



December 1, 2006

Dear Friends,

At long last, greetings from Montana! We knew we were in Montana when, instead of hearing people reply: "No problem," we heard most folks say "You betcha!" We knew we were in Montana when folks stretched out "Yeah" to give it its own melody. We knew we were in Montana when we dropped items off at the thrift store and found the dock worker skinning a deer. Montana.

And our new neighbors knew there were Southerners in Montana when they saw the boys out playing in two inches of snow. We had two of those "dustings" of snow. Then the arctic blast hit. Even veteran Helenans commented. The van thermometer registered -11. We thought we were ready for cold weather – but, as you can imagine, we have had to get outfitted even more. As I write to you, it is snowing again.

Here we are at 507 5th Avenue, Helena, Montana, 59601. We arrived November 9 after an odyssey of 2735 miles. Via and I each drove a vehicle. Thanks for your prayers for traveling mercies. Apart from fatigue, wind gusts in Wyoming and deer in Montana proved to be our greatest dangers.

Our trailer arrived at our new home November 10. Thanks to a friend in Helena, TJ, we had help from the Vineyard Church (the pastor and his wife, the worship leader, and an artist friend) and help from a couple who are part of the PCA church in Billings. The truck was unloaded *quickly*.

We have been shown real hospitality. The Lyndes, the Funks, the Trerises and the Barretts have all had us over for a meal. Thanksgiving Day, Via cooked the turkey and we joined 25 for dinner. It was good to hear Psalm 67 read and to thank God. We were invited to a mountain cabin to cut a Christmas tree. Via bagged a beauty. The other diver and I had gone to fetch the boys – who had been sledding. As we rounded the bend of that snowy mountain road, we saw her – saw in hand and tree in hand. Now, that decked out tree stands in our living room.

We've met a few of our neighbors. We plan to have a drop-in later this month. Via has started working part time at Lasso the Moon Toy Store (she walks to work). Despite the snow, Saturday, we walked downtown to a book signing by Stan Lynde (creator of the long running cartoon strip, "Rick O'Shay" – and also husband to our realtor). It's good to be out and about. We want to do a lot of that.

Helena is a place where there are frequent community events. Last night we heard Clay Scott, an international correspondent – one who has made his home in Helena for many years – tell about the time he spent in Lebanon last summer – putting a human face on that conflict. The week before, we heard a "debate" between Thomas Jefferson and Teddy Roosevelt. Both men were spectacularly portrayed by Rhodes scholar and historian, Clay Jenkinson.

We've been getting settled. Our new phone numbers are:

- Home: 406-558-4342,
- Steve's cell: 406-461-8529, and
- Via's cell: 406-461-9010.

In case you didn't know, Montana is still has only one area code.

This weekend we will begin extending hospitality. We are looking forward to doing that often too. In this new place we want to continue the earthly ministry of Jesus in word and deed. Hospitality must be prominent as we follow Jesus. In college, I participated in the *Areopagus* - a Santa Barbara, California, coffee house outreach to hitch hikers and others. We were reminded that, as we talked with others, we were simply beggars who had found Bread – the Bread of Life – and we had the privilege of telling others where that Bread was found.

Eugene Peterson reminds us: "It is striking how much of Jesus' life is told in settings defined by meals. Early on people noticed how frequently Jesus was seen at meals with people who were outsiders, men and women not considered acceptable in religious circles. "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" (Lk. 7:34). Jesus frequently reinforced the centrality of hospitality by telling parables that featured food and drink, meals and banquets (Lk 14:15-24; 15:22-32; 16:19-21; 17:7-10). He was training the imaginations of his listeners (us!) to see salvation being worked out in a foreigner, a neighbor's midnight demand for bread, a beggar at a rich man's door. Both Luke and John give their final hospitality stories as unpretentious meals, the resurrection supper at Emmaus (Lk 24:113-35) and the resurrection breakfast on the Galilee beach (Jn. 21:1-14). Is it significant that Luke, who has more references in his Gospel to "save" and "salvation" (twenty-one as compared with fourteen each in Matthew and Mark and six in John) also has the most references to Jesus at meals or telling stories of meals? I think so. Luke's gospel, in comparison to those of his Gospel-writing colleagues, is tilted in the direction of evangelism, making the connection between the message of salvation in history and the outsiders of history" (Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places, pp.212 – 214).

Followers of Jesus, as you pray for us, would you take steps to be hospitable too? In a day when even families often do not eat together, is it possible for us to open our homes – not only to friends and family – but to strangers? When Peter tells us to "practice hospitality" (1 Pet. 4:9), he uses a Greek word that is literally translated "treating a stranger like a brother." Let's see how God blesses such hospitality and builds bridges by His grace.

Other prayer requests:

1. Monday and Tuesday, Shane Sunn, church planter in Greeley, Colorado, and his wife, Jean, will come to visit us. Shane is mentoring the church planters in Missoula and us. Thank God for the good relationship we have already established. Pray that God will direct us through them – and that we will be able to encourage them too.
2. After being "incommunicado" for most of November, it was good to see that other gifts had come in for the Helena Project. We are now at 92.5% of the total. Would you like to give a Christmas present of support for the Helena Project? If you want to participate in this way, please fill out the pledge card below and:
 - a. Mail it to Mission to North America, 1700 N. Brown Road, Suite 101, Lawrenceville, GA 30043-814, or
 - b. Fax it to: Mission to North America: Attn: Michael Hutcheson: FAX: (678) 825-1224), or
 - c. Call MNA: (678) 825 -1200.

3. Rocky Mountain Community Church in Billing, Montana, is our largest supporter. I will have the privilege of preaching there on 12/17. Please pray for them and our other supporters.
4. Please pray for Peace Presbyterian Church as they search for a new senior pastor.
5. Please pray for our family: Jared, Rebekah and Jackson in Atlanta; Jordan and Claire in Chattanooga; Rachel, Nathan and Micah in Fuquay, and Zach in Kitty Hawk, NC. Micah will be finishing high school in January. Rachel has been accepted at UNC. Pray for Noah, Jesse and Isaac as they make a new life here.
6. Thank God that my Mom, Ruby, is recovering well from her heart attack and surgery.
7. Pray that I can get computer challenges settled. Maybe I will be able to send pictures next time.
8. I like putting the logo of Heart for Helena on these communiqués. It depicts the Sleeping Giant just north of Helena. But, it also reminds me that God has a heart for Helena. Pray that we will have His heart for this city. *"Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and all that move in them, for God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah (He does have a heart for cities!). Then people will settle there and possess it; the children of his servants will inherit it, and those who love his name will dwell there"* (Ps. 69:34-36).

Thank you for your partnership in the gospel,

Steve and Via Bostrom



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