



二〇〇九年十一月

Dear family and friends:

Wow – November has just breezed in and out of 2009! For me, it has been a wonderful month. A little on the busy side, but wonderful! How about for you?

Some of my favorite Amy Grant Christmas songs have been playing in the background as I prepared this update and I'm in such a festive mood as a result. It must also have something to do with the fact that I'll be home for Christmas this year! Hurrah! I am soooo looking forward to my departure for the Christmas holiday. Now that it's less than two weeks away, I'm finally allowing myself to count down the days.

For friends living in St. Louis, I'll be in town the weekend of the 13th, so I hope to see you then. I've been blessed to keep up with some of you via Facebook; in fact, if it weren't for Facebook, I think I'd be in shock at how much some of you, especially "my kids," have "matured" in the past several months. My hope is to spend the bulk of my holiday with my wonderful family and with friends who are like family to me. Because for me, people make the season what it is. Gifts are nice and appreciated, but it's the people I'll get to surround myself with that I'm most looking forward to. Of course, the main "person" responsible for the season is my absolute all-time favorite person...in the whole wide universe!



This past Monday a good friend of mine gave birth to a beautiful little girl named Destiny. She's perfect in every single way and her proud daddy is glad she looks just like him. As I stood admiring her in the hospital this afternoon, I couldn't help thinking about the One born so long ago who has become my destiny. It was a sweet moment...a kind of sermon brought on by a newborn girl. Barely a day old and already she's impacted a life!

While at the hospital I learned something interesting about the people in this part of China. We hear stories so many times that Chinese prefer having boys, but the people in Sichuan and in this city in particular prefer having girls. They have a few insightful sayings I thought I'd share with you as a little peek into a culture that doesn't get covered much.

Saying 1: If a family has a boy, it's like opening an account at the China Construction Bank. All their money goes out to others. If a family has a girl, it's like opening an account at the China Merchant's Bank. More money will come in to their lives.

Saying 2: If a family has a girl, they are blessed later in life with a son [because of marriage]. If a family has a boy, they are raising him for someone else's family later in life...they will become childless.

Interesting perspectives! Nearly every day I hear some kind of "ancient" Chinese pearl of wisdom. I heard one that made me grin big just a few hours ago in the hospital. The attending nurse didn't like us taking pictures of the new baby using the camera flash. She said, "It's bad for the baby's health to use a such a light!" I learn something new every day...which by the way, is "good for health," or so I've been told.

Happy Holidays everyone! --a

TEACHERS "HOT POT" INVITATION



Last month I mentioned being invited out by a group of teachers for a meal. They made good on the invitation so we headed to a nearby restaurant that serves the famous Sichuan "Hot Pot."

Hot Pot is pretty much what it sounds like, but the ingredients can be surprising. There are many types but the favorite around are boiling food in red chili oil or chicken broth. Everything from feet to "innards" are fair game.

←Bell, an English teacher, demonstrates eating cake with her chopsticks. I've noticed there is not really an order for eating food here. Desert can be first or in between courses. It's typical to see children eating a snack right before a meal.



Chilies, duck beaks, chicken feet, bamboo, cucumber, and some potatoes are in the hot pot at left. I was intrigued by the "black chicken." Apparently, the actual chicken itself is black. The skin, the bones, and parts of the meat. I've seen black chickens in grocery stores, but thought something was added to the bird for flavour, etc. I was wrong...the chicken IS black. What does it taste like? Hm...tastes like chicken.



The big white crock is for boiling "soup". People here DRINK their soup...they don't EAT it. Lots of things thrown in the pot to boil...and boil...and boil. The veggie nearest the gal in the blue scarf is lotus root - still don't have the hang of that taste yet. =) Our little group - we had a nice time and a promise to do it again before I head home for Christmas.

PETER'S TEX MEX – THANKSGIVING MEAL

I wandered into a favorite Western hangout/restaurant for my Thanksgiving meal and found they were serving guests a little differently than usual...okay, well, a lot differently. This Thanksgiving they offered two choices for dinner. The first set meal came with the traditional foods for Americans including hot spiced cider, pumpkin soup, Waldorf salad, turkey, yams, mashed potatoes and gravy, dressing, a dash of cranberry jelly, pumpkin pie and tea (hot, not iced). The second set meal was an overload of food that was intended for a group. It was simple but delicious! No prep. No cleanup. Nice, and easy. Of course, a home cooked Thanksgiving meal would have been a huge improvement (I missed mom's 5-cup salad and candied yams) – but this was pretty yummy – my taste buds are still in shock! If you're curious, this meal cost Y99 (approx \$14.50).

