



Our "host brothers" – Alex, Seth and Justin Reeves

The Open Mouth

Ezekiel 2:8

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Let's go Dutch!! How much has changed in our lives since the last Open Mouth!!

Three days after we launched our last letter, we finally learned our European destination – The Netherlands! MCYM has assigned Steve as the new Club Beyond Community Director for AFNORTH, a large NATO headquarters. We are quite familiar with command name changes from our days in Naples and sure enough, this summer the name of the base changed from AFNORTH to JFC-Brunssum. (JFC = Joint Forces Command; Brunssum is the Dutch town in which the base is located.) On August 8 we arrived in the Netherlands, or “New Holland” as Caleb calls it (because we’re moving to a “new house” in Holland), and are enjoying our familiarization with our new culture. Here are some of the highlights of this very full two months...



Welcome to Young Life After two weeks driving up the West Coast finishing up our support-raising, Shannon and the boys dropped me off at Multnomah Bible College in Portland, Oregon for my initial Young Life training. The very day we arrived in Portland, we received three emails and two letters that pushed our pledged financial support level over 100%!! We’ve said it before, but we keep learning it afresh: God is often not early, but never late. It was very difficult to be separated from my family for four weeks, but I know it also enabled me to focus more completely on this outstanding training experience. The first week of Cross-cultural Orientation was an excellent opportunity to develop community with other International staff families and a sobering reminder of how difficult ministry in another country can be. The next three weeks included two intensive seminary courses in the life of Christ and youth culture, seminars in leading leaders and multi-cultural ministry, and of course lots of small groups, worship, and wild club meetings. The continually recurring lesson I learned throughout that month was that the single most important thing I can do to “succeed” in youth ministry is to draw ever closer to Christ myself. Though I expected a lot of practical techniques – “X’s and O’s” – the greatest value of my training was a reminder of what should be a fairly obvious truth: “You can’t lead where you haven’t been, so lead yourself to Christ first.” What a challenge!

Europe at last! On August 2, we flew into Frankfurt and found ourselves a day later at a wonderful family hotel for the MCYM welcome conference. Though the heat and jet lag made us weary, the welcome from our new MCYM family made us feel quickly at home and grateful to be back among them in Europe. The boys actually did quite well with jet lag; as we watched a couple other families struggle through the time change we realized it could have been a lot worse!

A week later we got to Holland and met the Reeves family. Chaplain Reeves and his wife Janet, sons Justin, Alex, and Seth — 10th, 7th, and 4th grade — took us in and made us a part of their lives for three and a half weeks while we transitioned and looked for our own house. You should have seen the nine of us living under the same roof! After looking at five houses, we were a bit discouraged that we would need to look at five times that many before finding one that felt like “ours.” But we walked into magic house number six and immediately knew it was the one! The only downside is that it is not available until October 15th. It will be hard to wait that long, but our landlord is finishing the attic (fourth bedroom and storage area) and the house is well worth waiting for. We’ll have plenty of room for guests so we look forward to welcoming any of you that would like to visit! In the meantime, we have moved into a small furnished apartment where we’ll live for about the next six weeks.

On August 24, we all experienced the unique adventure of picking up our cars at the port of Antwerp, Belgium. This undertaking involved a series of stops to pick-up release documents, pay for unloading fees, get customs clearances ... at each desk my heart went into my throat with the anxiety that I didn’t have the right piece of paper, stamp, signature or approval, or that the one person who could help me was on vacation. After three hours and three hundred Euros in fees, we went to the “last” stop, the vehicle lot, only to be told, “I don’t have those cars.” Off to another yard of containers we went, hoping our cars were in fact unloaded from the ship. What a relief it was thirty minutes later to see a mobile crane carrying a container bearing a number I had come to know well: TTNU 572567-8. A few minutes later, we drove our cars right out the end of the container and back to the Netherlands. What an exhilarating moment of freedom that was! ☺





Beth (top right) and some high school girls

We really are working with teens!!! For the past eight months, although it seems we have been continually *talking* to friends, family, and strangers about ministering to military teens, sometimes the idea of actually *doing* youth ministry seemed like a distant concept. Once in a while, little doubts would nag at my heart – “You’re not around teens at all – how do you know this is really where God is leading you?”, “Will you have any rapport with teens?”, “Will you enjoy it?” Well, I have only just barely begun this life of full-time youth ministry, but I found my first day of walking around our high school campus ... refreshing, energizing, and encouraging! On Friday, August 21, we had our first formal meeting with teens, a student leadership planning meeting

with ten core returning kids who were involved in Club Beyond here last year. We both enjoyed getting to know them a little bit and there seemed to be enthusiasm for reaching out to their high school. Three of these teens also came to help out running our Middle School kick-off club the following Wednesday. Thirty-eight seventh and eighth graders turned up for pizza. Many were definitely new to Club Beyond (we heard one girl say “I thought Wild Life was a nature club”); we pray they will continue to come back through the year to hear the great story of Jesus. You may be wondering how on earth I’ve had time to jump right into a busy ministry schedule in the midst of a confusing transition time while living in someone else’s home. I can answer that in two words: Beth Landrum. I am extremely grateful for my fabulous Associate Director who’s hard work has made it possible for me to essentially just show up and have fun hanging out with the teens. Thanks Beth!

The Big Chase! (by Shannon) One of the highlights of the MCYM Welcome Conference for Caleb was the glass elevator, which we took all the time, even when our destination was only one floor away. Caleb also LOVED playing in the “Happy Club,” a childcare play area full of big trucks for Caleb to play with in the sand. After lunch one day Caleb was suddenly nowhere to be found. We were making our way out of the dining area and he had slipped away from us un-noticed. It is hard for me to describe what I felt when I realized he was gone, but if you are a parent, I expect that you’ve experienced similar moments. About 65% of me panicked! Did he get on the elevator? If so what floor was he on and who would kidnap him and take him away from me forever? The other 35% of my rational mind was saying, “It’s only been a minute, this hotel isn’t very big, he’s somewhere close by, and he’s OK.” The 65% won and I ran after him. I would pursue him until I found him, and I couldn’t run fast enough. It couldn’t have been more than about three minutes that Steve and I and a few other staff members looked when I found him safely inside Happy Club, very happily playing with a giant excavator in the sand. He was oblivious to our frantic pursuit, and also unaware of my grateful delight in finding him. My son was desperately lost and joyously found all in the span of about five long minutes. I would run after him again and again because of the depth of my love for him.



As I thought about those five minutes later in the day, it struck me that we came over here to tell the story of another passionate pursuit. We want the teens here to know that God loves them to a degree that they will never fully comprehend. The pain that I experienced in those five minutes was horrible. But God chose a pain worse than that; He watched His son die--all to let me, and you, and the teens here at AFNORTH know how He feels about us. It feels good—better than good—to know that someone loves me like that, and will run after me just so I know. God’s love is so far beyond what I can comprehend. It seems as I get older, and especially since I’ve become a mom, that I have a whole new picture of how much He loves me, His precious child. Pray that hearts here will be open to hear about that crazy chase, and soft to respond to the One who went to such great lengths.

“Imagine a woman who has ten coins and loses one. Won’t she light a lamp and scour the house, looking in every nook and cranny until she finds it? And when she finds it you can be sure she’ll call her friends and neighbors: ‘Celebrate with me! I’ve found my lost coin!’ Count on it—that’s the kind of party God’s angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God.” (Lk 15:8-10 The Message)

In Christ, Steve and Shannon

MCYM: Building the Church, celebrating life with teens, introducing them to the Lifegiver, and helping them to become more like Him.

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