

December 2013

One of the Christmas traditions that I cherish from my childhood is celebrating advent with the lighting of the candles on an advent wreath. Don and I have continued this tradition with our boys. On each Sunday in the Advent season, the focus is on a different facet of the Christmas story. The first week reflects on hope and the prophecies foretelling the birth of Christ. Week two is the Bethlehem candle, or candle of love. The shepherds received the news of Christ's birth with great joy, which is the focus of the third week of Advent. The last candle points to the angels and the peace that Christ's birth brings. The final candle, lit on Christmas Eve, is for the Christ Child, as we remember his birth so long ago and how it turned the entire world upside down.

We are privileged to help bring **hope** to the area of the Philippines devastated by the typhoon that ravaged the country back in November. Don has been back in the Philippines for most of December, leading a team of men who are helping to rebuild a church in the city of Tacloban. Praise God with us for the many who have given to help in the relief effort. God has multiplied your gifts and Don was able to bring over \$25,000 with him for the people there.

This year of home assignment has been filled with many times of **love** and laughter with family and friends. It has been wonderful to have David close enough that he can take the train out from Chicago and spend a day or weekend with us. We have delighted in getting to know Josie, his girlfriend, as well as meeting many of his other classmates and friends at Moody Bible Institute. We are grateful to be close enough to Taylor University for all of us to attend Family Weekend this fall. It was great to see Austin flourishing in his first year of college there. Caleb is a junior at Wheaton North, and we've enjoyed watching him play soccer as well as sing in the chamber choir. It's quiet at home with just Caleb around, but we cherish the time we have together, knowing it won't be long before he, too, is off to college.

Our hearts are filled with **joy** as we thank God for His wonderful provision for our every need. We are so grateful for the Missionary Furlough Homes, for a house to live in and the community of other missionaries. We are blessed to be part of a caring church family. It is a joy to worship together, to share life together once again.

In the midst of being busy with Don's trip to the Philippines and multiple school schedules, we have still found times of **peace** and rest and refreshment, time with our extended families and friends, and time to read and think and pray.

As we pause this Advent season to reflect on Christ's coming as a baby over 2000 years ago and look forward to His coming again in power and glory, our hearts are filled with gratitude for the gift of grace which brings hope, love, joy, and peace into our lives. Our prayer is that you too will find your heart overflowing this Christmas.

Don and Kristen MacKay, David, Austin and Caleb

*Blessings!
Don & Kristen*