



I will be celebrating this Thanksgiving as an orphan... for the first time.

During the week prior to Mom's passing, as I kept vigil by her bed, I spent much time reflecting on our life together, to revel in the sweet memories and recount the heartaches, to cry tears of grief and of celebration... often at the same time.

As I held her hand and talked with her and with God about our life together, thoughts and words flowed back to and through Pepperdine, where Corinne and I have built our family, feel loved by our community, are enriched by our friends, find meaning in loving our students, and purposed our lives in shared mission.

In the quietness of Mom's bedside, I gave thanks to God

...for the countless fellow Pepperdine alumni, faculty, staff, and friends who worked tirelessly to make our family's reunion a reality after 16 years of separation.

...for Pepperdine alumnus Ron Stearns, who moved heaven and earth to find and rescue my brothers from a refugee camp in Thailand.

...for the loving community that held us up, encouraged our faith, and sustained our hope.

...for the University Church, who lovingly welcomed our family and showered them with so much love and support.

...for our fellow Heidelbergers who gave sacrificially to provide for our family in their early days in the US.

God provides for us abundantly through this loving community we call Pepperdine. We hold each other and weep with one another during times of immense pain and searing loss. We celebrate with one another in moments of victory and triumph. We walk alongside one another and hold up each other in the mundane and the profound moments of life and everything in between. We learn with and from one another in and out of the classrooms. We sing each other's songs and add to the melodies of life. Our lives intertwine and integrate. We belong with one another and are better through our shared life together.

We are family.

And as I live with the new status of "orphan," I am especially thankful for this family, filled with so many who love extravagantly, who dispense grace liberally, who listen keenly, who give of their lives willingly to make life more abundant for so many others.

Indeed, "I thank my God upon each remembrance of you" (Philippians 1:1).

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