

Dear Family and Friends,

Ah, Christmas time... colorful lights and festive decorations, presents, yummy food, family and friends, fun and sacred carols to sing... and the list goes on. But what is the basis for our celebrations? Looking back, it all began in a rustic stable with dirty animals, two new amazed parents holding a beautiful baby boy - Emmanuel (God with us!) and shepherds. Have you ever wondered why the Lord choose the lowest of society -the shepherds- to receive an angelic chorus announcing Christ's birth; to be the first to see the Christ child; and then in full of wonder, go and tell that the Messiah had come?

Many times as we drive out from Quito into the mountainous countryside, we see young shepherds dressed in colorful woolen ponchos (like the one at the bottom of the page) braving the cold to lead their sheep to better pasture. They take them on steep rocky trails, broad flat paths or on roads with cars zipping around them, all the while making sure that not one of their flock is hurt or missing. As they lead their flocks out to the safety of the highland pasture, the sheep settle in, eat well and rest knowing that their shepherd has a watchful eye on them and the surrounding area.

Our Lord refers to Himself as a Shepherd (Ps.23) and later as the Good Shepherd (John10). Being a shepherd is very close the Lord's heart as He relates to His children (His flock). He leads us to better pastures. He cares for and protects us. He loves his flock and says, "... Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have summoned you by name, you are mine." (Is.43:1) Yes, the shepherds were the perfect ones to announce that the Messiah had come, leading others to Him!

The Lord has led us this past year in many exciting ways. We give praise for...

Stacy's health: A year has past since she had surgery to correct an anatomical defect that caused a blood clot in her arm. She has had a clean bill of health and no complications!

Team Ecuador: Despite several transitions, it has been a great joy to see our team grow closer as we work in ministries that support a common vision! The extended team includes US and Canadian missionary families as well as Spanish and Quichua speaking Ecuadorians who live in Quito and Guayaquil - Ecuador's two largest cities.

Our girls: It is both a joy and challenge to raise 2 active preschoolers. We daily see in ourselves that we can't do it, and our dependence has to be upon Him. It is His grace, love, patience, understanding and sense of humor that we need... and He provides!

We thank you for your love and support!! In 2007, may the Good Shepherd lead us all into exciting new places on our way to green pastures!

**Feliz Navidad y
Prospero Año Nuevo**

**Love in Christ,
Craig & Stacy
Karis & Aimee**