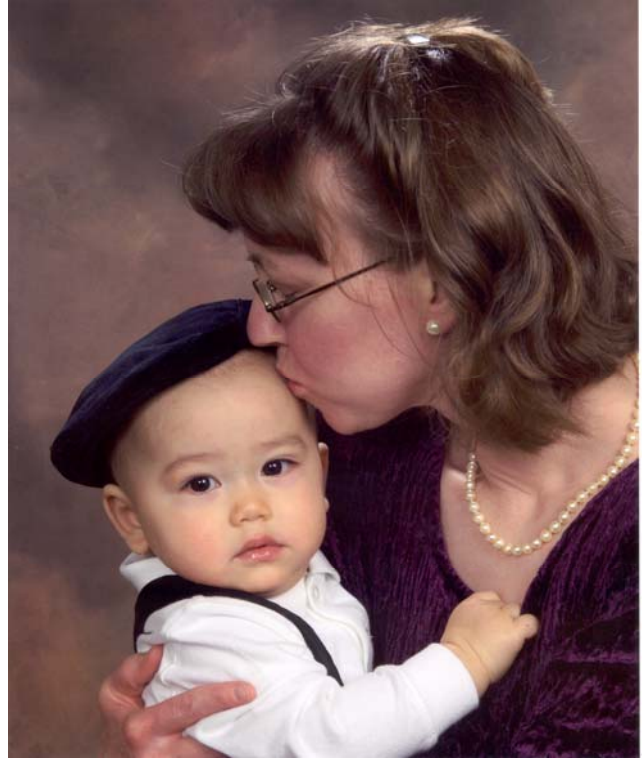




The family in November 2007



William with his mommy!

20 December 2007

Dear friends and family,

The big news is the newest member of the Kuwata family. As many of you already know, William Sato Kuwata was born on January 29. He takes his names from Alexa's maternal grandfather and my mother's family. (His first name is also a tribute to a 17th century martyr, St. William Courtet, who was a Dominican missionary to Japan.) It has been wonderful seeing William develop and interact with Margaret. At 11 months, he crawls up the stairs, stands unsupported, and babbles frequently. Unlike Margaret, he seems contented taking a bottle (of Mommy's milk or formula) from me, but is already leaving Gerber's Baby Food behind for little bits of grown-up food. He is generally calmer than Margaret was as a baby, but also more aggressive, grunting like a little Marine, grabbing at the tail of Echo (the cat), and pulling both his sister's and parents' hair. There is no doubt that little boys and little girls are different!

Margaret experienced another quantum leap in language and behavior around her third birthday in October. She now loves counting items on her own initiative, usually enjoys using her potty, and dresses herself with little problem. She still loves dancing, singing, and organizing elaborate activities for her panoply of "friends" (stuffed animals and dolls). Besides the hair pulling, the only other thing William does that irritates Margaret is when he picks up (and usually starts chewing on) one of her carefully placed friends. "William can't have that stuffed animal!" she will declare. We are, slowly, teaching her to share even beloved toys with her little brother.

My sabbatical in the fall of 2006 had a nice conclusion, with an article that I started writing during the sabbatical being published in June. In the spring, I taught my standard analytical

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chemistry lecture and lab, and a new course in computational chemistry. The class met one night a week and was pretty informal, and was therefore not extremely taxing. In the fall, however, teaching a brand new course in thermodynamics and a somewhat new accelerated general chemistry course was extremely demanding. This came after a challenging summer of research, where one of my three students was strikingly uncooperative and unresponsive to advice. I am looking forward to a restorative winter break with the family, a saner spring semester, and working with a promising group of new and returning research students this summer.

William met the grandparents and members of his extended family for the first time back in May. We look forward to another trip back to Los Angeles during the holidays. We also enjoyed a trip up to Lake Superior in August. While we spent much of our days in Minnesota, we stayed at a motel in Superior, Wisconsin. This happens to be the see city of the Catholic Diocese of Superior, where our former pastor is now the bishop. Alexa and I had the privilege of witnessing Fr. Christensen's consecration on September 14. Perhaps most striking to me was the reading of the apostolic letter from the Pope. Hearing Fr. Christensen called a "beloved son" by the Holy Father reveals a patriarchal spirit unfamiliar to our Protestant democratic society, and a spirit explicitly condemned on my college campus. But, to paraphrase C. S. Lewis (badly), I find such hierarchy refreshing and a good reminder of the underlying realities of this world.

Alexa has spent most of her time at home with the children, but continues to work part-time as a nurse at St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul. (The Birth Center at "St. Joe's" did a great job helping bring William into the world back in January.) She remains active in a local Familia group for Catholic mothers, and is the Associate Vice President of a local Mom's Club.

We are grateful for our two wonderful children, and hope all of you have a good 2008.



Margaret in February 2007



At Gooseberry Falls on the North Shore of Lake Superior, August 2007