



## *Dear family and friends,*

It has never been so hard to say goodbye. This furlough has been filled with many drawn out farewells, visits that have gone way too late into the night, plans to get together “one more time” that never materialized, and dinners that edged on precariously close to breakfast. A few of the last goodbyes have brought Renee to tears, with me not far behind her. We spent an evening well past midnight once talking about why. Why does it pain us to say goodbye? Why this time? Well, it’s simply because you all have grown so dear to us. We have never felt so supported as we do now. Our friends and churches have vividly demonstrated how much they love and care for our small family. It kind of makes us want to stick around, being with the Church, the Body of Christ, as it was meant to be. I realized, as Renee and I pondered this paradox, that hard goodbyes are the best ones – they are a testimony to the sweet fellowship we have with you all. I remembered the words of CS Lewis, that “Christians never really say goodbye.” It is some small consolation as we drive off again, and fly away to Africa, that God has set aside a time, an eternity in fact, when goodbyes will be no more.

## **Our Journey**

Our home assignment has been predictably busy, but a different kind of “busy” than we are used to in Kenya, and as such, it has been restful. One thing I have cherished has been the time with Renee and the kids. It has been nice to wake up every morning next to them, and not be in a hurry to fly off to the ends of the earth before the sun comes up. We have traveled, but together, from New Jersey to Florida to Illinois (and everywhere in between.) And thanks to a special friend who loaned us a car, we have been able to visit every Church, and nearly everybody we had hoped to. And we have cherished the time with all of you.

This furlough has also been different from our two previous. Part of me never left Kenya and part of Renee is still not ready to return. We have had a four-month, eleven thousand mile journey through these feelings, guided by our prayers and long, dream-filled conversations; and by other folk’s encouragement. What did we find? That we are as reliant on God today as the first time we departed for Africa nine years ago. That a home could be found anywhere, and so can a calling to serve the Lord. But moving in a way that follows God’s leading may not always take us to a comfortable place. And following God’s leading is far better than determining our own way.

As familiar as this whole process is to us – the preparing and packing, the goodbyes, and the long flight “home” – we do not know what the next term overseas holds for us. Going into it can be daunting, or a wonderful adventure, depending on our point of view at any given moment. We are still learning to trust God in the moments though, and in that way we are as new to this as we were in 1997. On the other end waits (eagerly) a ministry with AIM AIR that has felt our loss, even over a few short months. Waiting are

our friends, and our house that Renee has fashioned into a home. Waiting is a ninety-pound Rotweiller who lost a family four months ago, but still hopes expectantly every day for me to roll up to the house in the Land Rover. "Home is where your dog is," I told someone recently, joking about our gypsy lives. Maybe what I meant was that home is where you are supposed to be. Right now, we know where we are supposed to be.

## What's Ahead

Arriving back in Nairobi this December, Renee and I will start out working on our house. We will be taking care of the painting, which is long overdue, and a renovation in the "attic," creating an extra bedroom so that we can have a proper classroom for the kids. By mid-December I will be flying again, and I expect I will be flying hard for another two years. A welcome development some of you may not have heard about yet is that I will not be returning to my administrative role as the Chief Pilot. In its place is a new part-time ministry for me, which stemmed from a brand new idea in our mission. I am going to be contributing to a media ministry for AIM, using my gifts (so they say) in writing, photography, video, and other creative stuff, to help our mission "tell the story" of what God is doing in Africa. We have included a brochure about the ministry along with this newsletter to give you a better idea. If you have ever been encouraged by something you've read in our letters, then you already know a little about what kind of ministry there is in "telling the story." Both Renee and I are really excited about the new role. It seems to fit us well, and hopefully will result in less stress, and more joy in my work this term. On any given day I will either be piloting around as I always have, or working on telling the stories of our missionaries – both unique and specialized ways

to further the Kingdom of God.

## Pray

As you pray for us over the next few months, please keep this new development in them. We don't know yet how the media ministry will come together formally as a department in the mission, and what my role with it will look like. Pray for our transition back, especially for Renee, that we will feel at home and find our place in God's purposes every day. Pray for our safety, in and about Nairobi, which is rapidly becoming a more hazardous place to live, and on my flights, which have always been hazardous. Pray for Renee and I to be united, and supportive of one-another. Pray that we will treasure our family above all the pressing ministry needs around us. Pray that we will remain humble and moldable for God's design.

**Thank you** for your awesome support.

If we didn't get a chance to see you this furlough, I hope you know how much we appreciate you. And if we did get to see you, I hope we told you as much. May God bless you and keep you. See you again in 2009.

*Mike, Renee, Amelia & Zach*



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