

Peter & Kelly + Lukas Passchier

“Both Feet on the Ground”

Newsletter June 2008

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Thailand! Welcome to the first edition of our family newsletter to be sent out from Asia! Our apologies to those of you who hadn't realized that we'd finally left for Asia – we now seem to have overcome both our logistical and organizational communication issues! We have been in Thailand now for three weeks, preceded by four weeks in Singapore for orientation with the organization we are working with – OMF International.

Since our last newsletter about a year ago (!) we have been in Vancouver with Peter working with international students at UBC and Kelly at home full time with Lukas and volunteering here and there with the students and at church. At the end of February of this year we heard that everything was in place for us to go the OMF orientation course in Singapore in May 2008 which left us 10 weeks to pack up our lives in Vancouver. The complicating factor was that six of those weeks were booked for a trip back to The Netherlands to put things in place with our church there and the Dutch branch of our organization and to say goodbye to Peter's family and our friends! Being a cross-cultural family and working with teams from two home countries brings lots of richness but certainly adds complexity to our lives as well! So we packed up our apartment in two weeks, trying to keep straight all the strands of things staying in Canada, coming to Europe and those ultimately going with us to Thailand!! We had a busy but good time in Europe talking at different groups from our church, meeting friends and spending time with family. Lukas' loved playing with his cousins but his highlight was probably riding on a pony at local children's farm. Every time we saw a horse after that he wanted to ride on it and was very disappointed whenever we rode on the train that we didn't get off to go and ride on the horses that he could see out the window just waiting for him!



*Vancouver Time
in Singapore*

After our trip, we had 12 days back in Vancouver to get everything ready to move to Thailand. Needless to say we were crazy busy but somehow managed to fit in all the logistical matters as well as many goodbyes to dear people. At times we felt we didn't have enough time to spend with the people in the midst of it all but we were grateful for the many events and occasions we did have to connect with people before leaving. Coping with nine hours of jetlag every few weeks takes it toll and facing our third set of jet lag in two months found us panting in tropical heat, looking at palms trees and bouganvillea and emotionally trying to catch up with ourselves.



*In the National Orchid
Garden in Singapore,
across the road from the
OMF headquarters*

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On a field trip in Singapore

Our time in Singapore introduced us to tropical heat, tropical vegetation, tropical wildlife, our team of eight adults and three children headed for Thailand, other colleagues headed for different countries, and the international directors and staff of OMF. Lukas was fascinated by the turtles swimming in the pond in the Botanical Gardens across the street from where we were staying, the lines of ants marching across the floor to eat the crumbs he dropped, the frangipani flowers dropping from the tree outside. Every morning he spent time in a kids' programme with four other little boys. It was the first time he had been in any regular sort of childcare but he took to it like a fish to water and loved spending time with his friends and the childcare helpers. He learned to sing songs, drink lots of water to keep hydrated, and clean up his toys. In their free time the boys could be found riding bikes and toy cars outside. It is great that a couple of his friends have come to Thailand too but it was heartbreaking to watch his goodbyes to those that went to other places. He still talks about his friends who went away on an airplane.

We arrived in Thailand on 1 June and a couple of days later arrived in the city of Lopburi at our new home for this coming year. The next day (4 June), we began orientation to our Thai Language and Culture Training programme and celebrated Lukas' second birthday. We were so grateful that the welcome party coincided with Lukas' birthday. One of our training directors baked a birthday cake for him so we could celebrate in fine style even though our food supply at home consisted only of many litres of juice, ten eggs, jam, peanut butter, a loaf of bread and a bag of rice!! Apparently we were a bit absent-minded when we went grocery shopping the day we arrived! We are staying in a house rented by our organization from a local family. There are five houses and families in our compound: our landlords, another family (colleagues of ours) also studying Thai, a Thai military man and a currently empty house. There is also an orchid nursery outside our living room windows so we have some green to look out at with splashes of gorgeous colour as the orchids bloom. We live in a lower class neighbourhood and so far our neighbours seem fairly friendly and the many stray dogs are more scared of us than we are of them. The language centre where we study is about a five minute walk from our house. We study one-on-one with a language helper for two hours a day with the rest of the time in self-study, homework and practice on the street. After one and a half weeks of language study we can ask people for their names, buy a few basics at the market, tell what country we come from and how long we are planning to stay here, and tell a few basic things about what



Lukas turns two

we do each day. But every sentence comes very slowly with great thought and concentration and we can't always understand all of the answers we get!!! Every morning Lukas goes to another house (the overall training headquarters) and has a childcare programme for 4 hours. He can already give a greeting in Thai (could do after 2 days!!) and now also understands quite a bit of what his Thai-speaking caregiver says to him. He is a little sponge. He has also picked up some new English phrases from the American neighbour girl: "time out," "come on!" and "I want..." being the most prominent! Besides language study, eating and sleeping take up most of our time. In the heat and with concentrating so hard all the time we find we need more rest – apparently this is normal. In terms of eating, it is cheaper to buy food already prepared and most days we buy our dinner at the market or at one of the ubiquitous little house-restaurants. We have been enjoying tasty curries, yummy fried rice and some other less spicy but very delicious dishes. We haven't cooked more than rice for dinner yet in three weeks!



Kelly + Lukas in front of our house

There is too much to tell you without causing information overload, so we will stop for now. If you want to see and hear more, check out our new weblog on our website at www.passchier.net !!

Lots of love and blessings,

Peter & Kelly + Lukas