

The Meeker's Annual Christmas Letter (uuh - booklet!)



Happy Holidays!

Wow. I thought last year was busy. However, I didn't have an active little one for most of the year! Lee, Piper, and I have been very busy this year, full of adventure and growth, and we wanted to fill you in on the latest news. (Below, Piper at 3 months, 6 months, 6 months, and 1 Year; 1 Year at left! -- Isn't the change in a year just amazing?)

A lot has happened this year, so this year's letter is a bit longer and full of more pictures than usual. We hope you enjoy it!



Last Christmas was a lot of fun. It was a little tiring, but Lee and I are learning how to do things at a little slower pace. We have a sweet little angel to think about now. We spent the day at my mom and dad's home. Lee's parents came over, as did his grandmother, my grandparents, Aunt Nell, and Kim. It was a long and fun day, filled with bottles and naps. Piper was just figuring out what presents were about (she really liked the pretty ribbon the best!), and Morgan found his quickly and put his little nose right in! Piper had a pretty Christmas dress with a smocked Santa and reindeer across the top. Santa was good to Miss Piper, giving her clothes, toys, and some stuff for later in the year. She wasn't sure about the Santa thing just yet, but I'm sure this year, Santa will be a fun surprise for her.



New Year's Eve we spent with Lee's parents, aunts, and grandmother and we had a second Christmas opening there.



In January, we got together with our "prenatal" class for a reunion. Everyone brought their babies and it was really neat. Piper was the oldest (I had her about 4 days after the class ended) followed closely by some twins, who were due in November, but came in September. All were happy and healthy. The reunion was such a good idea!

Also in January, Lee and I began to talk about the future. I love being at home with Piper, but my job at USC was a two year position and was to end in June of this year. We talked and talked about what to do. I really wanted to teach -- that was my goal and the reason I went on to grad school. However, it was difficult to even think about leaving Piper. At the time, she was four months old and doing something new every day. (Of course, she still is doing new things daily!) We prayed about it, discussed it, and I decided to look around and see what God would open up for me. Little did I know what He had in mind!

In February, we took a couple of trips with the little one. We went down to Myrtle Beach for an extended weekend and had a really great time. Piper loved to go shopping, but it was too cold to go out on the beach, so we waited until July before introducing Piper to the ocean. We also went down to Charleston one Saturday and really enjoyed going to the new aquarium. Personally, I like Ripley's aquarium at Myrtle Beach better, but this one was nice and Piper loved watching the fish. She was just entranced. First, she looked up at the ceiling, where the reflection from some of the fish with silver fins and the water made interesting patterns. Then, she noticed the fish themselves and she was "hooked." It was a lot of fun to take her there.

FURMAN

Early in the year, I was looking through the job listings. I wanted to find a teaching position (if possible) near enough to commute from the house.

Looking through the listings, I saw one advertised for Furman. WOW! I was so excited. However, I considered the commute (about 1.5 - 2 hours each way) and Lee and I talked it over very carefully. I'd looked at other jobs as well, but this one really jumped out at me. We talked about what we would do with Piper and how it would affect us. We decided that I should look further into the job and so I applied. Tom Allen (the current department chair) asked me to come for an interview. Now, interviews for professors consist of pretty much the whole day. First, (typically) you go and talk individually with each of the current faculty. Then, you may meet with some students and at some point meet the Dean and/or President of the institution. You also are expected to give a talk about your current research at a level which the students can understand. Furman was no exception to this style, and I had a great time. I mean, how often do you get to lecture your old professors? I also got to meet with 4 students for lunch (the dining hall has not changed that much I'm afraid ;*>). I don't know what it is about Furman, but every time I return there it's like I've gone home. I was nervous in the drive up to Greenville, but relaxed as soon as I stepped onto campus.



