



August 26, 2017

Dear Praying Friends,

Since our last prayer letter, we have torn off three more sheets from the 2017 calendar. These three months have been extremely full with travel, ministry, and important family events. Here is an outline summary of our travel during this period, followed by a detailed report:

- May 14 - June 29—Taiwan (Cornerstone Baptist Church)
- (May 25 - June 5)—Australia /New Zealand BMM visit (5 missionaries couples)
- (June 8-10)—Creative Access nation BMM visit (2 couples and a single missionary)
- June 29-August 15—Ohio; Kentucky; South Carolina; Vermont; and New Hampshire.
- August 17-25—Indonesia BMM survey trip

**TAIWAN MINISTRY.** During our stay in Taiwan, Marla and I ministered at Cornerstone Baptist Church. Our co-workers, Josh and Rachel Stewart took a much-needed break, while we minded the shop. Matt was involved in preaching, teaching, counselling, and youth ministry, while Marla helped with the counselling, as well as some of the church music.

Our field visits with BMM missionaries in Australia and New Zealand were informative and productive; we were able to develop new relationships and strengthen old ones. It was almost as far for us to fly to New Zealand from Taiwan as it would have been from the U.S.A. The airlines lost both pieces of our luggage during our stay in Invercargill, NZ and didn't return them to us until just before our departure. This required us to visit the "missionary closet" to borrow Sunday clothes. Participating in the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary service of Tay Street Baptist church turned out to be one of the highlights of our trip. Art and Deb Brammer and Jacob and Jamie Sechrest are partnering together in that work. We then moved on to visit with Joel and Beverly Shoaf in Napier, on New Zealand's north island. They are in the process of planting Bay Baptist Church. Next, we visited with Robert and Jackie Ernst and Mark and Sara Pitts in Melbourne, Australia. The Ernsts are establishing Cornerstone Baptist Church and the Pitts are planting Grace Baptist Church. In all of these places, we enjoyed warm fellowship and gained new understanding and appreciation for the work being performed by these faithful servants. Finally, after a few days back in Taiwan we travelled for a very brief visit to a Creative Access nation to confer with our team there. This trip demonstrated that in the future it will be very convenient and inexpensive for us to make short visits from Taiwan to almost anywhere in South-East Asia as the need arises.



**USA TRAVELS.** Our stay in Taiwan was brief—only about 6 weeks. In late June, we returned to the US to finish out the second half of our furlough. We have settled in the Cleveland, OH area, which is close to our home office and about halfway between our Michigan and Pennsylvania churches. We attended the BMM annual conference in mid-July, which provided opportunity to connect with many more of our Asia-Pacific missionaries who had gathered for that event.

God provided for our needs and our children's needs in some amazing ways during the month of July. God has been testing us all to see whether we are willing to follow him and trust him to provide our

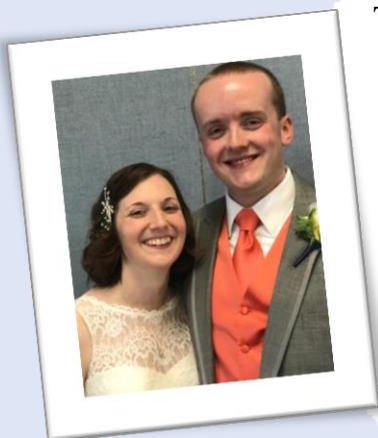


basic needs. It was almost the last minute before the Lord provided suitable housing for Marla and I in Cleveland. We searched and prayed for months ahead of our planned arrival date, but nothing materialized. We worried and bit our nails; then just before our departure from Taiwan, the Lord provided exactly what we needed. It was a lesson that even when the future seems to be a blank wall, God is sufficient and God is faithful.

