

[Email Update 1/8/2010]

Subject: 2010 Update

Dear Friends and Partners,

We realize this letter is a little lengthy, but our access to communications is sporadic, so please forgive us for putting a lot in one letter. Grab a cup of coffee and read on.

First, Happy New Year! We are so grateful for the grace of God which has brought us through another year. We are confident that this year will be replete with NEW STUFF in God. Each time we say 'Happy New Year' the word 'New' just keeps ringing in our spirits. For sure, we are READY for some good new adventures!!

Even with new calendars in hand, our old priorities still remain in full force. We are passionate for Brazil. Each time we witness the needless suffering, so often the end result of political corruption, our hearts yearn for divine justice. (So many millions injured across Brazil...) The social crises—domestic violence, addictions of all sorts, promiscuity, vigilante justice, skewed distribution of wealth, mafias, witchcraft, horribly inadequate health care—constantly motivate us to use every resource we possess in creative ways such that we make the biggest change possible. And naturally, it's the Kingdom which is the vehicle that brings true change.

- We work towards equipping and edifying the local church through teaching, worship, and discipleship.
- We work towards making a relevant contribution to community health care and demonstrating Christ's compassion in relevant ways through professional work in dietetics.
- We work towards developing meaningful relationships with people at all levels through digital integration (helping make computers accessible to the youth and disadvantaged).

But with continuous financial constraints, all the above efforts have suffered a large degree of frustration. We are not yet working at nearly the capacity we envision.

Maybe it's that I am too "Brazilian" or that Railson's strategies reach too far outside the traditional lines, but we don't see ourselves fitting in neatly with conventional, church agenda-based evangelism. Firstly, it's important for our

supporters to appreciate the fact that many of our potential converts, leaders, workers, etc. are actually our own colleagues and extended family. Since our family is essentially Brazilian, the expectation the community has of us is different than that of other missionaries. Put in other words, we don't work at an outpost; we work at home, a situation very different from most mission set-ups, and one which, in our case, actually allows for greater collaboration. At the same time it requires that we keep everything we do, as well as every motive in our hearts, deeply accountable to them—the Brazilians, whether in English or in Portuguese, for a lifetime.

Secondly, we have a difficult time seeing Brazilians as primarily poor and helpless. Rather, we see them as exceptionally willing, perseverant, generous and courageous, given access to knowledge and adequate resources. It always saddens us, for instance, when we see NGOs and other well-meaning social assistance organizations using images of desolation, misery, malnutrition and crises as their only tactic for luring donations. We never want it to be said that we earn our living based on donations spurred solely by Brazilians' suffering. For us, that would be like exploiting the pain—the pain of our family. Here in Brazil, the poverty in which many live has been largely fostered by spiritual and social oppression, which only Christ can revert. Once we learn how, through His poverty, we become rich, the whole picture changes. (2 Cor. 8:9)

Thirdly, we (well, I, the American, at least) are constantly fascinated by the fact that the Brazilian Constitution DOES NOT FORESEE THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE. This precedent is something which has historically provided an advantageous situation for the Catholic institution, but at the same time, it leaves the door wide open to evangelism, yes, in public, at all levels. And, let's face it: this is a difficult paradigm for us North American missionaries to flow with. Just imagine the reality: prayer in Brazilian public school is politically and socially correct (it's just a question of to whom one prays), Christ is inseparable from Christmas (it's just a matter of keeping religion and materialism out of the holiday, as anywhere), and speaking openly about Christ on a crowded bus or at the market is rarely creates offense. So, obviously the job here is not finding space to evangelize without upsetting anyone, but rather turning dead religious norms and terminology into life-changing, soul-saving, miracle-making faith. Local churches are essential, but they no longer have to be isolated platforms for demonstrating the work of the Kingdom.

We long to do so much more both inside and outside the walls of the church, but, as we have said, funding has been a major obstacle.

The last year has been very challenging. When I say "very challenging" I mean in the sense of us working so severely under budget that it has affected things like our family health and our kids' education. In a nutshell: it's been yucky. During the past year, a few more long-term supporters had to discontinue

support, and the exchange rate lost another 25%. Plus, we are once again facing the need to re-route our financial support, since LCC will no longer be able to provide this voluntary service for us.

You might wonder about our income-generating work on the ground down here. Well, the nutrition clinic has been interesting socially and professionally, but not economically, at least not yet. And Railson's part-time sales are very low. On the other hand, there has been a constant trickle of funds from the English classes I teach weekly.

On the bright side, the constant lack of sufficient income has helped confirm to us that we need to think bigger in terms of fund-raising. After nine long months, our new tentmaking business is finally legalized (selah!). We have been blessed to have the voluntary assistance of businessmen in Brazil, China, and the US to help us get the framework set up for importation. Although the venture may sound very lofty and ambitious, we are just hoping to be able to get the gears turning before we all go hungry!

Considering that Brazil's economy is one of the top four growing economies in the world today, the future of the business appears to be bright (or at least that's what friends in the field are telling us, and what we believe in the Lord). The business is registered for importing mainly computer and communications equipment, providing technical assistance, and possibly contracting satellite links for internet. It is not, however up and running yet for lack of capital.

Once operating, we will not have to depend as heavily on the shifty dollar for missions support, and we will finally be able to open up the Fundação Jubileu, for attracting donations Brazil-side. We hope these two things will happen by the end of 2010.

But the enemy is really trying to snuff us out before we begin. We have lost considerable support too early and the bills are piling up. The way we depend on donations, it's always a guess as to how much money will come in during the month. This makes planning family life and ministry very frustrating, as you might imagine. It would be a dream to have the certainty of a minimum amount of monthly income throughout the year, or at least until the business is able to provide the return we expect.

If you can pick up where others have had to leave off, at any amount, we would deeply appreciate it.

For those of you with the vision to invest, or know of someone who has, we invite you to consider joining with us to get the business off the ground, and, naturally, share in the return. A start-up of a combined \$15,000 to \$20,000 would do the trick.

And still others may feel impelled to send a useful item:

- Office supplies
- Digital camera (ours broke and we really miss it!)
- Clothes and shoes
- Multi-vitamins and pre-natal vitamins (in bottles of around #60-100)
- Calcium tablets (in small bottles as well)
- Funds for revalidation of my OSU diploma (around \$2000 –this makes the diploma valid in Brazil and allows me to be registered as a dietitian)
- Sponsorship for my American Dietetic Association membership (\$300 per year)

Get in touch with us via e-mail for more information and shipping tips.

Thank you for making what matters to us, matter to you. And thank you for the liberty of making our needs known to you. Together, we are making a difference in our generation.

All our love,
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