

December 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On September 27th we arrived in Richmond to the wonderful welcome of our family. Since then we have been reporting to our supporting churches, visiting family, and even been presenting our ministry in some new churches. Our time has been extremely busy and our first months have been flying by. The children have been experiencing so many new things like seeing squirrels for the first time (fascinating). They “discovered” that many houses in America have rugs that go from one wall all the way to the other. They are making “discoveries” every day. We have all been “adapting” to the “new” culture and germs. I believe we have caught almost every cold and virus that we have come in contact with.

At this time of year we are all thinking about family, planning and participating in Christmas programs and activities, and generally running with the busyness of this hectic time. We have anticipated with joy and excitement being able to be “home” for Christmas, and although we certainly feel like the “temperature” and “experiences” of this Christmas season will be familiar and like “home”, deep in our hearts there is an aching that we are not at home. Many pastors have asked in our travels, “How does it feel to be home?” Every time I have to explain that we are back, but not home, for our home is in Brazil. God called us to Brazil. He put a love in our hearts for the people there that has grown exponentially and we are looking forward to getting back. I wait anxiously for the next chance to call Daniel and ask how things are going. I thrilled to hear the news of Fabricio and Elaine trusting Christ as Savior. I praised the Lord over knowing that our little congregation has begun supporting five missionaries. My heart ached as I counseled Daniel on how to deal with a difficult situation. God is working back at home, and we cannot be there, but we will get back. For now we have a ministry here to fulfill reporting, encouraging churches to continue their faithfulness, raising some new support.

This has caused me to be reminded about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He left the glory, adoration, and position reserved for Himself in heaven to come to earth and be like us. He chose to leave his “home” so that we could someday have a home. He made himself at “home” here on earth while perhaps His heart ached and longed to be returned to the communion He had in heaven with the Father. Yet He did it for us. He lived it for us. He endured the rejection, mocking, and scourging for us. He died for us. He rose for us. He did it all because we could do none of it. None of us should feel at “home” here because if we know Christ, this is not our home. Christ be praised!

Many of you were instrumental in our arriving back “home”. Several churches and individuals made great sacrificial gifts to help our family arrive here in the states and to all of you we say, “Thank you!” We are grateful for the prayers of you all as we continue our furlough. Daniel has asked me to thank you all for praying for him as he leads the congregation in Brazil. Cynthia is thankful that so many have expressed gratitude for her “reflections” in our newsletters. Morgan, Aydan, Daniella and Abigail have been overjoyed by the attention and love that they have received. Our furlough so far has not been relaxing, but it has been refreshing. We do ask that you all continue to pray. Pray for Daniel and the congregation in our absence. There is much hard work to be done and many souls to be saved. Pray for our travels as we visit both supporting churches and new churches. Pray that the Lord provides the additional support that we need as well as the temporary support for Daniel. Pray for good health for our family. God bless each of you and your churches and families with a very merry Christmas!

In Christ,  
Joel Dickens  
for Cynthia and  
all the little Dickens