God reinforced this lesson when we drove our daughter, Beth, to Columbia SC for her new study and work opportunity. We had exhausted our resources in trying to search out safe and affordable housing for her; we had also been unsuccessful in finding her a good used vehicle, which was necessary for her to live and work there independently. We left for the long drive down from Cleveland, OH to Columbia, SC with only the conviction that we were moving her where God had plainly directed her to go. We stopped in Greenville, SC for two days to pick up some things we had stored there last May; through a series of unscripted circumstances, God directed us to a reliable used car at an affordable price and the purchase was quickly completed. We drove on to Columbia and within two days made contacts that met Beth's need for housing. While we never want to become presumptuous, we are learning to relax a little as we follow the path God sets for us, without knowing all the details in advance. With all the changes that our new mission responsibilities are bringing into our lives, it is important that we learn this lesson sooner rather than later.

*Nothing before, Nothing behind;  
The steps of faith  
Fall on the seeming void, and find  
The Rock beneath.*

(John Greenleaf Whittier)



The biggest recent event in our lives was the marriage of our daughter, Rose, to Mike Elmore in Vergennes, VT on August 4. God met our family's needs in this event through the graciousness of God's people there. Since this was our first time ever to set foot in New England, we were greatly limited in our ability to manage many of the things traditionally provided by the bride's family. The wedding was performed in Mike's home church, which helped unstintingly with the planning, decorating, serving, and myriad other logistical arrangements, which our family had only limited ability to do. The ceremony and the bride were beautiful. We thank the Lord for providing a godly husband for our daughter. They are happily settling into their new life together there.

**INDONESIA TRIP.** On August 17 Matt travelled with one of our BMM appointees and his pastor to Indonesia to survey the field, in anticipation of their family's future arrival there as missionaries. Indonesia is a majority Muslim nation (85%). We needed to determine if it was truly feasible for a missionary family to live there safely, to explore the living conditions in their target city, and to make a recommendation based on the result of our survey.

It was a truly moving experience to stand atop the 300-foot high minaret of the Al Akbar Mosque in Surabaya and see the crowded city spread as far as the eye could see below us. The need is truly great! On Sunday, we attended a small house church located in a narrow back street of the city. The believers present sang enthusiastically; a national brother preached; and neighborhood children peeked in curiously at the door.



We quickly discovered that the local society is very friendly and open. Officially, the government recognizes five different religions, of which Christianity is one. The local people pride themselves on their religious tolerance. While other areas of Indonesia are more strictly Muslim and less tolerant, Surabaya seems to have an open door for ministry. However, *open* does not mean *easy*. Individuals hold their own traditional religious beliefs firmly and living conditions are poor by Western standards. Please pray for this missionary family as they raise support and strategize for their future ministry there.



On Monday and Tuesday of our stay in Surabaya, we engaged a local Muslim tour guide, named Denney. Well educated, articulate, and ambitious, he considered himself to be an enlightened and tolerant representative of his nation. The Lord opened a door for me to witness to him on our last evening together. He listened and interacted thoughtfully during our half-hour conversation, but without any seeming conviction. Pray that the Lord causes him to think about the gospel truths that were shared with him.



**IN OUR ABSENCE.** We are receiving good reports from the Stewarts as they carry on in ministry at Cornerstone Baptist Church, Kaohsiung. In July, they participated in the Taiwan Baptist Youth Camp in Central Taiwan, in partnership with other Taiwan missionaries and churches. A good group of teens from our congregation attended, as well as some adult workers. In August, they conducted VBS, which attracted many children from the community. There was a full house for the closing ceremony, which drew in some of the parents also. The gospel continues to go out through these and other regularly scheduled ministries. Please pray for the continued growth and maturity of the congregation

as they serve together under Josh and Rachel Stewart's leadership. Pray especially for God to raise up a national pastor for that work.

Please pray for Marla and I as we travel in northern states to report to supporting churches during the fall months. Pray also for grace and wisdom as we interact by phone, email, and video with missionaries under our care. Marla and I also plan to make another overseas trip together around Thanksgiving, when we will be visiting missionaries in Myanmar and Assam, India. Lord willing, we will return to Taiwan on December 28. Thank you for partnering with us as we minister in Taiwan, the USA, and the regions beyond.

In Christ,

Matt & Marla Hanna