

December 9, 2006

## Home

There's no place like home—whatever home means. Phoebe is teaching me true flexibility. When I told her earlier today that we were going home, she asked, Which home? Our trailer home, or grandma's house, or "our old home in South Africa?" When I told her which one (the trailer home), she walked away like she didn't really care anyway, just was curious.

We've all felt a bit like that—home is wherever we land, and for whatever length of time, and there's Good to be found in all our many homes.

We arrived in the U.S. the day before Thanksgiving after a remarkably smooth forty hours of travel. Zeke reached new heights of cuteness snoozing on his daddy's chest, and Phoebe was thrilled by everything from the seat-belt demo movie to the green emergency telephones in the London airport.

Since then we've basked in family togetherness with each of our families, and started stocking up on enough hugs to last another year. My last two articles in the Northwestern have been joys to write—one was a list of the things we're thankful for coming back to the U.S., and the other was a little story of Phoebe's fascination with the little things we take for granted in the U.S.

This past week we stayed in the Oshkosh area, and it felt like Give-a-Talk Week, with speaking engagements nearly every day. It felt good to pack up our laptop and CD of photos for the last time today (for a while), but overall it's a blessing to have so many speaking opportunities. We meet lovely people—from the middle school boy who politely told us "I'll really think differently after your talk," to the strangers who shake my hand and tell me they feel they already know us from reading our newspaper articles (which, incidentally, will continue through next year). Not to mention we're humbled and taught ourselves each time we prepare a talk. If you want to learn something about life, try telling a hundred semi-strangers what you've accomplished and learned in the last five months!

Besides speaking, we've mostly just enjoyed people's love. Walking into our old Oshkosh church last Sunday was like a dream. There's something about being gone for a few months that makes you see people in a purer light. That fabulously dressed woman I found rude when we first met, the man whose shifty eyes annoyed me, and the funny-looking kids all just seem so transparent, forgivable, and lovable.

I kept looking around and thinking to myself, this is what church is. People just as odd as me, putting up with me, and me putting up with them, and even going further to really loving each other. People I don't know gave me hugs. They asked how to help the South Africans we know, and they baked more cookies for a bake sale than 500 people should

eat in a month. We sang “Joy to the World,” and even if our clapping was a little stiff in our North American white way, still there was joy in the air.