



TOP: Creative and inquisitive, Arwen loves to draw, sing, and read.  
RIGHT: Dr. Seth and Becca Mallay and their children came to Togo in 2017 through the Post-Residency Program. FACING PAGE: Arwen and her sister Elora handed out Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts in a Togo village.



# SHINING JESUS' LIGHT

BY ARWEN MALLAY

*Editor's Note: As the daughter of a medical missionary, Arwen Mallay watched her pediatrician dad care for children at Karolyn Kempton Memorial Christian Hospital in Togo. She wanted to be a "light for Jesus" to hurting children too. A little over a year after moving to Africa, Arwen was diagnosed with stage 4 neuroblastoma. With honesty and courage, the 11-year-old shares how God and her family are helping her battle this health crisis—as she brightly shines the light of Jesus for all to see.*

**M**y name is Arwen Mallay, and I'm 11 years old. My name comes from *The Lord of the Rings*, which is one of my parents' favorite books. My dad Seth (I call him "Papa") is a missionary doctor in Togo, West Africa. I have one younger brother and three younger sisters. Sometimes I don't like having such a big family, because I like to be alone, and that's hard when there are so many people around! But sometimes it's nice to have a lot of siblings. I always have someone to play games with. Some of my favorite memories are of us all playing together and making each other laugh.

When I'm not playing with my siblings or doing chores or schoolwork, I like to read fantasy adventure books or study music. I love to sing, and I am trying to learn the violin. My favorite hobby, though, is art. I love drawing,

coloring, painting, sculpting, and creating new things.

When I was 8 years old, my family lived in France so my parents could learn French, the language people speak in Togo. When we moved to Togo, I really liked that it was always warm there. Everyone lived close to each other because we lived on a mission compound with the other missionaries. Sometimes I missed my friends and family that lived in the United States and France, but I had good friends in Togo, too. Now that we are back in the U.S., I miss my Togo friends. I also miss the heat!

In the middle of our time in France, I started getting strange aches in my head and body. My parents thought I was tired and would tell me to drink water and rest. After we moved to Togo, it got worse and worse. Sometimes my legs,



*"I want to say thank you to all the people who are praying for me. Please pray for strength for me as I go through these hard treatments."*

arms, and back hurt a lot, too. After we had lived in Togo a year, my friend, Dr. Kristi, and Papa found a lump in my stomach area. We decided to go back to the U.S. for surgery to take out the tumor. The doctors here did more tests and found out it was cancer, and that it had spread to my bones. They said the treatment would take at least 1½ years.

I felt really disappointed, because I had thought we would only be in the U.S. a month and then go back to Togo. I had really wanted to stay in Togo and finish our time there as missionaries.

Then my parents told me that this cancer is very serious, and even with all the treatments, I still might not get better. I was very sad, and I could tell my parents were also very sad. But I believe in Jesus, and I know if I die, I will go to heaven. So I told them, "God will heal me either way. Either here, or in heaven, I will be healed."

I started chemotherapy in February. It made me lose my hair, but it has started to grow back now. It also gave me an upset stomach, but it's not too bad. I've had a couple of small surgeries and one

large surgery. The big surgery was to take the tumor out. They got most of it, but I still have cancer in other places. Since the surgery, I have had some chemotherapy with immunotherapy. The medicines I take make me grumpy sometimes, but I've been trying to have self-control. The hardest day of my treatment was the day after the big surgery. I didn't feel well, and I had a big tube in my throat and they kept having to check to see if I was breathing alright.

I've had some good days, though, too. Most of them were at the summer camp I went to in June. We played lots of fun games, talked about how God is the ultimate superhero, and watched our camp counselors dress up as funny characters and do silly things. It was really fun. I made lots of new friends.

Papa has helped me watch my attitude when I'm not feeling right. Mama and Papa both keep me eating. My siblings have been good about leaving me alone when I need rest. They also cheer me up by making me laugh. I was really glad Papa was able to stay with me after my surgery and help me go through all the terrible things that I didn't like at all. He helped me remember to be kind to the people working at the hospital even though I didn't want to be. I was glad he was there and I didn't have to be alone. Jesus helps me feel like I'm not alone, too. When Papa has to leave, sometimes it makes me sad, but then I remember God is still with me.

When I was in Togo, I wanted to share God's love with people, but I didn't know how. I prayed that God would use me to show Jesus to other people. I think He has answered my prayer, because now people can see Jesus when they see how I trust in Him even though I'm sick.

Lots of people have sent me gifts and cards. I feel very thankful and amazed by



Arwen is undergoing rigorous treatments after being diagnosed with neuroblastoma earlier this year. She says, "God is leading me through it. He is with me always, even through hard times and scary things."

how many people care about me when they don't even know me.

Our family reads the Bible and prays together every day. My favorite Bible passage is Psalm 23. It helps me remember that God is taking care of me. Even though I'm going through hard times like the valley of the shadow of death, God is leading me through it. He is with me always, even through hard times and scary things.

The next steps are another scan and then more immunotherapy and chemotherapy. I will keep getting that treatment every three weeks until most of the cancer is gone, and then there will be a stem cell transplant. I want to say thank you to all the people who are praying for me. Please pray for strength for me as I go through these hard treatments. Pray that God will help my parents be strong as they take care of me. Pray that I will shine Jesus' light at the hospital. ■



Arwen and her baby sister Irene receive a visit from Lady Darla, a therapy dog at the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital in Michigan.