

In the midst of the pandemic and political chaos around the world, Wilson and I feel so blessed to have had the tremendous privilege of spending the holidays in the USA! Life has been tough this year for everyone, but as we reflect on our time this past month, we have so much to be thankful for. It's the little things in life that make us stand back in awe and wonder:



- The opportunity to spend some real quality and quantity time with our kids and grandkids, celebrating Joshua, Leighann's and Brandon's birthdays and meeting our newest grandson, Thomas Elliot Spicer, for the 1st time.

- To see snow and feel the cold after so many years. The ice/snowstorm in IL was breathtaking and absolutely beautiful. At the end of our trip God sent one more very short-lived snowfall that was the "icing on the cake" for us...

a sky filled to the brim with those big, huge, puffy flakes falling so gracefully and silently! By the way, our favorite feature of our car by far this trip were the "butt warmers" on the front seats!



Winter Wonderland!



- Making time for family fun and fellowship; decorating Christmas cookies and a real Christmas tree, celebrating Jesus with loved ones through special church services, prayer times and sharing so many other precious moments together.

- Treating ourselves to special foods that we don't have access to in Benjamin Constant: certain cereals and cheeses, treats, chips, special ice creams, a variety of fruits, great yogurts, etc.

- Our excellent health during the trip. Even though we were exposed to COVID during the holidays and haven't experienced winter weather in years we didn't even get so much as a sniffle.

- Getting some much-needed rest and most of all, realizing and knowing more than ever that we as Christians can rejoice in LIFE and don't need to fear death and all the chaos around us.

There were some things we didn't get to do, like the short trip we had planned to Wisconsin, since we quarantined ourselves for two weeks in IL after being exposed to the virus. Because our time was so limited and we wanted to focus on family, we also didn't have the time to get in touch with as many as we would have liked through phone calls. We love you and miss you. Even so, our time in the USA with our kids and grandkids was absolutely wonderful! It was so awesome to bond with family, love on each other and share in life together!! 😊 This summer we plan to contact you personally and hopefully have the chance for a visit during home assignment/furlough from Aug.-Sept.

We praise God the church plants have continued strong and are growing, even during the pandemic and through our short absence. The church in Cavalo Cocha dug three wells for families in the community, through the leadership of Pr. Edgardo and Corina, and they also took a team by boat to minister in the village and church plant in San Juan do Camucheiro.



Here is a special service in the church plant in the village of...



SÃO
JOÃO

Pr. Borges is now the Pr. Coordinator of this little church carrying out the ministries twice a month together with a team from his church, like we did for a little over a year. It's tremendous to see them welcoming the New Year celebrating Jesus in worship and prayer.



We arrived safe and sound in Brazil after having to book new flights last minute due to cancellations, taking two COVID tests, filling out two health check forms for Colombia and finding a taxi to take us to the port. Because of COVID, Tabatinga is not allowing any cars to circulate. We ended up having to hire a taxi from Colombia not knowing if he would be able to pass the border and take us all the way to the port. The passenger boats are currently not allowed to operate so we had a worker pick us up in our small mission boat for the 40 min. trip to Benjamin Constant.

Benjamin currently has only 4 reported COVID cases, but Manaus is spiking alarmingly and several pastors, church leaders and members that we know personally have died recently. Our hearts and prayers go out to their families. The boats coming and going to Benjamin have all been stopped for an indefinite time, so we don't really know if we will be allowed to go all the way home. Currently, there is a "toque de recolher" which means that no one can leave their house after 7:00 pm (following orders from the state of the Amazon.)

Wilson continues working on mission projects and is preparing seminars for seminary training modules for pastors and leaders in Cavalo Cocha and another in an indigenous area among Ticuna Indian leaders. He will also be working on the by-laws for the mission we have set up in Peru. I maintain contact with key children's ministry leaders here, helping them with resources and training.

When we travel, we store many household items for security reasons. This is my time of the year to do some deep cleaning, put the house back in order and restock food supplies. That's a good thing. It will keep me so busy I won't think much about eating since I really overdid it this trip with all the holiday treats and delicious meals our kids prepared. The cold just makes you want to curl up on a couch wrapped in a warm blanket and EAT! AND being winter, who wants to exercise, right?! It's just too cold to be moving those bones around.

All our love and hugs, looking forward to seeing you soon! 😊

Wilson and Lori

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