



Holden Newsletter

We hope the following highlights will help you find and read what interests you.

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Dear Friend, Encourager, Partner-in-Mission,

Melancholy Good-Byes

Two months ago, we said “goodbye” to our house, our neighborhood, and our community in Stevens Point, WI and to our beloved son, Aric Jon. On July 14th, we celebrated Aric's life and his “going home” at our home church in Plover, WI. We have beautiful memories of that day as being both melancholy and joyous. Our son is “home”, we spent precious time with family, friends, and church family. We were overwhelmed with love and showered with hugs and expressions of comfort. The environment was beautiful, the message was powerful, and God was present. Who could ask for a better day? Our hearts are filled with overflowing gratitude to the many people who physically and financially helped with the details of all the arrangements as well as the boxful of cards and financial gifts given in love. **We thank God for each one of you!**

Two days ago, we said “goodbye” to our temporary home in Wautoma. The past 2 months have been more than challenging and without our Lord and your prayers, we never would have made it through it. What was physically, emotionally, and mentally accomplished during that time was not humanly possible. There were a few moments when we wondered if we were going to have to reschedule our flight for a later date. So many people have helped with encouraging prayers and phone calls, visits, cards, cash gifts, vehicles, help with packing, transportation to the airport, transferring our possessions to storage locations, etc. **It's actually hard to wrap our minds around the amount of things that have been done and the love that it took to get it all accomplished. Our eyes have welled-up with tears more than once, thinking about all of you and praying, thanking God for you! Jesus' love has shown itself through your words and actions.**

Good-Bye Church Family

Ten days ago, we said “goodbye” to our church family. Our home church, Woodlands Church in Plover, WI, held a commissioning for us. The pastor introduced us and asked us to share with the entire congregation (1,800 people at 4 services) about the ministry God has called us to do, then he and the congregation prayed over us. Afterward a luncheon was held with about 60 attendees during which we were able to tell “God-stories” and share some “mission-stories” and a time to answer questions. **The day also provided us with fellowship, laughter, hugs, 6 new recipients of our newsletter, over \$1,000 in financial gifts, one new monthly supporter and others who are praying about it! The support the Lord has raised for us is currently over 96%! Please pray about whether the Lord may be asking you to support us as we are in need of at least 3 more supporters at \$50/month.**

Good-Bye U.S.A.

Moving twice in two months is a challenge in itself, but the task of trying to pack to move overseas for 3 years is something quite indescribable. We had a bit of an idea of what would be entailed for we made a 6-month move to Ecuador in 2011 but packing for 3 years plus losing 3

weeks of preparation time due to the death of our son, put a bit of a “kink” in things. We managed to get over 50 plastic tubs packed, organized, labeled and mostly delivered to the appropriate locations. Approximately half will stay in the U.S. Indefinitely; the other half we would like to transport to Ecuador in the future. When we packed for 6 months in 2011, the airline allowed us a lot more luggage than they do now. In 2011 our “extra” and “overweight” bags didn’t cost near the price they would cost this time. So we went with only 4 checked bags with 2 of them overweight, which still costs plenty but there was no other choice. Even though we had left some of our possessions in Ecuador until we would return, we still needed everything that we brought this time. We actually really needed to bring more, but those items will have to wait until October. **We’re arranging for a mission group with E3 Partners to bring one or more of our bags with them when they arrive this fall. Please pray that this plan will go through without any “kinks”.**

We left Wautoma at 12:15 am Monday August 11th. Our flight left from Chicago at 7am. A father and son “tag-teamed” the driving responsibilities of getting us there during the all night drive. The mother of the family helped Sondra make a “yet-to-do” list, helped her pack the very last tubs, and committed to running all the “last minute” errands that we ran out of time to do. Without this family, we never would have made it in time. **We had been up since 5am, had been “running at full speed” all day and knew that prayers were preventing us from collapsing.**

The trip to Chicago, then Miami, then Quito was uneventful (just a few miles of driving in a downpour to Chicago, a bit of turbulence during both flights, and a ½ hour delay to Quito). All of our bags arrived (although covered in grease from the newly greased conveyor belt in the Quito airport) and nothing was damaged inside of them. The process of “hand-checking” the multiple bottles of natural medicines and homeopathics was the smoothest and quickest we’ve ever experienced and the staff were extremely helpful and pleasant (not typical of O’Hare TSA staff). **Again, we have our Lord and your prayers to thank for this outcome!**

Hello Ecuador

For sure, I thought I’d burst into tears when we settled in our seats on the plane at O’Hare. The feeling of knowing that “there is nothing left to do now” for a few hours was such an incredible relief. Typically, an international flight is considered by most to be stressful, but any stress that could come with this flight would be of no comparison to the last 2 months. But much to our surprise, only a few tears came; most likely because my body was too exhausted to even transmit that signal to my brain. **The tears never came.....until.....I saw the setting sun over the Andes mountains of Quito and the lights begin to turn on as we approached our landing.**

We are now “home”. It’s hard to describe it to most people but **this is our home because the Lord has so clearly put it on our hearts to feel at home here.** This first occurred for me on Feb 23, 2005, on the last day of a 8-day mission with Operation Christmas Child. Darrell’s occurred the summer of 2008 during the first of 30 days we would spend at the Houses of Happiness (now, the Henry Davis Foundation) orphanage. After those occurrences, **we never felt “at home” while residing anywhere else.**

We’ve made the trip to Quito 6 times in the past. But this time was our first at the big new airport recently built on the mountain-top outside of town. We weren’t sure what to expect, but the Lord blessed us with English-speaking people next to us in line (two from N. Carolina, and 1 from Ecuador). Later we were met at the airport entrance by staff from our language school and driven to our new home with an Ecuadorian family in Carcelen (a northern suburb of Quito). Once we arrived at our family’s home we were greeted with long embraces, tears, laughter, giggles, and nervous words of welcome. We were told that the family has hosted international students in the past for short-stays but we are their first couple and the first to stay for a long-stay. It is obvious that they are eager to please, extremely hospitable, and already consider us a part of their family. The mother of the house keeps calling me “mi hijita” (my little daughter) even though I am 4 yrs older than her.