Well, I was offered a position at Furman which (after talking with Lee) I happily accepted. I will teach four classes my first year; I've taught similar classes at USC, but while the class sizes are a lot smaller the courses are more intense, so I'm very excited about it. You see, Furman meets Monday - Friday (instead of Monday/Wednesday/Friday and Tuesday/Thursday classes like USC), so I will have many more lectures to prepare. During the summer, I obtained copies of the books for two of the classes (for Fall and Winter term) and began to read and make out my lecture plans, syllabi, labs, etc.



Piper's First Easter

This year, we had a very special Easter. Little miss Piper gave us a really fun time. She was dressed in her pretty pink Easter dress and the Easter Bunny came by with some fun things! We also visited family that day, traveling to Camden and Sumter.





Piper's First Long Drive



In May, we took Piper on her first long road trip -- she traveled to Benton, PA to meet her great-grandfather Harvey. She took the trip well, and for her sake (and ours) we stopped about every 2-3 hours along the way (making this a long trip) mostly at Cracker Barrels. Those rocking chairs were just the trick for little Miss Piper. The food isn't bad, either! Piper's great-grandpa was celebrating his 90th birthday and there was a party at Lee's Uncle Ron's lake house. It was a nice get-together and everyone had a good time. He seemed so surprised to see us; especially Piper.



We stayed at the Red Poppy Bed and Breakfast there and it was really nice. We had a wonderful time and would love to stay there again. Would you believe that I forgot to take a picture of it? Me, the queen of pictures! Oh, well. Next time!



On the way back through, we stopped and visited with our friends Clif and Kim Presser and heard all about their plans for a new house. It was great to see them again. Then, we traveled on through VA and stopped at the Jordan Hollow Farm Inn for the night. That's where Lee and I spent our first anniversary. It was not too far from the Interstate and we thought it would be nice to visit there again. The breakfast was wonderful and Piper got to see her first horses and llamas there! However, she was more impressed with the little pond out front. This trip was her first viewing of cats as well, as Clif and Kim have Ben and Charlotte and the Jordan Hollow is full of cats (one of which snuck into our room).





Our First Mother's Day

May 13th was Mother's Day -- my first. St. Andrew's Baptist made it special by having a very special parent/baby dedication service. Now, when Piper was 4 weeks old, Dr. Edwards (now retired) presented her to the church. This service was different though. All the parents of the last year were invited to dedicate their lives and family to the Lord -- to promise to bring up the little one's the way God would wish. Only Piper can decide to invite Jesus into her life, but we must give her a good example to go by and "bring her up in the way she should go." She was very sweet during the service and the day was very special. After church, we went to California Dreaming with my parents, Aunt Nell, and Kim. Then, Lee and I finished the day by taking Piper to the zoo. We had such a great time.



Our First Father's Day

In May, we took Piper for her second picture spread at Wal-Mart. She was 8 months old and they turned out really cute! We thought it would be neat to give our fathers pictures of the three of us (Lee, Piper, and I) when we were all 8 months old. (Lee - left, Paige - right, Piper - below)



For Father's Day, we decided we would visit our "fathers." Lee, Piper, and I went to Camden and Sumter to visit with our family and had a very nice day.



Quill America, 2001

June 1st and 2nd was a wonderful time! Over the last year, I had been planning "Quill America, 2001." This is the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the North American Quilling Guild. Quillers from all over the US (18 different states), Canada, and England attended. We had such a wonderful time and the artwork was just breathtaking. You have to see it to believe it!



Friday evening, we met for a casual get-together at the Colony Inn Cafe in Camden. Then, on Saturday, the meeting was held at the Fine Arts Center. We began with some speakers and then dealt with Guild business. Then, we were able to view each other's work, eat lunch, and allow the public to come in and view the art. It was really exciting! Finally, Saturday evening, we went to Aberdeen, where we dined in the beautiful garden and enjoyed horse and carriage rides. Everyone had a wonderful time. I must admit, it was challenging to plan and coordinate everything with Piper around; when I put Camden into the mix for this year's AGM, I thought "she'll sleep a lot." (Yes, all you moms out there are laughing at me!) But, with Lee's help and my parents' help in looking after her, I was able to get everything planned and it was certainly worth it.