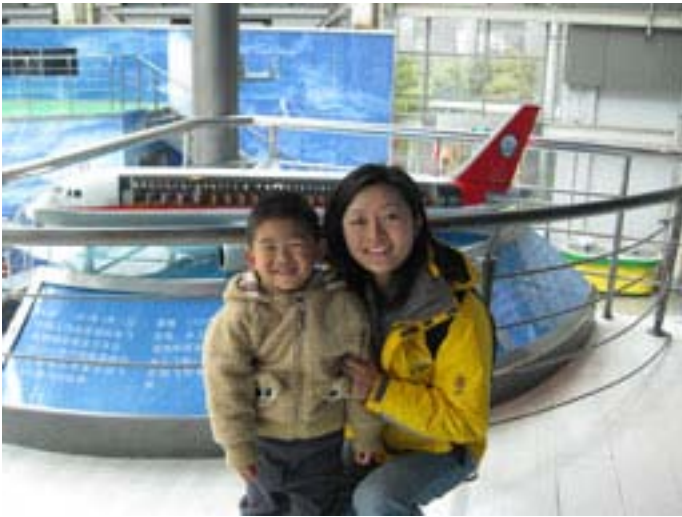


If you should ever come to visit me, (and you should) I will be sure to take you to Peter's for at least one meal. They have some of the best food here, and for some menu items, they can't be beat.

Their Potato Skins are a perfect example of a hands-down winner. They bake the potatoes, and then deep-fry them with batter. Next they pile (and I don't exaggerate) them with ham bits instead of bacon and load them with cheese before broiling them to perfection. Uh-oh, I'm drooling just typing about it.

So...when are you coming to see me?

LITTLE ONES...



Little Bobby and his mom too me to the Science/Technology Museum last Saturday. We had a good time together...until he strapped me into this rocket seat – I was relieved to find out it was “hwwhy-la” (broken). His English is improving quickly. His newest phrase has moved from “stinky!” to, “Oh really? Sure!” And nowadays when he wants something, he says, “Please give me!” We’re working on “thank you, [name],” and “you’re welcome!”



←Last month’s photo of the Mao statue was set against blue skies, which is very rare here. This month’s photo is a more normal view. While at the Science/Technology Museum I got a glimpse of the back of the statue for the first time and a great view of the city centre square. Tian Fu Square is typical of middle sized city centre squares with lots of space for walking and festivals. It was in this square some months back that I met several interesting people as I quietly sat “remembering” this city.



←Hudson and Emma are in my 1st-2nd grade class at my weekly flwshp. They know a lot about the stories but are very interested in applying it in their daily lives.

At the beginning of November they said brief prys for a friend of mine who was facing back surgery and the possibility of a report with the word “cancer” in it. As I recall, their words were something like, “J, I ask you to help Miss Angie’s friend. Please don’t let there be any baby goo’s growing in her body. And the big goo (tumor) not to have cancer!...” My friend wrote me (and them) few days later saying there was no cancer – and they were psyched!

Two weeks ago I challenged the class to double a Y1 bill. Again, Hudson and Emma were among four who brought back Y2 the following week. They’re really hungry for more than the “usual” stuff, which makes teaching this class such a joy!

ACTIVITIES...



Someone sent me these pics from the October Fun English Day so I thought I'd share them with you. Caught in the act!!

This coming weekend I get to take part in another cool event. A group of us are going to a countryside registered mtg place to hear stories from believers there. Then we will go to their homes to share a meal, then out to their orchards to pick and purchase fruit from them in order to bless them with a show of our respect for their dedication and commitment. **Stay tuned for more countryside photos next month!**



The weekend before Thanksgiving, close to 100 expat women gathered at a very unusual place (amusement park area) for a ladies retreat. We had such a wonderful time. I enjoyed hanging with my group (pictured at left) and from what I heard, we all left feeling refreshed and challenged in a good way. *Beauty for Ashes* is definitely one for the memory books, for sure! In addition to enjoying the company of "DAD," and each other, we enjoyed having just about every Western restaurant chain here within steps of the hotel entrance. Restaurants such as: Dairy Queen, Starbucks, Casa Mia, Pizza Hut, KFC, McDonalds, and some Japanese noodle shops as well.

←Hurrah! My kitchen sink is still on the balcony, but the balcony is now officially part of the **inside** of the house. Windows were put in on November 30th! *No more excuses for leaving dishes in the sink!!*