Our family and their home is beyond our hopes and expectations! Our home is in a relatively safe neighborhood. The street is gated at each end and of course the small property has a locked gate. The house is 3-story, the rooms are small for the U.S. but large for Ecuador. The house was being remodeled by the father of the family who is now not living here. (We don't know any more at this time). The only rooms in the house that are completely remodeled are our bedroom and our bathroom! There are 4 bedrooms and 2 baths on the 3rd floor, and a shared living area and kitchen on 2nd floor (we will cook our own meals during the week and we've agreed with the family that on weekends we will share the kitchen and take turns cooking meals for each other). The oldest daughter and her 4 children live on the 1st floor. There is also a fireplace (very few homes in Ecuador have a heat source!)

The Family: Carmen (57) is the mother/grandmother of the house, Verito is the oldest daughter. Her children are: Alyson (15), Nicolas (10), Asaias (6), and Beli (2), the two youngest daughters are Stephanie (24), and Jennifer (21), and there is also a son (no info yet) who is married who lives in Southern Quito with his family.

For those of you who want to find us on Google, our physical address is Garcia Nobel O3-206 y Rodrigo Munoz, Carcelen. We are located north of the old airport strip which was located at the center of northern Quito. Look for the area named Carcelen, and then the street names Garcia Nobel and Rodrigo Munoz. Our house is located in the center of the block. The house has curved picture windows on the street-side.

Hello to HCJB/Reach Beyond

Dreams of sleeping in the first day faded quickly as we discovered that HCJB/RB had scheduled a pre-field interview and orientation at 11am the morning after our late evening arrival. Even though we haven't been here for 3 years and Quito is a city of 3 million people, Darrell's "built-in internal GPS" that the Lord has equipped his body with, took us right to their office from Carcelen. We were greeted by Denise (the director of missionary personnel under whom we will serve) and various other staff. We spent most of the day, including lunch, learning more about the mission facility, hospital, and clinic, the culture, upcoming events and meetings with staff, etc.

One of the fun things was having our photos taken and receiving our I.D. passes to the facility.

Entering the compound is quite a process; now we just greet the guards, show our I.D.s, and walk on through (or electronically swipe our pass at the back gate).

///A "SHAKE"-EY WELCOME!!! ///

The exciting but "not-so-fun" thing was experiencing an earthquake tremor while in Denise's office during our appointment! The small country of Ecuador (approx the size of Nevada) is home to more than 25 volcanoes as well as earthquakes as it is situated on "the ring-of-fire" (edge of a fault-line of the oceanic plate covering most of the Pacific Ocean). This is not an uncommon occurrence for Ecuadorians but, reportedly, was a significant one!

Darrell has experienced tremors a number of years ago when he drove semi-truck to California and back, but I had never experienced anything quite like this. I was looking at some paperwork that HCJB/RB gave us to read and felt the table rattling and jumping. At first, I honestly thought Darrell was just being himself and pulling a prank. But next next second, I realized that the walls and windows, floor, and items on surface tops were shaking and bouncing around. I immediately knew what was happening.

Other staff came running into Denise's office very concerned because she was just on the phone with someone when the person on the other end of the phone started shouting "The mountain is falling!" and the call was disconnected. Denise immediately began calling all missionary staff in the area checking on their status. So far, there are no reports of missionary staff being directly affected (injured, etc). Although, sadly 2 Ecuadorian persons are reported dead (including a 4 year old was was killed by large falling bags of rice, 8

injured, and 4 missing). The earthquakes was a 5.1 and the epicenter was located 14 miles north of where we presently live. Landslides and dust are the remaining issues. Darrell, stood-by, his usual calm self, smiling, with both of us knowing with even more assurance that the Lord has sent Darrell here for this reason .Darrell's assignment with HCJB/RB is designing and writing plans and training staff for protecting missionary staff during such occurrences as this!

News Report :“Quito Earthquake”

Please click on the attachment at the bottom of your email for a news report and photos. Please pray for the families who are affected. We have experienced 2 more tremors last evening and one more this afternoon just a few hours ago. The tremors have been significant and people are nervous. The Lord has given Darrell and I an unexplainable peace about the situation, although we did decide to not place our family photos on the window ledge above our bed as we had planned because more tremors are anticipated.

Other Prayer Requests

Either Darrell and I “picked something up” in transit to Quito or the altitude has affected us this time around. Darrell's stomach and head were in bad shaped yesterday but resolved with some natural medicines by the end of the day. I, had a bad headache when I woke up the first morning but after drinking a lot of water and taking lots of Vitamin C it too, resolved itself by the end of the day. The stomach is still squeez-y. Please pray for total resolution of the issue. Thank you for your prayers for sleep; we've been sleeping VERY well since leaving Wisconsin!



Darrell and Sondra Holden

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