Other Fun Firsts of the Year

During the year, we had many of the "firsts" you expect with a little one, as well as a few we didn't! She got her first teeth (she currently has 12), she crawled for the first time (she can really move now!), she pulled up on furniture for the first time (she's taking steps now), she ate her first cereal (left), her first cookie (right) and her first table food, she drank from her first straw (very successfully -- we had a hard time getting her to move back to the sippy cup!), she said her first words (Mama, Daddy, Baba, bird, og (dog), duck, and touch). Her first tastes of table food included (of all things) pickles and lemons! She just seemed to love sour stuff. She's also had (as of now) cantaloupe, strawberries, apple, mashed potatoes and gravy, baked potatoes, chicken, carrots, sweet potatoes, spaghetti, applesauce, honeydew, crab, hush puppies, bread, rice, bananas, beef, turkey, dressing, broccoli, rice, mashed potatoes, grits (with ketchup), and a Little Debbie oatmeal pie!



A number of our friends/family were blessed with little ones this year. We'd like to congratulate Brian and Sherry Parris in the birth of their son, Adam; Lynn and Walt Ginn in the birth of their son, Harrison; Steve and Tanya Mabry in the birth of their daughter, Allison; Deborah and David Rea in the birth of their son, Hampton; Kelly and Ollie DeBure in the birth of their daughter, Alex; Mark and Julie Blomeke in the birth of their son, Gareth; Clif and Kim Presser in the birth of their son, Collin; Becky and John Gonyer in the birth of their daughter, Morgan; Susan and George McGregor in the birth of their twin sons, Will and Finn; Kristine and Bill Hobbs in the birth of their son, Will; Darrin and Michelle Wilcox in the birth of their son, Nicholas; and Kay and Guerry Hensley in the birth of their daughter Sybil. Piper will have friends to play with here in Columbia and up and down the east coast! When the little ones get old enough, we should start them mailing (or emailing) each other.

June 29, 2001 marked my last day at USC. It was both sad and happy, as I was ready to move on to (or is that back to) Furman. I had a last meeting, finished up last minute things, and turned in my key. I wish the Perobase project all the luck and funding it needs in the future!



Our First Vacation



So, what did I do with myself after USC? Why, Lee and I decided to do the adventurous thing and take Piper and Morgan down to Myrtle Beach for a week. So, June 30th, PC, Buttercup, and Samuel went down to the Sunset Animal Clinic for boarding and we took an 8 year old Sheltie and a 9 month old baby in a Malibu down to Ocean Drive. We rented a smaller place this year that was across the street from the ocean. Morgan and I enjoyed morning walks on the beach and Piper got to experience tide pools, the ocean, sand and mud (what fun!), and the wonderful fresh ocean air. I love the beach and I hope she will, too. Mama, Daddy, Aunt Nell, and Kim came down for part of the week, and Piper began really moving that week. She started out with the "army man" crawl (on her tummy) and then advanced slowly to the regular crawl, though she sometimes tried an elephant walk (on hands and feet!). She had four teeth at this point and could bite into things.

While there, we took Piper to the newly opened "Butterfly Pavilion." There, she was just amazed to see all these wonderful, delicate, flying creatures all around her. She got a little irritated that I wouldn't let her touch them, but seemed satisfied to look (most of the time). There is also a lorikeet aviary there, and one of the birds landed on me, so I took it to show her. She (of course) wanted to touch it, too. It was a really neat place to visit, but a little pricy to get in. However, your ticket is good for two days and multiple trips in those two days, so I guess that's OK. Piper really loved it.

She also loved the Sea Captain's (my favorite restaurant there). There, she had her first real banana (off my plate) and she really got into that. She cooed at everyone and was just the world's most perfect child. She later tasted the crab, hushpuppies, and other fruit from the Sea Captain's.

