

Before I get into the update, I want to thank each one who has been praying for our family throughout this entire ordeal -- beginning with Emmalyn's first health scares in Liberia, our plans to bring her back to Canada, the trip itself and now this present hospitalization in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. So many have reached out by email, text and comments to encourage us and let us know they are praying for us, and I know many more have been praying that never contacted us. To each one of you, thank you! (Sorry if I don't respond to each person who contacted me, I assure you I do read and appreciate each one.) I will begin the update with the latest information since my last update, and then at the end I will go into more details of everything leading up to our trip to Canada.

PLEASE NOTE Most of the people on this particular email list signed up because they wanted to receive our monthly prayer letters. You may not have wanted to receive constant updates on things like this. Because of that, I will try to limit how much I send on this list. If you are someone who wants to get every single bit of news from our family that we post, you can send me an email asking to be added to my secondary email list, you can sign up for blog posts on our website at www.reimers2liberia.com/blog/ or follow our family/ministry on Facebook. Thank you for understanding.

EMMALYN UPDATE

The last update you received from me was asking you to pray for Emmalyn. She had been working too hard to breathe, and was becoming lethargic from lack of energy. The doctor that came to talk to me said that they were going to give her another hour or so to start breathing better, but if not they would try one other thing before going to intubation. From the way she said it, I understood that they expected that this would be necessary. I reached out to family and friends and churches to ask them to pray.

And then I prayed. As I was sitting there in the hospital room, my precious daughter about 15 feet away as the medical staff are busily working on her and doing what they can to help, I am feeling helpless. Everything was out of my hands, except... praying. So I did. I prayed. I gave Emmalyn to the Lord. (Something I've had to do a number of times over the past few months especially) I submitted myself to His perfect will. And then God asked me to take a small stand for Him. No, it was not in any audible voice, but a conviction in my heart that I needed to pray publicly. Not out loud, but to get on my knees in that hospital room to pray. I resisted. "God, why can't I just pray privately as I have already been doing?" I know it doesn't sound very "spiritual," but at that moment I didn't want to make a scene or draw attention to myself. So I wrestled. As Jacob of old, I wrestled. As Jacob of old, I lost. I kneeled next to the bench I had been sitting on and gave the situation over to God—again. I knew others were praying all over the world, I knew that there was nothing I could physically do for Emmalyn, I knew that God was in control, and I knew that I was tired.

So with impending intubation for Emmalyn, I laid down and fell asleep. I woke up about two hours later with a start, and expected to see them preparing to intubate her. Instead, it was quiet in the room with a nurse and the respiratory specialist working next to Emmalyn. When I looked at the monitors, they looked fine. I asked them how she was, and they said she was much improved from two hours prior. **God answers prayer!** Emmalyn and I both slept fairly well that night, waking up every couple of hours for them to suction out her passages so she could breathe more easily, and to give her the medicine that helps open her airways. Otherwise the night was very uneventful. Which is a rare and valued commodity these days!

So where are we now? At the time of this writing, Emmalyn is still receiving help with breathing through a machine that senses when her diaphragm muscles are tightening up to breathe, and giving the air an extra push to help her lungs expand. The atmospheric air we breathe is 21% oxygen, and the air she is getting through that machine is right now 28% oxygen. Salbutamol is being nebulized into her airstream every few hours to help with her breathing as well. She is being fed a high calorie formula into her duodenum, bypassing her stomach so she won't vomit her food into her lungs and facemask. There are a number of different tests that they have started doing and are planning on doing in the coming days. They did two x-rays and one CT scan on her lungs, and have not found anything that would lead them to believe that this episode is related to or caused by her suspected Tuberculosis.

