

April 8, 2013

Dear Praying Friends,

Since we last wrote to you in November, we have concluded our furlough ministries and returned to our work in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Our entire ten-month furlough was one long, continuous whirlwind of travel. However, it provided us with many opportunities to visit most of our immediate and extended families (including our three children) and to report in all of our supporting churches. Our Honda Odyssey minivan was a great blessing by giving us many safe and comfortable rides, while we put more than 30,000 miles on the odometer. Calvary Baptist Church of Midland, Michigan provided a wonderful home for our use; we wish that we had been able to enjoy it more!

During January, I (Matt) attended a doctoral course at Bob Jones University on the Theology and Practice of Prayer. This required two months of reading and preparation before class and another several months afterward to write the assigned papers. Although this has added extra stress to an already busy schedule, the content and impact of the course was well worth the effort that it demanded. It has helped to meet a felt need in my personal prayer life. I have experienced observable improvement in both my theological understanding of prayer and in my actual practice of praying. The knowledge, experience, and blessings, which I have received through this course, are now overflowing into my family, pastoral, and preaching ministries.



We returned to Greenville (SC) in late February to participate in the mission conference at Morningside Baptist Church and to make our departure for the field on February 26. We enjoyed the visit with our three children, but we did not enjoy saying goodbye to them! It was our first time to return to Taiwan without any of our children being with us. Since Rose was able to get her Michigan driver's license over Christmas break, we decided to leave our van with the kids at school, rather than trying to sell it. They are all doing well with their college and work responsibilities. All three of them plan to stay on campus and work through the summer.

It was also hard to leave our parents. Marla's Mom is still in recovery from a second back surgery on December 17. Progress in her recovery has been slow. Marla's sister is caring for her, but we wish that we could also be nearby to help provide support. Marla and I made a brief trip to California in early February to see Matt's parents one last time before we left. At age 93, Dad's Alzheimer's disease is slowly progressing; Mom does a good job of caring for him, but it is difficult for her without the support of family in the area. We thank the Lord for a caring Christian couple nearby, who looks in on them and assists them when needed.

Cornerstone Baptist Church remained stable during our absence. A major factor in the preservation of the work here was the help we received from three different couples or singles: Yoh Shirato from Guam, Grace and Henry Tsuei of Greenville, SC, and Dave and Shirley Marsteller with Baptist World Mission. Each of these invested one or two months of their time to minister to the needs of congregation. Other local co-workers also preached or provided support in other ways. We are grateful to the Lord for the godly influence that all of these individuals have had upon the lives of believers, and for their outreach to unbelievers.

After being "out of the saddle" for ten months, there was a lot of information for us to process and many scattered threads to regather when we arrived, but our re-entry has gone smoothly. There were several professions of faith, baptisms, and believers added to the congregation while we were in the U.S. Since our return, we have had two more baptisms, and there are two more scheduled for next week. Last week we had a very meaningful Easter service, which included a mini-cantata by the choir.



Some important church matters were placed on hold until our return, but have now been moved back to the front burner. One is the legal organization and registration of our church with the government. This will allow us to hold bank accounts and purchase property in the church name. We plan to submit our proposal to the government soon. Another item is our need for a permanent or semi-permanent building location. Our present landlord is indicating that he will probably raise our lease again when it comes due next March, which may require us to move. At present, it does not seem likely that we will be able to afford purchasing a property big enough for our church's needs. Speculative real estate investment in our area is making it difficult to find anything in our price range to either purchase or lease. Please pray with us as we look for creative ways to face this looming emergency. Finally, we felt it necessary to stop our children's church ministry until we can reorganize and restart it on a more stable foundation. Pray that we will be able to recruit and train a qualified, committed leader to guide this ministry.

Thank you for your faithful prayers for Marla and I here, for our children away in college, and for the ministry of Cornerstone Baptist Church. "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf." 2 Corinthians 1:11.

In Christ,

The Hannas
(Matt, Marla, Luke, Rose, and Beth)