Piper and I actually went back to the beach at the end of July with Aunt Nell and Kim; Lee joined us for the weekend. Piper and I visited Ripley's Aquarium and she was overjoyed at the tunnel. She pointed and cooed as the fish swam over her head. I thought she'd like the "rainbow row" area, where all the colorful tropical fish live, but she really liked that tunnel the best. We went back a couple of times (we thought it best to get a membership) and she really loved it. The word "fish" was added to her repertoire.



St. Andrew's Preschool



Then, the day came that I'd dreaded all summer. Her first day of preschool. At the ripe old age of 11 months, Piper headed off to St. Andrew's Baptist to join their preschool ministry on Aug. 22. She seems to really like it, though it's been hard on her Daddy and I. She gets to play all day with the other children and there are always 1 adult to every 3 children. She plays and has fun with her friends there and we pick her up at the end of the day. It's an adjustment, but one that has both advantages and disadvantages. All in all, we believe it was a good choice for us, and St. Andrews couldn't be a better place. They have several different programs to fit into your schedule, so it works out perfectly. She has three teachers during the day; Ms. Betty, Ms. Wanda, and Ms. Carol.

Well, after about a week, Piper was really "into" school. She was reaching for her teachers when we dropped her off and to this day, she loves to go. It really makes me feel better about leaving her when I know she's being well taken care of. When they found out we had a dog, they taught her to say "woof-woof" and now almost everything with fur is a woof-woof. Our little woof-woof (Morgan) is growing accustomed to the increasingly mobile Piper. The school even had a little get-together for the parents and teachers, complete with balloons and games for the children. We got pictures of each of her teachers there. (Above, left to right - Wanda, Betty, and Carol with Piper!)



Furman



My first day at Furman was September 4th and the first day of classes was September 11th. Our hearts go out to all who were personally affected by the events on that tragic day and our prayers are with our country's leaders and our servicemen who are putting their lives on the line to protect our freedom.

Furman is so wonderful. So much has changed and yet the core reasons for being there are the same. If any of you Furman grads haven't visited the campus in awhile, you will find a lot has been added. There's an amphitheater on the other side of the lake, with decent restrooms (something the lake didn't provide before!). The chapel is just beautiful, there's a soccer stadium, Timmon's Arena is now a host to many Greenville events, John's Hall and Riley Hall are gorgeous new classroom buildings, and the apartments on campus for students now make me wish I could move in myself! The University Center (no longer the "student center") has a bookstore that likens to Barnes and Nobel, complete with a little cafe in the back. The old "Burgess Lounge" where we saw movies (that big green room) has been renovated and the University center proports an ACTUAL (small) theater for the students. I was also intrigued by what has not changed; Plyler Hall still has the same feel to it, down to the same smell! People still reserve the picnic area on the other side of the lake for cook outs, the fraternities and sororities still decorate the mall at homecoming with floats, and everyone greets everyone else with a smile, even if you don't know each other. Some old acquaintances have seen me and mistaken me for a student (for good or for bad, I don't know) and I've been able to briefly visit with old friends. (My schedule has been keeping me running, however, so if I haven't gotten to say hello, please forgive me and know I will soon!)

This term, I'm teaching the CS 16 class, which is a computer class for non-majors that teaches them how to use software. I'm really enjoying it and I have a great group of kids. I was a little unprepared for the amount of daily preparation involved in teaching a class every day. The same class at USC took me 3 hours of in-class hours each week (with the lab), with about 3-4 hours of outside prep-time per week (and sometimes less). Here, the same class is 7 in-class hours each week (with the lab) and I'm finding the daily prep work to be about 3-4 hours before the class. I'm putting all their notes on-line, so creating the web pages is a bit time consuming; but, the next time I teach the class, I'll have all that done and I'll only have to update. I'm also trying to add things to the book, so I do a bit of research on current events and topics in the targeted area. Wow, it's a lot of work! The commute of 1.5-2 hours is really not that bad, except when one of us is sick. Then, I really feel the distance. But, as a daily drive, it allows me time to mentally prepare for the day or for the evening.

Piper's First Birthday!