They also just did a bronchoscopy to get a better look at her lungs, and also collected some samples while they were in there. Although we have not received the final report from the doctor yet, the nurse who saw the preliminary findings said there was nothing remarkable about what they saw. So they will be continuing to ask questions and do tests that will hopefully lead them to finding out what is happening. I asked about how long they expected her to be hospitalized, and the doctor thought that — best case scenario — Emmalyn would likely be in ICU for another couple of days, and then spend a few days in the pediatric ward before she will be able to be discharged. In that case, depending on the status of her tests here, we may be able to return to Manitoba to be able to finish our quarantine and continue getting to the bottom of her health at the children's hospital in Winnipeg. So, in the meantime, Jackie took over for me at the hospital yesterday and me and the other children moved from the hotel to an AirBnB that we have rented for a week, located not far from the hospital where Emmalyn is in. We are thankful for brothers and sisters in Christ in the Montreal area that have been willing to help us out by getting food for our quarantine, and by delivering other necessities to us.

Leading Up To This...

As you know, we were supposed to fly out of Liberia on Monday, March 29th, but we were not able to do that because of some COVID related travel restrictions that we were unaware of. Our itinerary got rescheduled for Friday, April 3rd. On March 30th, we got back home in the morning and had to prepare ourselves for another few days of waiting. Friends invited us over for supper, so we went and enjoyed some fellowship. It was good to get out after the stress of the previous evening. But, when we got home our power was off. One of the main wires from the generator that we get our power from burned up in our absence. When it came back on, we noticed that our refrigerator, computer and phone chargers, and our internet router all got fried in the process. So now we were not only back home for a few days against our desires and intentions, but we had no refrigeration or WiFi, and had to find other means to charge the computer and phone. The next day, Wednesday, we had to go back to get a second round of COVID tests for everybody but Emmalyn.

While it was a long process, it went fairly smoothly. We continued to make final preparations to go, and on Thursday we had gotten the apartment and luggage ready to go for a second time. Our negative COVID results came back late Thursday night so all that was left to do was go and select our seats and check in on Friday morning, and we were ready. Friday morning I left for the Brussels office (for some reason flights originating in Liberia are not eligible for online seat selection). I got there early to beat traffic, and as I am waiting in the parking lot for the office to open, Jackie messages me to tell me that Emmalyn is breathing more rapidly than usual again. My. Heart. Sinks. After consulting with the doctor who dealt with her previous episodes, I headed back out of town to pick her up to bring her back to the hospital for an assessment. Without going into all the long details of everything that happened there, she was seen by a doctor who, after listening to her lungs, did not feel that there was any sign of respiratory distress and that she shouldn't have any problems making the trip.

He prescribed a couple medications to help keep things going in the right direction, and was willing to do another quick check on our way to the airport. So I dropped Emmalyn back off at home on my way back into town to select our seats and check in. This took quite a while because of some issues in our booking, but they were resolved enough that we were able to be all seated with each other. After double and triple checking all of our documents, we were ready for a trip back to the airport. Although it is a long process both because of all of the COVID protocol as well as the large family we have, everything went smoothly and we were at the gate in around an hour. While we waited we were able to talk to several missionaries who were also travelling, including one who was on our flight and right across the aisle from us. The flight schedule changed because Liberia was out of Aviation Fuel, and our flight also arrived an hour late.

This concerned me, because we already only had a 1.5 hour layover in Brussels (which with a large family and having to go through COVID protocol and security would make things a little tight). We got off from Liberia and headed through the darkness of night to Brussels via Sierra Leone. The pilot only gained about 10-15 minutes on the flight, so when we arrived in Brussels we had less than 45 minutes to get our flight. (Remember, we had 9 carry-ons/personal items, and 5 children aged 7, 5, 3, 2 and infant.) So, along with our missionary friend, we ran as fast as the kids little legs could carry them. We got express passes to go through security, but with all of the baby things in our carry-ons, we were delayed as they inspected 3 or 4 of our bags. When we finally got through, we took off running for our gate. We were met on our way by an Air Canada employee looking for us and telling us the plane was waiting for us — so hurry but they are holding it for you. We kept on running and of course the gate was at the far end of the terminal.

