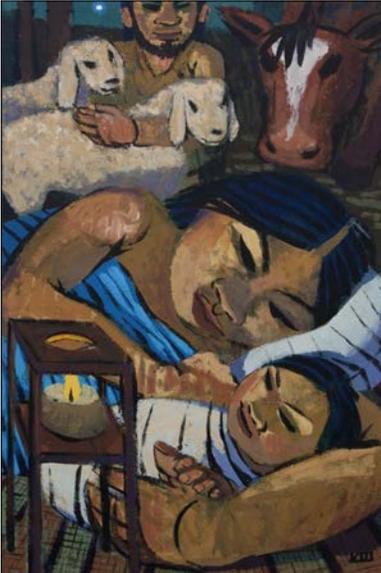


We just wanted to give a short update on what is happening with us. It's still unusual for us to be overseas and go through the Christmas season (Thanksgiving and Easter holidays, too). It's hot and humid here, no snow, no TV, jungle setting, work is as usual and in fact Huyen works a lot especially when she's on call. Our kids play with large banana leaves and bamboo outside instead of snow in addition to Alex learning how to shoot a homemade bow and arrow we just made (maybe akin to throwing snowballs?). Nothing too "Christmasy" here. After years of being home in the U.S. during December, being in hot climates makes it almost like you must make an extra effort to celebrate and get excited at holiday time since there's virtually nothing to remind you. So we've painted little toy soldiers with Alex and Emma, made our own Christmas presents from popsicle sticks (we ate A LOT of popsicles to do that), and Alex is learning Hark the Herald Angels and Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring on her violin (she is now at the point of bypassing Tim on violin!). Emma is still just playing "pepp-er-oni pi-zza", so Tim is not totally left in the dust. We have, though, had a lot of get-togethers at the hospital for various holiday celebrations for hospital employees, church folk, missionaries. Thankfully, there are several such planned events to help remind us of the advent season.

I have been following a daily online devotional for the advent season. Being in the Honduran, brown skinned culture right now, this picture, below left, struck me as being something one here might envision the incarnation to be like.

This intimate scene of Jesus' birth brings us up close and personal with the reality of what it meant for God to humble Himself taking the form of a baby, utterly dependent on the love and care of his human mother Mary. Completely secure in her loving embrace, he grasps her thumb as only babies do. Following Christian tradition, his swaddling clothes foreshadow his eventual death and burial. The flame of the lamp beside them casts a warm light on their faces signaling that the light of the world has indeed come to dwell among us. Behind them, having accepted God's charge to be their protector, Joseph quietly watches over them, faithful and calm. He holds a sheep, reminding us that this babe is the promised Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world. In the distant night sky, a single point of light connecting the heavens and earth is seen penetrating into our midst.



The picture below was given to me by someone a few years ago who got it in Ethiopia when travelling there. Although it is a bit theologically inaccurate, what I find interesting is that no matter what culture you are in, those who celebrate Jesus' incarnation with art do so in a way that is naturally reminiscent of their culture, not necessarily out of any ethnocentrism, although that is naturally how a particular culture might think about events of old. But it does show us that Jesus came for all people in all cultures in all times and while we will never know this side of Heaven what He actually looked like, it might be safe to say, for now, that He is a mix of all of these cultures inasmuch as who he came to redeem.



Work at the hospital for Huyen has been rather busy, but for Tim, it has continued to be on the relatively slow side. There are different pathologies and needs that present here as compared to when we were in Mali and Cameroon. Tim does a lot of tonsils, skin cancers and ear malformations, as well as some clefts. Recently, facial trauma has been steady.

Last Saturday, Tim was called into the E.R., which is a rare thing, for a young man who came in drunk and had crashed his moto. I was told his ear was hanging on by a thread and I figured it would be essentially just necessary to finish the job rather than try to do heroics. We have no leeches here which are nice in these circumstances to get the blood flowing out of the ear. When an end organ like an ear needs circulation help, leeches are our friends. After seeing the man and cleaning him up, I realized the 'thread' was more like a thick rope and I wouldn't need to be looking under any rocks for any blood suckers! ☺

Below you can see his before picture and so far, although his ear is rather purple, it is less so with each visit. When he last came in for wound care, our Pastor Oscar who is great at

assessing patients' situations spiritually, began to pray with this man as we huddled in a circle in my clinic. As the pastor prayed for him, he asked if the man was willing to accept Jesus into his life and give up his life of drinking and partying. The man knew his actions were taking a toll on his kids and wife and he hesitated at first, but then prayed with the pastor's leading. PTL! I don't see much in this way in my clinic as we doctors get so busy with physically fixing people. Many are cultivators, planters, waterers, and reapers and we have mostly been cultivators or waterers in the past. I think he realized his foolish life might've cost him not only his ear, but his eternal life. Pray for him (named Alex) for physical healing as well as a conviction to follow Him long after his ear is healed and he has no more need for the hospital nor its doctors.



As many of you know, we've been in Africa a long time and continue to return to Chad in the summers to do maxillofacial work there as the need is huge and there is a pastor there, Thomas, whose ministry in N. Cameroon has been greatly boosted by our surgical ministry there. The pastor recently retired and is home in the south. Now, he relates a new kind of death, that of the violent civil war going on between the English and French speaking regions. The north is largely unaffected, but in the south the atrocities have been horrible and completely unreported by the news. Recently, some of you might be aware that we were trying to get two ladies with brain tumors operated on who I, Tim, met last summer while in Chad. We did as much as we could to raise funds to pay for their surgeries, but alas, only 2 people donated. Even though what they gave was very helpful, the violence in the south of Cameroon made it impossible for doctors who were coming to visit the mission hospital where we sent them. So, they both remain untreated. Pray for peace there! What we are seeing in the news about needs to escape "violence" in other geographic areas pales miserably in comparison to the photos Pastor Thomas has sent us. We are ones who send fairly 'interesting' pictures in our prayer letters, but even his photos were too much for our seasoned eyes. The only picture I can show about what is going on is the last picture in our letter below which, as the old saying goes, is worth a thousand words. Pray for Cameroon! While we celebrate the birth of Jesus and make merry, lives in need of that little baby in the pictures above continues for others like this little girl. We thank you for your praying and finances that help so that we can try to make small impacts wherever Gods leads us.



Tim, Huyen, Alex and Emma

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"When you think your problems are the worst in the world, look at this photo and change your mind. My heart will ache out...The world is coming to an end. Need only prayer."—Pastor Thomas Ngango Ngwa, Mbe SW Cameroon

