

December 2019

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Dear Friends & Family,

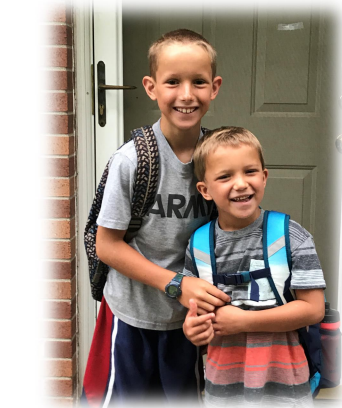
God has been preparing our hearts for this year in Kalamazoo for a long time. Regretfully, I have wrestled with God about it. My mind would race with questions & concerns, & my heart would ache with worry. Would the boys do well in school? Would they make friends? Would they fit in okay in a different culture? How homesick would they be for Kenya? Would Jeff & I make lasting friendships? Would people invest in our family? Who will we invest in? Would Jeff & I work? What other activities would we & the boys get involved in? These are just some of the questions I wrestled with-excluding all the logistics & practicalities of living in 2 very different worlds. There was lots to worry about & lots to figure out when we moved our family back to Kalamazoo for just 1 year. But, in His ever-faithful, patient, trustworthy, **PEACEful** manner, **God has given us PEACE! As in every Advent season, we are reminded to prepare our hearts & remember when the Prince of PEACE entered the not-so-PEACEful world and conquered chaos, anxiety, and fear.**

His **PEACE** for our family was revealed to me over Labor Day weekend. We were in Holland for the annual Family Camp at the beloved Camp Geneva, on the shores of Lake Michigan. All 3 of my brothers made gallant efforts to attend the weekend so that we could be together as a big family of 21. Our boys were able to reconnect with their 8 cousins (aged then 2-12) & experience all the joys of summer camp.



One night, the speaker for the weekend was teaching on Matthew 19: 13-15 when Jesus said, **“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”** She asked us to close our eyes & to be quiet while she read the Holy Spirit inspired word of God. She wanted us to really try to imagine what it would be like for this story to be played out in our lives. Now, I’m not one to get all excited about this type of activity. It is much easier for me to just listen to the story & not give in to creating visual pictures in my mind of what this passage could be. But, the Holy Spirit must have been working over time that session, & I surprisingly allowed myself & gave in to the life-changing pictures God drew in my mind that night.

As I did, the story came to life in my heart & deep down in the anxious nooks & crannies of my soul. I clearly saw my family of 5 in a loud, excited crowd, all pushing each other to get closer to Jesus. Jesus was standing on the ground, not up on a stage or seated on a throne. But, he was at the reason for the crowd, & I felt that we were all hoping that Jesus would invite us to his lap. As I stood there next to Jeff, with our arms around our boys (probably to make sure they were behaving in front of all those other strangers & that we didn’t lose them), Jesus clearly said, “Come here, Brennan,



Lincoln & Caden.” A path was made clear & we were ushered up to Jesus Himself! He looked in the eyes of each of our boys; put his arms around them as they formed a little semi-circle in front of their Savior. He knew what they were each wondering about. He said to each of them individually that they would “be just fine”. He promised them that they would make friends, they would do well in school, they would learn to appreciate America, & they wouldn’t be too homesick for Kenya. Then, he set them each on His lap & listened to them as they asked Him questions. He hugged them each tightly & assured them that He would be with them. He then looked up at Jeff & me. He looked me straight in the eyes with his ever-knowing, **PEACE**-spilling-over look and said, “Your boys will okay. I will be with them every step of the way.” Then, I was able to envision Jesus with us at the bus stop in just a few days. I could see Jesus helping Lincoln at school making new friends & letting him be free to be himself, & to feel comfortable eating in the lunchroom with new friends. A picture came to mind of Jesus going before Brennan as he entered middle school, helping him to make good choices, protecting him from bad influences, guiding him as he figured out how to open his locker, find his classes, work on a Google Chrome Book, & creating new opportunities for him. I saw Jesus take Caden by the hand & lead him out to recess, organizing a game for Caden with some new friends on the playground, showing him how great America is & comforting him when he missed his dear friends in Kenya. We didn’t want to leave Jesus’ lap or loving embrace, but knew others needed to receive from Him as well. As we walked away from Jesus with comforted hearts, an overwhelming **PEACE** enveloped me & I was able to let go of all my worries & fears for this year. My fears turned to simple trust & deep faith & a **PEACE** that overflows my heart. One of our big goals this year has been that our boys will learn to love & appreciate America & all it has to offer. With this **PEACE**, came the realization that God will do this in their hearts! We’re learning how to be intentional with our schedule & conversations to help foster this **PEACE**.



