

BLESSED THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS

from Taku & Katie Longkumer

Beloved Family, Friends and Partners,

We pray this finds you all well and in joyful preparation to give thanks for all God's gracious blessings with your family and friends in the fellowship of Christ in the church. We are grateful that there are now a few Americans in our area and we look forward celebrating Thanksgiving with them this coming weekend. Even though we won't have the turkey and all the trimmings, we will enjoy the blessing of fellowship as we give thanks and feast on God's provisions we share. I have an oven for the very first time in all our years here and have gotten hold of a pumpkin, so I'll try my hand at a pumpkin pie and probably roast a chicken. It's a far cry from the attempts at baking over a wood fire years ago! Praise the Lord!

Imagine waking up one morning to the news that your money no longer has any value! That's what we are facing! On the evening of November 8th, with no warning, the Prime Minister, in an effort to eradicate "black money" (illegal cash from bribes), declared that at midnight the most used notes of the Indian currency would be demonetized....no longer valid! All banks and ATMs were temporarily closed while trying to provide substitute currency (smaller denominations and new notes). Even now, one week later, the banks cannot exchange our old money nor permit any substantial withdrawals due to lack of cash available. All business is virtually at a standstill as shops don't have cash. The ATMs open for brief periods with long lines until cash is extinguished. Taku stood in line for over 2 hours to withdraw the limit of about \$30...that's not much even in the Indian economy! Today we tried to withdraw from the bank, only to be told there is no cash to disburse! The intent is to promote digitalized, electronic transactions, but in this context where there is unreliable electricity and erratic phone/internet connectivity that is not really feasible.

So, as we are yet in the midst of the currency crisis and **NEED YOUR PRAYERS!** Some of our ministry plans are affected. The Neighborhood Ministries Discipleship Training program that was scheduled for next week has been indefinitely postponed due to the impact of this situation. We do hope to still be able to conduct the Womens' Seminar in Odisha next week, as everyone's tickets have been purchased. But it's not clear whether the hosting venue can secure food, etc. It is a challenge to buy food as vegetables and meat are available from street market vendors who operate only in cash...no cash...no shopping! Even the bakeries stopped producing bread because they had no cash to make change if folks come in to purchase. You can imagine the chaos. This is still being fought out on the political level as the entire nation grapples with the fallout. As usual, when events like this occur, everyone is affected but it is the people at the lower economic levels that suffer most, the daily wage laborer, the street vendors who end up with no income. We are still unsure how this will impact our ability to secure our funds to live and work here. Please pray for the people of India as we walk through these challenging days.

Family Prayer Need At the same time this currency crisis erupted, ***Taku's youngest brother Imkong, the family whose home is next to ours, was diagnosed with a very fast spreading throat cancer.*** The doctors are still studying to devise the exact treatment plan which is complicated due to the location of the cancer on the valve of the esophagus. It may be necessary to insert a feeding tube throughout the duration of 5 weeks of radiation treatment. The details of the treatment plan are still being determined by the doctors as they plan to begin next week. This is very serious and we don't have a clear prognosis yet, but need your prayers. The situation is also complicated by the currency crisis. Medical insurance is only beginning to be introduced here and Imkong, like most, does not have any. The medical system here is "Pay as you go". When the doctor orders a scan, you go to billing, pay the cash and then proceed. Now securing the cash for each day's procedure adds another layer of stress to a difficult situation. Amazingly, the hospital does not accept checks and the banks don't have cash...so.... You see the dilemma! But God is gracious and faithful and till now we have been able to pay each day's expenses as the doctor orders. We are praying for God's continued provision, grace and healing. Please pray for Imkong, his wife and two daughters, especially as the youngest is preparing for the crucial class 10 matriculation exam that determines all options of further study and career.

As we enter the season of Advent, in preparation for Christmas, we reflect on that event that brought eternal changes to all creation. God left His throne in glory to become human, live as a refugee, labor with his hands, deal with relationships and the upheaval of transitions of life to bear our burdens. We cannot imagine the depth of His love that caused Him to willingly suffer, even to die in shame on the cross for us, yet He did. This Christmas, as we all navigate the tumultuous times of change occurring in the world around us, let us find our peace in Christ, the Prince of Peace, our hope and rock in times of shaking. We would ask for special prayers for grace for all our family members during these months filled with family gatherings. We are all more acutely aware of our absence from our loved ones in the US during these times. ***Thank you all for your gracious prayers and faithful support!***

May we all experience joy in the power of His presence in all our preparation and celebration this Christmas.

God Bless You! Taku & Katie