

♫♪"Oh there's no place like home for the holidays"♪♫

You might be celebrating the holidays 'away from home' if…

- ...if you have become obsessed with trying to find a turkey to cook for the big holiday meal. Buying a whole turkey is not a common thing here! The local grocery stores have looked at us like we are complete aliens when we have gone in and asked if there was a way to purchase a whole turkey. "Why?! It's not Christmas yet. We don't sell whole turkeys until Christmas." Okay… I get that Thanksgiving isn't a holiday here and it's not customary to cook an entire turkey at any time other than Christmas Eve, but I would really like a turkey for Thanksgiving. Not only for us, but for the three North American families who will be celebrating together. By the way… forget a spiral cut honey baked ham! That's not happening, either!

- ...if you cheer and throw your hands in the air when you finally find a corner butcher who has a whole turkey! First, he thought we were nuts. Then he thought it was cute. Then he realized we were from the States, and he was excited for us. Then he gave us sausage as a bonus gift for his 'new Texas friends'. I think the butcher is my new best friend.

- ...if you have to create your ingredients for the big meal from scratch… like, EVERYTHING! Today, we made home-made brown sugar. There is no such thing as a can of pumpkin - we'll have get a real pumpkin or fake it with sweet potatoes. Forget the refrigerated pie crust. No box of Jiffy cornbread here. No can of chicken broth. Nope… no Velveeta, no Cool Whip, no Karo syrup, etc. Cooking Thanksgiving and Christmas meals requires lots of planning and preparation!

- ...if you have to juggle school schedules with your meal plans and holiday festivities (because this holiday is NOT a day off here).

I won't lie… that first two years here, doing Christmas without family, THAT was hard. And last year, we were back in Texas for Thanksgiving and Christmas. We had a time to celebrate with family, to cook the foods we miss, and to participate in the traditions that we love. But, here's the thing. Although we do miss being in Texas for holidays, we also have great traditions in our Spain home, too.


Billy's mom is here for the Holidays this year.

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...Home for the Holidays



We love that we can be surrounded by friends and new family here. Last year, Thanksgiving in Texas was a juggling act of trying to juggle people's schedules and football games and work. In the end, only the three of us and our mothers were able to have dinner together. This year, 16 of our friends and family gathered in our home in Spain for dinner. We celebrated with a family from Puerto Rico (USA), a family from Mexico/ Texas, Billy's mom, and a family from Spain. The Spain family are commonly referred to as "Sarah's Spanish Family", as they adopted her (and us) years ago and they are never not involved with us. If a day or two goes by without contact, they check in on us. If Sarah has a cold, they want to take her to the doctor or bring her a home remedy. In fact, each of these families is so special to us and is so closely connected to us that we consider them family. So, when I say that we celebrated with friends and family, I mean it in every sense of the word! I'm thankful for these great people.

There are several things that I'm especially thankful for during the holidays in Spain:

- I'm thankful for the street scene in Spain for the holidays. It is so wonderful to stroll down the sidewalks, bundled up in big coats and blanket scarves and boots, with the warm glow of the Christmas lights.



- I'm thankful for chestnuts! Remember the Christmas song, "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire…"? Well, I grew up singing that song and NEVER in my life saw a chestnut actually roasting on an open fire. Until now! Chestnuts being roasted on a fire are common on every street corner.

- I'm thankful for a warm fire and lots of blankets. Okay, to be honest, the warm fire is a major necessity and not just an nice little winter touch. We do not have heat in our home. Each night, we reach lows of freezing and below. It is a rare morning that our yard is not covered with frost. Scraping ice from the windshield is a daily occurrence. So, the fire is important!

- And I'm thankful for candles! We have family Advent candles on our dining room table. Every day at lunch time - because lunch is the daily big family meal in Spain - we gather to read an advent reading and share a moment together and light the candle for the day. It's a nice moment in the middle of the day where we can be together, focus in, and feel grounded and centered. Somehow, the stress just melts away in that moment.



- We are VERY thankful for YOU! Because of our partners in ministry (THAT'S YOU!), we are able to continue to work here in Spain. Because of you, we are able to help empower church leaders, to train Sunday School teachers, to lead youth bible studies, and to connect with adults in intentional discipleship and community. Because of you, we continue to train new mission workers and to coach and counsel cross-cultural workers in Europe and the Middle East and other areas of the globe. Because of you, we continue to reach out to immigrants in Spain, to serve refugees in camps in Greece, and to help build cultural bridges of understanding among many people. YOU are effecting change and making a difference… your prayers and your sacrificial financial giving are MAKING A DIFFERENCE! For that, we are truly thankful!