Our missionary friend continued with us, and since Bethany couldn't keep up, I carried her on my shoulders while carrying three bags. We got to the gate, they checked us in and assigned us seats, and we walked onto the plane... the last to board. From there we flew to Montreal, Quebec where our mandatory hotel quarantine awaited us. Not eager about that, when we arrived we took our jolly good time going through all of the lines, and were probably the last from that flight to leave the airport for our hotel. We got to the hotel, settled in for a nice relaxing three day quarantine of not going anywhere or doing anything. We ordered in some Tim Hortons and A&W fast food for a "welcome back to Canada" treat for supper, and then me and the kids went to bed. Jackie stayed up a bit because Emmalyn wasn't ready for bed yet, but then they went to sleep. About 5 hours later, Jackie woke me up to tell me that Emmalyn's breathing wasn't very good. I contacted a local pastor to see what options were available for hospitals, and then I contacted the health line to see what they recommended.

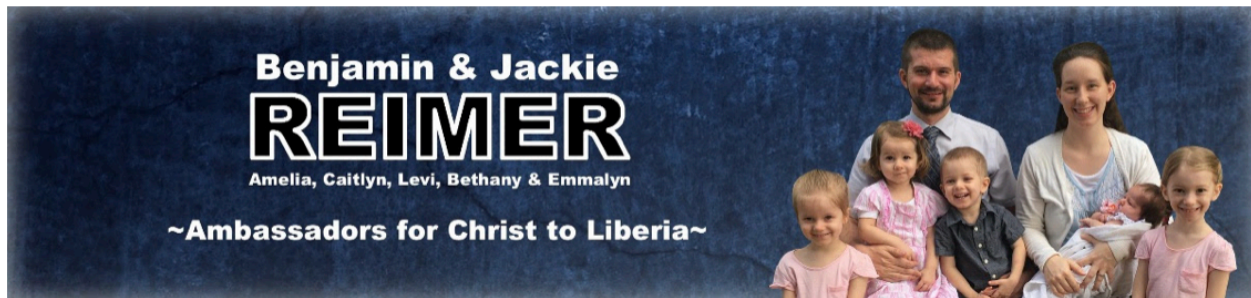
After giving them her history and symptoms, they said we should make our way to the ER. So I called a taxi and prepared to leave. While I was preparing, another person from the health line called and after talking to him briefly, he said I should forget about the taxi and call 911 immediately. I spoke to the dispatcher and he said he would send an ambulance to us. When the ambulance arrived, they took a while to come for her because of the suspected TB. They took a lot of precautions, and put all of our personal effects into plastic bags. We got Emmalyn inside and got her buckled in and hooked up to the sensors. Then we started making our way to the hospital. About halfway through Emmalyn started getting worse, so **the paramedic in the back signalled to the driver to "go hot" the rest of the way. (Lights and sirens)**

The next several hours were spent in the ER answering a ton of questions, holding Emmalyn for probes and tubes and needles, and then being wheeled to the paediatric ICU unit where she is still being treated. I spent the first two full days and nights with her there, and yesterday Jackie traded me off. The doctors, nurses and respiratory specialists that we have had so far have been so incredibly helpful and informative. Being in Montreal I was concerned about the language barrier, but most of them have been very fluently bi-lingual, and the others have been willing to potentially embarrass themselves (and Google English words) in trying to communicate in broken English what was going on. We are very thankful for them and for the top-notch facility with equipment and testing that is available to take the best possible care of our little girl. (The private room Emmalyn is currently in, would fit 10 beds from the paediatric ward in the hospital in Liberia she had been treated in before. I don't say this in any way to knock the ELWA hospital.

They do amazing work for the amount of resources they have. I just share that as a comparison.) I believe that God's hand has been in this from the beginning, including not being able to come when we originally planned, so that we would be in Montreal, near one of the best children's hospitals in Canada, at the exact time Emmalyn would get sick again. It has certainly not been an easy experience, but seeing what God has and is doing is a gentle hug from that One who gave His life for me.

If you have read this far, you are amazing. Thanks for caring and thanks for praying. We appreciate you more than you can imagine. Please continue to pray for God to be glorified, and for wisdom and guidance for the doctors, and for grace for our family. Thank you.

Yours for Liberia,
The Reimer Family



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