

Dave and Mary Decker Update-JANUARY 2012

Dear family and friends,

Greetings from wintery Charlotte! We are finding it very different from wintery Minnesota! No snow, and the cold days are soon relieved by warm and sunny days. But there definitely ARE cold days! As we continue in our transition to Charlotte, the weather is only one of many changes impacting our lives. Over the Advent season, I became especially aware that I'm not sure where "home" really is! We are in the United States, but working in SIM's USA office based in Charlotte--not "home" in Minnesota. We are making new friends, we have found a great church offering fellowship and care, and we are appreciating and enjoying our house. Yet, we are away from extended family, parents, siblings, nieces and nephews-- and our sending church. We are in different states than our sons. AND we are away from our friends and colleagues in West Africa. We are thankful to believe that God is with us, and that HE is the one who has placed us in this location for this time. Psalm 121 reminds us that "the Lord will keep your going out and your coming in, from this time forth and forevermore" -- and that comforts me when I struggle with feelings of not knowing where HOME really is.

We are thankful for your prayers and encouragement as we continue in our service with SIM. Dave's trip to Korea went well, and you can read a bit about his trip and see some of his pictures [here](#). One special blessing that he had not anticipated was the [opportunity](#) to get together with Sarah H. and her family. Sarah is the daughter of David and Faith Jaeger, the missionaries from Bethlehem Baptist Church who were instrumental in connecting us with SIM and West Africa. We have known Sarah since she was one year old, and have spent time with her family in Liberia, and Dave has visited them at their home in Guinea as well over the years. So fun to find God knitting lives together across many years and over many countries and even continents!

We enjoyed a full house over Christmas! Dave and I took vacation time from the office, and loved having all our kids home! We were all together for five days, and had about 10 days total with Danny, Leah and Alexis, and with Joey. It was fun to have Jacob home a bit longer during his break from Wheaton College, as he arrived before the others and stayed almost a week after the others had returned to their homes. As a family we enjoyed playing games, eating great meals, worship time on Christmas Eve at Eternal church, and a visit to the festival of Christmas lights at the Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden. We enjoyed many evening visits with six-year-old Alexis to a house in our neighborhood with an amazing display of Christmas lights and music while the others washed dishes at home!

We have been getting back into work at SIM, and have enjoyed meeting new candidates who have come to investigate becoming a part of SIM. I'm working with our member care director three days per week now, and though it's a bit exhausting, I'm feeling very privileged to work with the member care staff at SIM USA as we consider how best to equip and support missionaries serving in many difficult settings. I'll write more about this in another update since this one is getting long already! Please pray for me as I attend a conference in early February with the Child Safety and Protection Network, to learn more about this important and sensitive area of missionary care.

Please keep Joey (our second son, 24 years old) in your prayers. He has moved from Corpus Christi, TX back to Florida, and is beginning Advanced Flight Training with the Navy in his chosen aircraft: helicopters. We are excited for him, and very aware of his need for God's protection as he serves.

With thanks to God for your role in our lives,

Mary

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