

Dear family and friends ,

Thanks for your your thoughts and prayers in response to our consultation.
Here's the update,

Short report: Basically not much to report yet, the meeting was postponed on short notice.

Long report: We didn't actually have the meeting yet, we were sent home for more paperwork, not altogether unexpectedly. Some more documents to compose, translated, and prepare for a meeting. I was asked make a list of the agricultural development items that I hope to introduce to the country to present to officials. That was an enjoyable exercise in review of things that have not been in the forefront of my thinking for a while. So, now it is the time of the Asian spring festival on Jan. 30 for Mongolia and things will be a bit slow in the bureaucracy of the country till that is past. The director of our organization, Turkhuu, is out of country for most of the rest of this month as well. The chairman of our organizations name is Dulmaa, she is kind of taking things in hand as she is older and has some connections in the ministry of agriculture. I have forwarded her my list of the top 15 items which are needed here for agriculture modernization translated into Mongolian. She has a good agriculture vocabulary and will edit it and prepare to contact some of her friends in high places, perhaps as soon as this week. Dulmaa has said that there will be some officials who couldn't care less what I have to offer the country, and others who would be supportive. From an agricultural perspective of the small farmer it would be a shame for them to not welcome me to the country because what we have to teach and demonstrate could be extremely empowering to the small farmers. But the country is progressing agriculturally the same as the rest of the world into huge farms subsidized by the government, so from the perspective of the big farmers and their buddies in high places there's really no need for small farmers to be growing a pig and a few chickens on their homestead.

What we actually have seen lately is a vision for is putting the requisite knowledge and information into the hands of the people who want to make a living off of a small homestead. There are many people here being given new life in Jesus, and they tend to stop sinning after that and start looking for something to do with their time. Most of them are recovering from alcohol, no longer hireable due to age, etc, and want to do something agriculturally since it looks easy and the opportunities are economically attractive. But they have simply never done it before. For us it's as easy as falling off a log having 300 years of homesteading tradition behind our lifestyles in the US. We feel like we are here to pour out into the lives of those who wish to learn all that we have been given of wisdom and skill in managing God's creation.

What has been on our minds lately is starting an agricultural training center, which would put our work under the auspices of the department of science and education rather than the ministry of agriculture. Some have advised this course of action. We are open to the suggestion. We are really here to teach and train by demonstration. It is quite possible that we can operate a profitable small farm in the country which can double as a self supporting training center, not needing gov't support or international grants or aid. But, there are lots of obstacles and challenges to do that. We are reminded of the work of George

Washington Carver as fairly well representing what we'd like to do. We live a mile from one of the biggest ag research centers in the country, and have developed personal connections with one of the key people there who is leading the development of virus free seed potato production. She is very friendly to us and except for being so busy with her work, very supportive.

We have identified a dairy farm as the potential centerpiece of our operation and have been moving that direction since last summer. Yesterday we were provided with an excellent bull on short notice from one of the best small dairy farms in the country, started by a man, Bill Yoder, many years ago. They were finished using him and priced him much lower than we were expecting. It was a four hour drive one way and had to be scheduled for the warmest part of the day so as not to freeze them on the way home. We got two "queen" cows as well. Now we are faced with the challenge of getting the cattle bred in cold weather since if they are outdoors at night, when the most beneficial breeding activity takes place, they can freeze their udders. We are trying to breed for fall calving so as to take advantage of the winter milk prices which are three times the summer ones. It would be possible with 20 cows producing 20 liters per day to make a good living here. So our plans are slowly taking shape. We have a strong desire to have a legitimate profitable business base for long term living here. If we could have peak milk coincide with peak pricing and have the cows dried off in the summer we would be free to travel and do other things in the summer.

I took Naomi and the children to see the Yoder farm first, and she really had a sense of relief at the idea of doing something like that again as it reminded her of the steady life and routine of her childhood growing up on a dairy farm. So she's ready to go emotionally and it looks doable to her, and that's important.

So, thanks for your continued thoughts and prayers,

We'll keep you posted,

Tim and Naomi and family
Darkhan, Mongolia