



About a month ago, I started the process of transitioning home. It seems early...my departure date wasn't for another few months, but January was proving to be somewhat of a question mark on my calendar. I was planning on going home. Planning that next step in my life. The one that didn't involve Africa and the Africa Mercy - at least not for a while anyway. I was fairly at peace with the upcoming transition - knowing that it wouldn't be easy, but that ship life was coming to an end for me at this moment. There was a definite part of me that looked forward to starting a 'normal' life, and having my own space and not living where I worked and having that freedom to hop in a car and drive wherever I wanted, whenever I wanted.

And then something funny happened. A friend asked me what kind of nursing I wanted to do - we had been talking about the cute kids downstairs - *did I want to be a pediatric nurse?* I didn't really think about my answer - there wasn't really anything to think about - it has been clear for the last year and a half. I just want to be a VVF nurse.

This year on the ship has been a struggle. Last year I loved the nursing and loved being on the wards. This year hasn't been so easy or as natural. There are a lot of factors that played into that, but somewhere in the midst of it all, I realized that what I've missed the most this year are my ladies and their catheters. It feels funny to end the year and not have had them around. It just doesn't seem right.

I've never thought that my passion for the VVF ladies would go away - they continually move me - I just never knew what that would look like as I prepared myself to go home. Logistically speaking, they are a population that is almost exclusively in Africa. And they are generally in the most remote and poorest parts of Africa. I've always known that to be involved in their lives, means relocating. The picture of what that looked like was just never clear to me. Until now.

In just a few short weeks I will head home and instead of making it a permanent move, it will be a visit, as I prepare myself to come back. The ship returns to Togo in January and our ladies return to the ship in April for four weeks of life-changing surgeries. I will return somewhere in between to take on the position of VVF Team Leader, a position in which I get to walk beside and love on approximately 50 ladies from screening to discharge, work closely with the surgeon, and be an educational resource to a team of nurses. The position will have it's own set of challenges and the learning curve will be steep at moments, but I'm thankful to be coming back to a strong team of nurses. I will stay on the ship for a total of four months - allowing myself preparation time before the ladies arrive and time after to allow for final discharges, which would take up to three

November 2011

weeks after the end of surgery, final report writing and than helping the ship close down and sail from Togo in mid-June.

I'd like to say that I have a definite plan for what will happen after the Togo outreach, but the truth is, if there is anything that I've learned in the last two years of working in and out of Africa, it is that sometimes God has a different plan. Coming off of a hard outreach, where I spent a lot of time questioning my place here, I admit that it's hard to explain the complete peace and rest that I feel in regards to next year.

I can't tell you thank you enough for all of your support - prayerfully and financially. I wouldn't be here without your support. I ask that you would prayerfully consider continuing to partner with me through the next Togo outreach. Again, I cannot thank you enough for your support and prayers.

Email me at larson.karin@gmail.com if you have questions, comments or just want to get together for coffee. I look forward to seeing many of you while I am home!

Blessings,

Karin

"I had to choose fear—or
completely trust Him. One
cannot exist if the other is true."