

January, 2009

Dear Family and Friends,

I've heard different philosophies about the statue of limitations on Christmas letters, ranging from Epiphany to Lent. If Lent is the standard, I guess this one is still relatively early.... I like this tradition: a way to keep the threads of connection between us, even as our lives run in very different tracts. We love getting the letters and pictures, remembering how we're connected and how we've been a part of each others' lives.

The other thing about Christmas letters is that they cause you to put your life in perspective with everyone else. This has been a rather eventful year for our family - but when I think about families that have experienced death, serious illness and other major upheavals, I remember that our family drama is more like a one-act play than an epic film.

So, first our children: Anders finished his last semester at Rehoboth Christian School and graduated in May. The big event of his senior year, overshadowing everything else, however, was a rollover accident in March. Four boys, including the driver, walked away relatively unhurt. But the fifth boy, Thomas, was thrown from the vehicle even though he was wearing a seat belt, and died within a few hours. For Anders and his friends, this event has overshadowed and shaped the rest of the year, creating a strong bond of friendship among the four young men, who are left to grieve and find the meaning of this for their lives. The other big event for Anders was getting a semester of college under his belt. He made the adjustment to University of New Mexico in Albuquerque (about 140 miles from Gallup), with his friend Tyler Bostic as roommate. In addition to passing all of his classes, he achieved a blue belt in Kung Fu and found out that he has some talent as writer.

Hillary, who is 20, had some big events as well. She moved into a house off-campus near Calvin College this fall, making another transition to adult-hood, with some of the joys and responsibilities. Dan participated in "the move" by traveling with her out to Calvin in the "Jetta," which was to be the college car. Ah...best laid plans. The house they were renting experienced some flooding and subsequent mold during the summer months, causing a bit of a delay moving in and the loss of one roommate. And the "Jetta" lasted about a month before Hillary had a collision with it. However, the housing situation has turned out well, with good relationships among the remaining girls. And no one was injured in the accident. Hillary enjoyed coasting with her course work a bit this semester, as she re-took a couple of classes and added some business and economics to her repertoire. She worked a lot of hours for the Calvin Catering department each week. She's taking this January term at Calvin off and has come home to work again in Advocate Law. She's re-applied to the Calvin Nursing program for the fall and is pretty confident that this time she'll be high enough on the list to make the cut.

This year has had continual drama for Daniel in his work as the Juvenile Probation Supervisor. The personnel issues continue into the New Year, with Dan preparing for various legal procedures surrounding one former employee, dealing with continual drama with other co-workers, and trying to do what is best for teens in trouble, while not always having the

parents and legal system as allies. But, Dan says that despite all of that this 2008 was a very good year. That is because he is alive to deal with all of the drama of his job. In late March of this year, Dan found out that he had a cancerous mass in his colon. In the first week of April, he had colon re-section. And although the mass was large, it hadn't spread outside the colon. So, he didn't even have to have chemo-therapy! And we experienced a lot of love and support from our families, our Bethany church family, and Michigan friends. Dan was able to do most of a season of refereeing fall soccer, before tearing his Achilles Tendon.

My piece of family drama came at the end of this year, as it has become clear that the Red Mesa Foundation, where I've been the executive director for seven plus years, is unsustainable in its present form. Our land development efforts on the east side of Gallup have not yielded a developer/buyer. And with so much pressure financially on the schools and churches we serve, patience for a Foundation that isn't "producing" enough to even sustain its own operating budget, has run dry. So, my work for the near-term is to try to help with a transition of the funds and program efforts to Classis Red Mesa (the Native American Christian Churches). I'll also be doing some job hunting. The CRC Home Missions, who was the donor of the land assets in east Gallup to the Foundation, has a potential investor, interested in purchasing the remaining property to provide the income to the churches and schools. Although it has been quite a tumultuous time, I'm beginning to look forward to finding out what God may have for me next.

And what would a Christmas Letter be without a travel report? The big trip for us this year was to Coeur d'Alene Idaho for a Bruxvoort Family reunion. My parents, all of my siblings and all of their children, were able to be together for a few days in a belated celebration of my parents' 50th anniversary (in January). Anders succumbed to one (likely) last road trip with the parents and Hillary took a few days off from work and flew up. We were able to stop for a weekend in Salt Lake City to spend time with Sarah and Chuck, Dan's sister and husband. Anders also spent three weeks in California, the first week at a SERVE project in Redlands, and the last two with my brother Joel and his wife Barb, with their children Benjamin and Rosie, in Pacifica. They were wonderful hosts, providing him with many memorable experiences. And Anders was able to help them out a bit with the kids at their week of Folk Dance Camp. He got to enjoy a little folk dancing as well. For any adolescent friend or relative (and his or her parents) of Uncle Joel or Aunt Barb, this experience is well worth considering.

Of course, there's much more that could be said....but another "standard of limitations" for Christmas letters is two pages, although I've noticed that most of you manage to get yours to one. We hope that whatever comes your way in 2009, that you experience God's love, care and keeping.

Love,

Rhonda and the rest of the Gallup Bergs