

Giving Thanks at Christmas

Christmas letter from Don and Carmen Bryant

December 19, 2010

I'M THANKFUL FOR my fellow staff members and the many Associates and other volunteers that partner together in FOCUS. Every December, on the last Friday of fall term, Greater Portland Bible Church opens its doors to host our annual Christmas banquet. On December 10, with holiday decorations around the room and covering the dinner tables, 293 students, Associates, and other volunteers were given a taste of an American Christmas dinner, complete with turkey and pumpkin pie—and some vegetarian options in deference to those from other religions with dietary restrictions. Following the dinner, students performed a drama of the Nativity, where a Saudi Arabian playing Herod stole the show. Colleague Jonathan Guest explained the story of Christmas in a way that



Japanese student joins in the singing of "Silent Night"

would be both understandable and meaningful to students from other cultures. If you've ever wondered how one adapts the language of the story in such situations, click on this link below to see Jonathan's homily:

<http://www.dropshots.com/GuestFamilyFun#date/2010-12-10/20:48:18>

Following our traditional singing of "The Twelve Days of Christmas," the Gospel choir presented several numbers, one of which featured a Saudi Arabian singing praises to God in both English and Spanish. We ended the evening with a tradition found in many churches: the singing of "Silent Night" by candlelight.



I'M THANKFUL FOR the many young women who have been part of my life during my years in FOCUS. Sherley, a Chinese Indonesian, came to Portland a few years ago from Corvallis, where she had been helping a Campus Ambassadors colleague, Beth Arends, in international student ministry at Oregon State. Sherley watched God

provide her finances in miraculous ways to get her through Multnomah Seminary and a summer working with Muslim refugees in Sweden. As a FOCUS Associate, she spent many hours with David, a Swedish Multnomah student and FOCUS Associate, in planning and teaching ESL to international students.¹ They were the primary ones to organize weekly prayer meetings of Multnomah students connected with FOCUS. David and Sherley were married this September. David finished his seminary degree earlier this month, and yesterday they left for their new home in Sweden, where they will be working with Operation Mobilization.



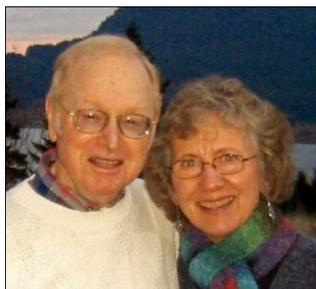
Abby and Baby Jane

I'M THANKFUL FOR Abby and her husband, Vance. I first met Abby when she showed up for a FOCUS Kick-Off, an event in September when potential Associates check us out as a Student Ministry for Multnomah requirements. Abby was 18 and knew exactly what she wanted. When she found out that I had been a Bible translator, she walked up to me and said, "I want you to be my mentor." She later met Vance at an SIL (Wycliffe) summer training session. They now serve together in Cameroon. Here Abby soothes Baby Jane while listening to language recordings.



I'M THANKFUL FOR family and friends who have served in the armed forces and other government agencies to protect and fight for our nation. In November, my mother's youngest brother, a Navy veteran of World War II, was laid to rest in Willamette National Cemetery in Portland. He was almost totally deaf in his last years, but he spent hours reading the Bible. Born on a ranch and raised as a cowboy, he loved cowboy music. It was in his honor that the family played "Ghost Riders in the Sky" at the funeral following the military honors.

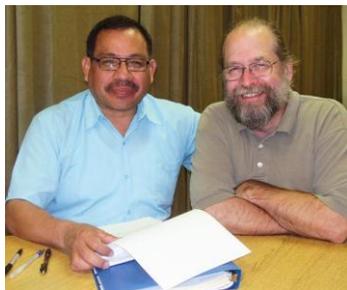
Other family members still serve in uniform. Our son Jim is in his 23rd year with the United States Coast Guard, working out of the headquarters in Washington, D.C. Son-in-law David served a year in Iraq with the U.S. Army and works now as a civilian employee in the Army hospital at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, heading up the psychology department in the Army hospital. Our other son-in-law Steve wears his uniform for the State of Oregon, working for the State Police and on the SWAT team.



I'M THANKFUL FOR new Campus Ambassadors teammates appointed recently to work among international students in Vancouver, WA. Marvin and Meredith Flaming are taking some training with FOCUS in Portland but will reach out to students at Clark Community College across the Columbia River. We first heard of Marvin 40 years ago when he worked as part of the team building Bethesda Hospital in Serukam, Indonesia. Now retired from his work as a mechanical engineer, he returned to Bethesda this spring to help with some repairs

¹ ESL=English as a Second Language

and upgrades. Challenged when he got back to continue to participate in missions, he contacted me about getting involved with international students in the Vancouver area. I'll be overseeing their work as they get started.



I'M THANKFUL FOR new colleagues in our missions graduate program. Dr. Máximo Hurtado (L) from Lima, Peru was in charge of our seminar there in February and March. He and I are scheduled to co-write one of the sections for our online learning program. Pray for us in this endeavor. Dr. Rick Buddemeier (R) from CrossWorld Mission has joined us as faculty member.

PRAYER ITEMS

1. For many years FOCUS has had a small office in the international student building on the Portland State campus, thanks to the graciousness of PSU staff, in appreciation of the services we provide for international students. Here we meet students and do a lot of our routine record keeping. Due to a crunch on space, however, that will likely end in July. Pray that they can find other accommodations for us, perhaps in another building close by. Having a presence on campus is highly beneficial for our work.
2. Don will have another surgery next week, December 27, to raise his eyebrows—not as “raising eyebrows in surprise” but as in getting his eyelids up high enough that they won't interfere with his vision. We are thankful that he has healed well from both of his cataract surgeries and has much improved eyesight.
3. Carmen, after being diagnosed with more food intolerances, has had to adjust to a diet with no gluten (wheat, rye, or barley), dairy, egg, or soy—on top of diabetes and other allergies. The results have been worth it, though, and she is feeling much better than she has in a long time. Pray that she will find a satisfactory routine that will allow her to travel as necessary.
4. Pray for our graduate center. We continue to have technological challenges as well as financial ones.
5. Pray that we will begin the year 2011 in the Holy Spirit's power, equipped for the work God has laid out for us.

Contact information

Carmen Bryant serves under Missions Door as a Campus Ministry Specialist and is seconded to FOCUS and Institute for International Christian Communication. She and Don served from 1969-1997 with CBInternational in Indonesia and the Philippines. They began working with international students in 1996. Don is now retired. Donations for Carmen's work should be sent to Missions Door at the address below or given online at the web site.

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