

The Christmas season brings with it a mix of contrasting emotions. I love Christmas for many reasons. It allows me to focus on the birth of my Savior, provides for an opportunity to spend time with family, to enjoy the beautiful decorations, and many other reasons. But unfortunately, the Christmas season also brings with it not so desirable realities; busyness in preparing for various ministries, sadness in not being able to spend the season with our families, and disappointment that most people, especially here in east Asia, don't remember Christ during this season. And because of this last reality, God has brought us here as missionaries to use whatever means possible to bring the light of Christ into the hearts of those living outside the road system.

**FINALLY AIRBORNE!** Finally, two and a half years later, we were able to complete the certification on one of our aircraft in October of this year. This was a major milestone in our efforts to resuscitate missionary aviation in this area. Unfortunately, due to the flooding of our airfield, the next milestone had to wait a little longer but the waiting is over. A day before Thanksgiving, in God's sovereign plan, on November 25 and together with the local missionary pilot and my wife as the media representative, we left the frozen runway along with the many questions of uncertainty behind us and circled the airfield. The first flight consisted of mostly take-off and landings and maneuvers near the airfield. The airplane did great; the pilots could do a little better (that is usually the case). With all the legal documentation in order, a decent workshop, and a covering for an airplane (hard to call it a hangar), we are intent on continuing the flights into the winter months. We will begin with shorter flights to familiar airfields and build up our experience for flights to more remote and difficult areas.

**TECHNICAL PROGRESS** The long wait and struggle to get the freshly overhauled engines over to us has ended. In November, both engines safely arrived. We were expecting to not have to change them immediately but instead focus on flying since we finally have one of the aircraft flying, and as time allows, work on replacing the engine on the second aircraft (Cessna 182). Waiting will not work, since the Cessna 182 also needs to be certified by the end of this year, and for that to happen the engine must be replaced, immediately! The reason is that in January 2021, federal regulations for general aviation will change again, substantially. This time, it seems like it'll be a change in our favor, but since this change completely changes the certification process, it'll take some time for everyone, including the local aviation authorities to figure out how to comply with the new regulations. As you might remember from previous letters and pictures of our hangar (tent over the airplane), that it's not the ideal place to change the engine when temperatures are -4 degrees F with wind chill making it feel even colder! It was necessary to build an enclosed room inside the hangar where the temperature can be raised a little. Now, the engine change is in full swing and by the time you read this letter, Lord willing, the airplane will be test flown with the new engine.

**MINISTRY BUSYNESS** Besides working on the aircraft, we are preparing for the annual Christmas program tour. Every Christmas season (which starts after New Year in this area), together with local believers and the help of the SGA-supported Immanuel's Child outreach, we visit several villages, mostly outside the usual road system (accessible by car only in the winter) and put on a Christmas program for the kids. The difficulties in preparing for this kind of a trip are the many areas of uncertainty. Many factors can change last minute, especially these days with COVID-19. The weather can affect when we go and how long we stay in some of these villages. If the weather shifts our plans, that will affect who will be able to come and finally, the local administration might decide last minute that they don't want us to conduct such an event, and so we plan and prepare with this understanding. We plan to visit five

villages this Christmas season. This year once again, we will take part in this road tour, but next year, Lord willing, we'll do something similar for Christmas by air!

**PROGRESS ON THE HOUSE** In my last update I mentioned that our house was not quite ready for winter (specifically the heating system was not yet installed). Thanks to many of you who prayed for us and helped, we got the heating system installed in time for the freezing temperatures. The house still has a way to go, but it is starting to feel like a home and not just a project

**A STORY OF GOD'S GRACE** Shortly after our first flight, we conducted a ministry flight into a village difficult to reach, but only a short distance away. [t's a village that already has a small church, thanks to many years of faithful ministry by local missionaries. In our desire to practice visiting familiar locations as we work towards reaching vast areas of the Far East, we chose the familiar village of Po. Here is a comparison of various modes of transportation: in the summer this village is accessible by boat (6 hours). Yet during the winter months, by ice road (3-4 hours), and year-round by plane (30 minutes). Together with a local pastor who planted the church in Po and another brother from our church, we departed our airfield near K at 9 am. We landed in Po at 9:30 am and were at the church building by 9:45 am. We enjoyed a cup of tea and discussed plans for the church service, which started at 1 am. The pastor who came with me led the service and conducted communion, and I preached. In one way, it was a very typical Sunday morning service but for this local congregation it was anything but typical. There are seven believers in Po. Six of them and their children were present that Sunday. It's very rare for them to have someone visit them and encourage them in fellowship and God's Word. Following the service, they brought out the hot tea and sweets. We visited for a little longer and headed back out to the airfield. After a short visit with the airport manager, we departed at 1:30pm and were back in K at 2pm. We could have stayed longer, but the local pastor who came with me had his local church service to attend, which began at 3pm. Seems like a very basic Preaching to the village of Po. with not much excitement or struggle. That is exactly the point I am trying to get across. Without the aircraft in the picture, the story would be much more exciting to tell. How we travelled many hours in an overcrowded 1970 boat with only standing spots available, and mosquitos and giant flies attacking us along the way. Or the many hours traveling along the frozen rivers, being vigilant to stay on the path which has been almost completely erased by the constant winds, in order to avoid driving into an area of thin ice caused by hot streams or air pockets creating ice layers. Both above-mentioned scenarios we've experienced traveling to Po, and honestly, if given the choice, I'll take the less adventurous, simpler and certainly much quicker option of flying. By God's provision, today we have that option! Thank you for your many prayers and faithful support of our ministry through SGA.