September 23rd brought a special day -- Piper's first birthday! Lee and I really went all out with the decorations and decided to have a small, family get-together for her (big parties are for big girls, right?). Anyway, in attendance were my mom and dad, Aunt Nell and Kim, Lee's dad, Aunt Jeanette, and Lee's grandmother. Piper loved the presents (but was a little suspicious at first when she was allowed to actually rip paper without getting into trouble!). She still likes the bows the best, but loved her presents and had a wonderful time. She was fascinated with the streamers and balloons ("Baa" for balloon, "ba" for ball are also new to her vocabulary) and she grabbed for her new books, her lego's, stuffed animals, etc. She loves my necklaces, so we got her a "medal" that said "1st Birthday" for her to wear that day. Her first taste of birthday cake was interesting... she "daintily" put one little finger in the icing and tried it. She continued doing this for a little while, then tried the actual cake. The icing was better, however, and she eventually got some on her hands. Before we could wipe it off, she rubbed her eyes and then was very upset! We cleaned her up and brought out the applesauce, and she was happy. She got a little tired and took about a hour nap in the late afternoon, but woke up in time to say "bye-bye" to her guests. It was a really fun day.



October Events

Then, in October, the State Fair came to Columbia. I was asked last year to demonstrate quilling to anyone who may be interested in the art form. However, last year I was about to give birth (and did!) during the State Fair, so I had to turn them down. They asked me again this year and I happily accepted. So, from 10-5 I demonstrated quilling to anyone who was interested and told passers by about the history of quilling and just what you could do with it. Lee and Piper joined me for part of the afternoon, and it was a fun day!

State Fair



Pumpkin Party



Well, with October came Piper's second Halloween. We took her to our Sunday school's pumpkin carving party. I brought her costume (a zebra this year) for her to wear, but she kept taking off the ears and mane (the head part), so we just let her play in her little outfit. She loved the little pumpkins and gourds that were decoration and had fun trying to get all the tools and things. Everyone had a great time and some really cool looking pumpkins came out of it. We had 5 kids and 11 adults, so the kids almost outnumbered us! There were treats and fun, too.



That Sunday was Morgan's day. The SC Sheltie Rescue organization sponsors an event called "Sheltie Fun Day" where people can go and let their Shetland sheepdogs run and play together. Piper was very excited to see close to 50 "woof-woofs" and Morgan enjoyed himself immensely. There was a professional photographer there who agreed to take pictures of both Piper and Morgan together, and it turned out SO CUTE! Piper was wearing her "I love my furry big brother" sweatshirt and we had a lot of fun. I understand the event raised a good bit of money for Sheltie rescue also. This is a group that rescue's abused and/or neglected Shelties and provides any vet care and psychological care the dog needs; then, they work to find a permanent home for them. It's a great organization.

Sheltie Fun Day



St. Andrew's Fall Festival



Well, that Sunday was really busy, because it was also St. Andrew's Baptist's Annual Family Fall Festival, so we put Piper into her zebra costume (she kept it on this time!) and headed out to the church. It was a lot of fun and Piper even got to drop a basketball into a goal, try popcorn for the first time (a big hit), see her preschool teacher "Ms Betty," and take home a flower made out of tissue paper. I can see how much fun this will be for her in years to come!



For Halloween, I had my class do a project with a piece of software called "Photoshop" where they had to create a pumpkin carving pattern of their own face from a photograph. They seemed to get into it (for the most part) and for extra credit, they could carve the pumpkin. A few did, and I think they did a great job!



With fall came the falling leaves and a few reflections on what Piper has taught us these last 14 wonderful months. The first rule is TASTE EVERYTHING! Next, she reminded us that the forbidden is fascinating. Thirdly, she pointed out what fun it can be to just lay back and relax. Forth, she has shown us how interesting even the smallest thing is -- take nothing for granted. Fifth, the container is often more fun than what's inside. Sixth, there are angels on earth -- God's given us one to care for. We thought we'd share these insights that Piper has brought into our lives.

In Closing...



Happy Holidays to All!

Love,

Lee, Paige, Piper, Morgan, PC, Buttercup, and Samuel

