



Dear friends,

It's getting much too late in the year to be sending a newsletter entitled "Summer," so I'm combining Summer and Fall this year. My apologies for the delay on this installment. Since I last shared news with you, it seems like a year's worth of activity has passed, rather than the 4 or so months that have passed in reality.

My three months in the States this summer were full of joy and sharing and catching up and a lot of activity: 17 congregations, dozens of meals with friends and supporters, 10 states, 12 flights, 2 14,000-foot mountains, 2 weeks of orientation in St. Louis, 2 weeks of masters coursework in Haiti, and I'm guessing close to 8,000 miles behind the wheel.

I was blessed with the opportunity to meet many new friends this summer, especially in Iowa, Nebraska, and Minnesota, many of whom I'm writing to now for the first time. It's my hope that it will be the first of many. I'm so thankful that God has opened up this pathway of support and Christian love, not only with those of you I'm writing to for the first time, but for those of you who I've been writing to now for four years strong. (!) Thank you for welcoming me into your homes, preparing a meal, letting me do laundry, taking the time for a chat over a coffee or beer, and just generally making me feel welcomed and cared for. You are salt and light. You are a reflection of Grace. Thank you.

To cap off the summer, God made it possible for me to be with the majority of my large immediate family in California for the baptism of my sister and brother-in-law's baby boy, Ezekiel ("Zeke"). My girlfriend Coco also made the trip to be with my family and I for this last hurrah before we flew back home to Shanghai the first week of September. It was such an awesome time for them to meet and enjoy each other for the first time. God is good.

Upon returning to Shanghai, I was quickly given several reminders that sometimes life is harder than we plan for. And also: that in these setbacks, God continues to be faithful.

The first reminder: In June, I excitedly wrote to you that the principal and teachers at our partner school in the outskirts of Shanghai were showing strong support for expanding Concordia Leadership Academy (CLA), our leadership and life skills training program for teachers and students. In July, we sent four of this school's teachers to Guangzhou in southern China to join our annual CLA training session. Things were looking great for the coming school year.

In late August, we were informed that the current principal had been replaced with a new principal, Mr. Gu. Sadly, at our meeting with him in mid-September Mr. Gu informed us that the school would no longer be able to partner with us in any way, due to strong pressure from his superiors to improve his school's test results. Conventional Chinese educational thought on this matter says that extra-curricular activities such as CWF's enrichment programs do not improve students' test results. This was tough for my colleague Chen Ming and me, but it was also a great learning experience, and I think it will serve to make us more thoughtful in our strategy and planning. We are now evaluating our options and meeting with several potential partners as we seek to continue developing the CLA program with middle school teachers and students in Shanghai. Please join us in asking for God's guidance in this next stage.

In late September, Chen Ming and I led a service team of 25 students and teachers from Concordia International School Shanghai (CISS) for their annual Interim week. Together, we traveled to tiny Tangzishan in China's rural southwestern province of Yunnan province, a Miao (same as Hmong) minority group village. There, we worked with the local people to install their village's new drinking water system, donated by CISS and facilitated by CWF. The people of Tangzishan are mostly Christian; it was really a joy to share life with our brothers and sisters in this village for a few days.

Unfortunately though, Tangzishan was the site of my second big reminder that life is harder than we plan for: Chen Ming came down with extreme abdominal pain that ended up being gall stones, so the trip was full of trips back and forth to the hospital in the closest town. Chen Ming had to undergo surgery to remove his gall bladder in his hometown the next week. We're very thankful that he's recovered and back in Shanghai now.

Last week, I traveled to our office in Phnom Penh, Cambodia for the first time to get to know our staff there and learn more detail about CWF programs there. Cambodia is a special country with much pain in the recent past, but great hope for the future. I'm looking forward to being more involved in our work there in the next few years.

From Phnom Penh, I headed here to Phuket, Thailand to join our entire LCMS Asia Pacific team, as we are being blessed with a wonderful family retreat facilitated by Grace Place and made possible by a grant from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML). We're so thankful for a few days to slow down to reconnect with each other and our Father. It is my joy to partner with you for His glory in Asia.

感谢, Josh