

## SEASON´S GREETINGS FROM IRANDUBA

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We write with hearts full of thanksgiving - especially as we reflect on the "unspeakable" Gift from God to the world. No mere spoken words adequately describe its worth. May you experience blessing and renewal in this joyous season.

Lately we have had some little troubles and some great joys. Thank you for the outpouring of prayer for us in our discouragement and whining (blush). But WOW! Suddenly, there were more planning meetings in one month than had taken place in one year! Alceris has come alive and to the fore once again. He has rented the house we are in Iranduba and seems excited. Wes has enjoyed some great personal talks with him and is much encouraged. THANK YOU, SWEET FAMILY!

God also brought encouragement to me (Trudy) through a *Women of the Harvest* Conference (sponsored by SAM and a dear friend in North Carolina). I was reminded that ministry is not what should identify us. Roles can change, but our identity as *God's child* never changes. Teaching in a classroom is not more important than living out His life in this neighborhood if this is where He has placed us for now. He is the joy-giver - not the ministry. Whew! I've been smiling ever since.

Well, I did have a teensy black thought since then - but only for a few minutes. Leaving for evening church three weeks ago, we saw a young man slouching outside definitely eyeing us as we left. So we prayed, "Lord, please watch over our house as we go to Your house." When we got home, we found the metal grating on the back window had been forced apart and broken. Both laptops and our modem were gone as well as credit cards, money, my cell phone and a few other minor items. A nasty little thought popped up: "Oh! So God must have gone to church with us!" However, once recovered from the shock, we realized God had placed limits on the thieves.

Money set aside for rent and utility bills was still in the front of our dresser drawer, intact with all our documents. And though I lost some important files, there was a little poetic justice done since my computer was pretty ancient. Five years ago my nephew declared it was more fascinating watching paint dry than waiting on my computer! I imagine somebody had a temper tantrum when he realized the worth of the "hot goods" he had purchased. Wes' office probably scared them since it was a chaotic jumble of tools and papers being packed for our move; they left it as they found it! And now, we are back in business as usual with a new modem and a desk-top from Aimee and Andrew when they left for home leave. PTL!

Sadly, the culprits had neighborhood connections. Yet almost immediately, God impressed us that this little trial was a privilege because it was an opportunity to impact our "hood" in a new way. Sure enough, the parents of a girl involved (and since gone missing) approached us shame-faced and broken; we prayed with them, assured them of our forgiveness, and shared with them that the only hope for us sinners is Jesus. The rest of the neighborhood rallied around with hugs and gifts of bananas and mangoes. Even the well-known resident thieves next door (who stole a canvas and some tools from us when we first came) were upset. Wes had on occasion run a few errands for them in the Toyota. They became, so as to speak, "thick as thieves"! *So they indignantly censored the gall and outrage of someone stealing from a friendly neighbor!*

Because of the above, Wes had to take time out to weld some iron bars on the windows to make the house more secure for Alceris when he moves in. So our new moving date is on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December. Though a Christmas pageant was not possible here this year, children in the other village are excitedly practicing for a huge production there. Last year a whole family came to the Lord because of the pageant! Here at home, we will have a "birthday party for Jesus" on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

One more thing: I am now the neighborhood banker - *bankress?* Anyway, I'm the moneybags. One of the kids got the idea of bringing the change he earned to me to keep safe! The idea caught on, and now there are several named childproof vitamin bottles with change in them in a row on top of my fridge. I have strict instructions to dispense the money to OWNERS ONLY - NOT to siblings or friends! (I have new respect for banking hours since most of the kids deposit fifty cents, then pop back two hours later to withdraw it so the bank has to be open all day!) But what a sacred privilege to have their trust. We have great chats, often with a chance to pray; now we are asking God for ideas on how to encourage them to study and work so they can leave the squalid, seamy life that entrenches them at the present.

This has been a lengthy update. THANK YOU for your "unspeakable" ministry on our behalf. We could not be here without your participation. An unidentified quote I came across clarifies our responsibility: "A long obedience in the same direction". So the following are some specific prayer requests as we seek to obey God:

- 1.) PRAY for our precious "gang" of neighborhood children. We so hope some of them will give their hearts to Jesus this Christmas. The mothers are invited as well, so they will also have the opportunity to choose. The contact with this

group will be continued through a Bible Club at our new location. The moms have expressed a new desire to get together for Bible study. PTL!!

- 2.) PRAY for Alceris and the new school as plans continue to unfold. All involved need wisdom and special spiritual discernment for an efficient, contextualized and Christ-centered curriculum to be developed.
- 3.) PRAY for us as we move to a rough new neighborhood. We have been warned that the area is rife with thieves and drug users. Though there are a few sturdy homes, a majority of the people live on the lowest economic echelon. We want to be lights. How would Jesus handle this? Please pray that we would be careful to follow His example.

We thank God for each and every one of you.

Yours because one day God personally stepped into our squalor with love,

Wes and Trudy Seng