

Dear Friends and Family,

Greetings to each of you! I hope that as this summer season draws to a close that it finds you and those you love happy and well. Our transition into fall started yesterday with our kids all returning to school. After a tornado in May that literally blew away our high school, the district has done a lot of “re-arranging” over the summer to fit what previously took up three buildings into two. They have done well and the mantra here is “We can do (almost) anything for a year!”

Our lives are about to enter a new season as well which is the reason for this letter. As many of you know TJ and I have been in youth ministry of one kind or another for the past fifteen years. We started out at Maranatha Bible Camp in the summer of 1993 with the promise of work for two months. From Maranatha we moved to Colby, KS where TJ served as youth pastor at the Colby Berean Church for nearly six years. Following Colby we moved to Great Bend, KS for only a few months and then moved to Aplington, IA on December 28, 1999. In Aplington, TJ has planted and pastored a non-denominational youth organization called the “Student Connection.” God has been very faithful and we have seen this organization go from a dozen students to well over a hundred on a weekly basis. Our prayer is that students will truly “connect” with Jesus through the programs offered and relationships built at “StuCo” activities.

Over a year ago TJ and I began to feel God moving in our hearts and lives towards a new ministry opportunity. Through a whole series of events we became aware of an organization called New Life Advance International. NLAI has an active ministry in Guatemala. There they own and operate a children’s home, medical clinic and Christian school designed to reach out on behalf of Jesus to the people of Guatemala. In April, TJ and I visited along with friends of ours and came away completely convinced that the “hands and feet” of Jesus were at work on the NLAI ministry in Guatemala City. Also, while in Guatemala, we visited the Christian Academy of Guatemala. This is a K-12 school designed to serve the children of missionaries as well as diplomats or other “displaced” students.

During our time in Guatemala we were able to identify a few specific needs that we feel God has given us the gifting and abilities to meet. The first has to do with the New Life Children’s Home. This home is doing an incredible job of caring physically, emotionally and spiritually for children who otherwise would go without their basic needs being met. The staff there also desires to spiritually mentor each child in a way that is age appropriate and relative to their lives. In the past, individuals have served with special attention to the high school and elementary age children. A real need is for someone who is gifted in working with middle school aged children to come alongside and mentor and encourage them in their walk with Jesus. TJ plans to serve in this area and is so excited that he can put his love for middle schoolers to good use with children who have suffered so much in their young lives. The other aspect of our ministry in Guatemala has to do with the Christian Academy. They are always in need of staff and have expressed an interest in having a “spiritual life pastor” for the students. After serving teens for fifteen years, the Academy kind of looks like one major youth group to us! It seems the chances to serve Jesus by serving students would be endless! The plan is that TJ and I will go to Guatemala as missionaries with New Life Advance International and then as well as working with students at the children’s home, TJ will be appointed by New Life as a staff member at the Academy.

Our position in Guatemala is not a salaried one, so in order for us to move there and begin the work, we need to raise funding to pay TJ’s salary. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of our plans as well as ask you to prayerfully consider being a part of our “Support Team” of people. Our goal is to have a prayer team of 250 people who will pray for us on a regular basis and to raise enough financial support to allow us to serve for four years with New Life Advance International in Guatemala. What at times can seem to

be a daunting task becomes only an opportunity to see God work when you remember that He “owns the cattle on a thousand hills.” (Spoken as a true rancher’s daughter...)

Enclosed is response card for you to use if God is leading you to be a part of our Support Team or if you would like to continue to receive updates or be interested in visiting with us in a more personal way concerning our plans we would love to hear back from you. Feel free to e-mail or call us to visit further about our new direction. TJ and I are so excited to watch God work out every detail of our family’s transition to Guatemala. We hope you will want to come along for the ride!

PS Everyone wants to know what our kids think of all of this...so here it is. They are EXCITED and TERRIFIED! We will let them speak for themselves in the future...our website should be up in a couple of months.

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