



Many thanks from all of us
Steve Vinton, April 16, 2008

We haven't had "that long talk" yet with the doctors (and we won't until next week it seems), but if a picture is worth a million words, then sitting here looking at the pictures of Jonathan's heart and seeing what they were able to do is just wonderful. The conduit really had tremendously calcified, it really had narrowed a lot, the blood flow really had been restricted – and even though none of that had seemed to have slowed Jonathan down a bit – even to someone like me who knows nothing at all with one little glance at the picture, it was so clear why the doctors were so concerned. With one glance though at what that area of the heart looked like after all of the hours of Dr Ing's work – it was also so clear why they were really very happy with what had been accomplished. They'll run more tests tomorrow, but all indications are that things were wonderfully successful. And Jonathan is already out of ICU and if he continues his recovery at this pace he could be ready to go home sometime tomorrow!

All of the other good things of the day definitely pale in comparison to that. And yet, I can't help but be thankful for the "other things" as well ...

It would be hard to not be thankful for all of the emails that have come in from all around the world with kind words from friends and family and even people who we hardly know but who chose to show us the kindness of caring about our son. One of the shortest ones came in from Godfrey about a quarter after four this afternoon. It was a quarter after midnight there in Tanzania and it just said, "Mzee we are all waiting here waiting for news from the hospital, we are all praying, we won't sleep tonight until we hear from you." Sometimes words really do express love.

You know Jonathan cried real tears twice there in ICU. It was because of two other kids in ICU who were obviously in tremendous pain and it was their screams that frightened and worried Jonathan. He's old enough to know what's going on now. It's not like it was in years past. Do you know how nice it was to see Jonathan lose himself completely as he spent a good half hour looking at all of the wonderful little gifts – probably more than fifty obviously carefully chosen items piled into a huge basket – that a dear woman brought to the hospital earlier that morning when Jonathan was in surgery so that he would have something special when he woke up. She's part of a group of people who for the past ten years have not grown weary in doing incredibly kind things like that for child after child, month after month, year after year at that hospital. Today's the day you wish you could hug everyone who has ever volunteered to give of themselves to visit the kids who are scared in the children's hospitals of this country.

Micah's mom made it all the way down to Texas Children's Hospital today. She came I know because in part she's our friend and has been for a long time. But she came, as she said, because her son, who is serving out in Tanzania with us and has in addition to all of his other responsibilities been teaching Jonathan math this year, that son of hers figured out how to get a phone and make an international call back here to America to say Mom, do me a favor today and will you go buy the biggest balloon you can and drive across town and take it down to Jonathan.

And then there was when Susan and I were walking with the two nurses taking Jonathan out of ICU and I thought that far ahead at the T in the hallway that maybe I had seen in the

group of doctors walking quickly by, Dr. Fraser, the world-famous surgeon who had done the major surgeries on Jonathan years ago. And then I saw him reverse course and come back from around the corner and stare a bit and then come walking towards us – and with a huge smile on his face come up and give Susan a wonderfully big hug. He barely knew me of course. When Jonathan was born eleven years ago and Dr Fraser and Dr Ing and all of the other doctors and nurses at that hospital did all that they did for Jonathan, I was the father who was stuck off in rebel-held territory as Congo

fell into war in 1997 and was the guy those doctors and nurses never saw, they guy they only talked to them via satellite phone. How wonderful for me as Jonathan's dad, and as Susan's husband, to see that doctor come to give Susan such a wonderful hug and to speak with such obvious joyful tenderness to my son. I am indeed blessed.

Many thanks from all of us for your prayers for us and for Jonathan.

With love, Steve & Susan