on their steaks, and I didn't know it. I saw my primary, and they prescribed an epipen and are sending me to an allergy doctor to try to get help and find out if I am allergic to anything else.

I do not write this with heaviness in my soul, but rather with hope knowing that these afflictions over the last several months are not new. We are doing our very best to keep our eyes on the Lord and His precious Word. Recently, I heard a message that really helped me about how this may not have been in our plans but it did go across God's desk and He approved it. We have blessed assurance that God will bring healing in His time, and if not, we will still serve Him. Our plan is to get all these tests done and head back to Guatemala as soon as possible. The infectious disease doctor warned us to at least wait long enough to see if my symptoms are improving. His concern for us is if we go back and I catch the Chikungunya virus again it would be very serious, as my body is still fighting it off. His words were that a double dose of the virus would have deadly consequences. So, we want to hearken to the wisdom of our doctor and get all the testing done, spend this time recovering and, Lord willing, head back to Guatemala mid December to early January. We would love to go back tomorrow; however, I believe God has us here for a short time to get healthy again and go back and serve him. We are living in an airbnb in Bloomington, IL; then we'll head to an airbnb in Clinton, IL. Our pastor and our church are allowing us to use one of the church vans.

If you have any questions about any of this, please feel free to contact me through text or call at 1-309-205-0494. With our many appointments, I may not answer a call right away; however, if you text or leave a message, I can and will call you back as soon as possible. As I mentioned before, coming home after five and a half months with different diseases was not in our plan, but I do believe God has us here for a short while to get the appropriate medical care.

Thank you for understanding and for your prayers.

In the service of King Jesus

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Psalms 126:5-6
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