



## **Merry Christmas (a little late)!**

December 27, 2009

On behalf of the Whelchel family, let us greet you a wonderful Christmas and wish you a blessed 2010!

First, a comment about the enclosed picture. It was taken atop of the UC Irvine Anteater, the mascot of Sharon's school. "Zot zot" is the noise the anteater makes when consuming ants -- at least according to Johnny Hart, creator of the comic "BC" which uses anteaters fairly regularly in his comics. Naturally, we give credit to Sharon, our studio art major from UCI, for the creative touch!

For us this Christmas has been a time to unwind and relax. We have been pushing hard for the past six months, and we really needed the break. We are all together in Riverside for the holidays, getting to see how Sharon is enjoying her college years and growing in her walk with the Lord and in maturity as a young lady. We also have seen how God has been good to my dad and sister here — both are doing well and seem to be weathering the economic challenges that have beset most of the US.

Being able to take this break has also given us some time to reflect on God's faithfulness. We have been exceptionally busy this year, and sometimes we lose sight of the milestones that we have experienced. Naturally the biggest was our 25th anniversary, celebrated in March but enjoyed the most in Israel in April. It seems impossible that we could have been married this long, and to have two children in their twenties already!

We also have experienced major new steps in ministry. Along with her regular teaching and discipleship in church and at IGSL, Louie has been pouring herself into the development of a new program at IGSL — a masters in education to equip teachers in both Christian and secular schools to impact students and institutions by integrating a Christian worldview into their work. It has been a simmering passion for Louie since joining the ministry, and now she is seeing the fruition of years of preparation. We expect the program will begin by the middle of 2010.

Jim began a new phase of ministry, transferring from IGSL to the regional office of Campus Crusade for Christ. He is helping bring training to the staff in the area (nearly 1000 people), helping develop local financial resources for the ministry, and assisting our director implement some significant programs and directions for the CCC ministry in Southeast Asia. It is a bit of a turbulent time for Campus Crusade for Christ globally, as we will be reorganizing in the coming months. We are grateful for being able to contribute in a small way to seeing movements developed in some of the toughest mission fields in the world.

Michael is soon to experience his own milestone. Lord willing, in April he will be graduating from his undergraduate degree in fine arts with a focus on web page design. He has been much more involved in church and with friends this year. Now he is thinking about his next steps — which we hope will include gainful employment! And Sharon has continued to enjoy almost everything she does at UC Irvine...which is just about everything! She is in her third year of studies with a major in studio art, which she has really enjoyed. She is active in club soccer; Campus Crusade's Epic ministry; is founder and president of International Justice Mission's UCI chapter; is doing a sports medicine internship; paints shoes, retouches photos and does paintings for hire to augment her income; enjoys her friends immensely; and generally finds ways to include fun in all she does.

## **And Happy New Year (a little early)!**

So after a year like that, what are we looking forward to in 2010? After recessions and typhoons (and now an erupting volcano), we recognize the uncertainties that face us all. We cannot anticipate all that might happen in the coming year. But we are sure of one thing: wherever God leads us, and whatever He calls us to, His presence will be with us, and His grace will sustain us. We pray that you will experience the blessing of God's presence and grace as well.

Have a wonderful 2010!

The Whelchels