Pray for us as we spend another holiday season away from Texas. It won't be easy. It never is. We miss our boys. We miss our mothers / brothers / sisters / friends more than ever during these times. And thank God that He has surrounded us with friends and family here in Spain that help us to have new traditions and feel loved and connected. We are home for the holidays, because home is both in Texas, and in Spain - home is where you have relationship roots, home is where you are loved!

~ Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas from

Laurie, Billy, and Sarah



Did you know that you can give a gift to the ministry in honor of someone else? Or that you can give in their name as a special Christmas gift to them? Did you know that your gift to this ministry effects hundreds (actually thousands) of lives?

During this holiday season, would you consider giving a special gift for ministry? During the year, we receive financial gifts that help us to live work overseas and do the ministry that God has called us to. God has always been faithful, as have many of you, and we always have what is needed to meet the budget… sometimes we 'just make it', but we manage to make it.

End of year giving is what pushes us over the hump and makes up the deficit from the year. If you find yourself in a position to give a little something extra for the end of the year, please consider these options:



- **Fund bible study hospitality and coffee ($40 per month = $480 for the year)…** Did you know that the majority of our discipleship and bible study time is done over coffee and a sweet? This is how this culture functions. Meetings are almost always at a café. If we're not in a café, then we meet in the homes of others, or we open our home for meetings. But there is ALWAYS coffee and a small snack. That means that we spend significant time in mom-and-pop type coffee shops, or preparing coffee and banana bread or snacks to host a study group. Do you have the gift of hospitality? Consider an end-of-year gift to help with this part of the ministry.



- **Fund a youth retreat ($700)…** This year, we were able to take our youth group on an overnight retreat to a camp near our town. It was an amazing time of prayer and study and growth… and some fun and play, too! We wanted to have a retreat twice a year (one Spring and one Fall), but we were unable to do the funding. Your end-of-year-gift of $700 could fund a retreat for the youth of Antequera.



- **Fund care and counseling for a missionary family in need of debrief and rest ($500)…** as a part of our care ministry, we host missionary families who find themselves in need - in need of a break from a traumatic situation, in need of a safe place in times of political unrest, in need of care when the work has pulled them under. This year, we have hosted several families in these situations. Our arrangement with them is that they pay their travel expenses, and we will care for them in Spain free of charge. We host them in our home, make home-cooked meals, care for their children, have counseling sessions with the adults, and give them time and space and tools so they can go back in to the field healthier and restored. You can be a part of this restoration and care ministry by helping us to defray the costs of hosting, meals, on-ground transportation, and care for these missionaries. By doing so, you help not only the missionaries themselves, but you help to keep them on the field so they can continue to help others. Please consider an end-of-year gift of $500 to help one missionary family in need of care.



- **Sponsor a Sunday School class ($20 per month = $240 for the year)…** Did you know that Laurie & Billy are the Sunday school directors for the church they serve. This includes adult and children's classes. This also includes the role of actually WRITING the curriculum, printing out the lessons and booklets, training teachers, and coordinating activities. The church they serve only has a working budget of $24,000 for the YEAR, and that includes the full-time pastor's salary, operating budget of the church building, and the cost of a satellite church and several outreaches within the county. The church budget is STRETCHED! As a result, the Drum's budget is currently covering Sunday school costs. A year end gift of $240 would cover the cost of materials and necessities for a Sunday school group (there are 4 total classes at the church). A gift of **$960** would cover the entire Sunday school department for a year!



- **Support ministry among refugees ($1000)…** Billy and Laurie will be returning to partner again with the refugee relief being done along the European borders. As winter progresses, fewer and fewer volunteers are present in the camps and the ministries that are serving refugees are short-handed. The need continues to be staggering. Your end-of-year gift of $1000 would allow one of us to assist and give relief to workers who have been with the refugee crisis for many months. **$2000** would allow both of us to return and give the support and love that is needed during this difficult situation.

Any amount of end-of-year giving would be greatly appreciated. The above ideas are just that - ideas, options, examples of real ministry costs. There are many other ministry costs that we cover, as well. Any gift would be a gift to the people we serve, in Spain and around the globe. Thank you for your continued love and prayers for the ministry the people we serve!

To give a special end-of-year gift, please mail the card on the reverse side of this page, or go online at www.themissionsociety.org/give , scroll down to the Give to a Missionary box on that page, and post your gift.

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- Sharing the Love of Christ with the least, the lost, and the left out… immigrants, displaced peoples, the lonely, the abandoned, those who need a friend.
- Nurturing and developing people to be healthy spiritually, physically, emotionally, and relationally - because "care" is not just an emotional feeling word, "care" is a verb - an action. That's who we are… the care-givers!



DEAR BILLY AND LAURIE,

☐ I will pray for you.

☐ As God provides, I plan to partner with you by giving $ _____ Per month / quarter / year for _____ years.

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