Brennan’s amazing school. He gets there at 7:00 on Thursdays for a prayer breakfast put on by Campus Life ministries.

Since we've been home in Kalamazoo, we have seen God work everything out! I'm so thankful for all the tangible things He has provided for us & the unshakeable **PEACE** that we walk in each day. He has provided two vehicles for our family, a miracle story for another day. He has given Jeff & me flexible jobs that we both really enjoy. Jeff is driving for Uber and Lyft. Wouldn't you love to have him as your driver? He's safe, responsible, easy to talk to, & keeps that car spiffy clean, complete with free water & mints! I am working for Shipt – buying & delivering groceries to all kinds of people. **Brennan** is doing great at school academically & socially, & was able to play on the school's soccer team this fall. He is growing in his trumpet playing & after auditioning, was welcomed into the school's Jazz Band as well as a Southwest MI Middle School Honors band. He's reconnected with a friend from last time, & invites him to youth group with us. We are thankful that Brennan is a pre-teen who opens up to us & asks us questions about things that he sees & learns about at school. **Lincoln's** teachers tell us that he is such a joy & is making friends easily. One of his teachers said to us at conferences, "Lincoln is a really cool dude! He doesn't say much, but when he does, I know I better listen to him. He listens intently & doesn't miss a thing. Thank you for sharing him with us this year!" **Caden**, like the other two boys, is happy to go to school. He loves riding the bus & enjoys recess & playing with friends, & adores his teacher. He has made a special friend with Judah (who lives across from my parents) & we are so thankful for him.



Jeff's discipleship group at HCA

Jeff has been able to get involved with *Heritage Christian Academy*, a school he taught at full time in 2014-15. Each Wednesday, he attends their chapel session & then has small group time with 9 high school boys. Every other week, they visit an Assisted Living Facility & spend time playing games with the residents there. He has also enjoyed hunting with Brennan & Lincoln (Brennan shot a buck with a crossbow!). Jeff is smitten with the trails close to our house & is still able to run often. I was able to join a Bible Study at our church with a lovely group of women. I have also been able to join my mom & aunt as we visit my grandma in Holland a couple times a month. I also enjoy going with my mom to a water

aerobics class at the YMCA. **God has given us lots of opportunity for rest & we feel that this time has been very rejuvenating for our souls.** We attend dinner &

Wednesday night classes at church most weeks. And on Monday nights, you'll often find us having good family fun swimming at the Y burning off lots of little-boy energy.



We've hosted some company & will continue to host more as we try to connect with friends, family & supporters. We purposely have not traveled much this fall and early winter, as we've really wanted the boys to settle into life here & develop a normal routine. The new year will find us traveling more though, as we are missionaries & do desire to connect with you all! Our first trip will be December 31-January 12 to the Southeast. Then, in February, Jeff & I will be gone for a week (without any little boys!!!) to visit CA & AZ. In early April, we'll find ourselves heading to PA & NC. This summer, Lord willing, we'll take the boys on a big 5-6 week trip to every place else that we haven't visited yet, hoping to get all the way west to Oregon. We still have a little fund-raising to do, between \$200-400 a month (based on our annual increase in January for the boys' school fees & an increase in the unavoidable cost of living). We are trusting God that more will join our team, so that we can assure AIM that we are well supported & ready to return to the field in mid-August 2020.

We have been able to keep in touch with the goings-on of RVA while we are away & love getting news from our home & community there. They have had ups & downs this first term, but overall, things are going well for the school & the students are learning & growing in Christ. The rains have been very heavy the last couple of months, which is definitely affecting the country, and we are praying that Kenya & its people will be sustained through this time & that God would bring the sun soon.

As we are deep in the Advent season here, preparing our hearts to celebrate the coming of Jesus, I'm so glad that we are finding it easy to sit back & reflect on the **PEACE** that he came to freely give. Praise God with us for the promise that he gave this momma's heart, and in turn, that I've shared with my family, that we will be just fine this year in Kalamazoo. He's not leaving us. And, if He's not leaving us, I know without a doubt that He's not ever going to leave you either. May you lean into His presence & **PEACE** as you give your all to Him.

With **PEACEFUL** hearts,
Jeff, Kate, Brennan, Lincoln & Caden

Want to join our support team? Click on the link below to give online, or email us at jkdavis@rva.org with questions.

<https://usgiving.aimint.org/missionary/1024350>



Celebrating Kate's mom's birthday with all the brothers & kids