

Christmas 2023

Dear Family and Friends,

How can it be the end of another year? The days were long, yet the weeks flew by. Like so many others of our demographic, life was punctuated by medical events. But the most dramatic happened to the youngest of our grandchildren, Adalyn, at age 2½ months, on Christmas Day 2022. She rapidly transitioned from quiet to floppy to paralyzed. It was due to a rare condition called “infantile botulism.” She was hospitalized, placed on a ventilator for a couple of weeks, then slowly transitioned back first to breathing, next to feeding. Finally, she was ready to resume her developmental milestones. When she got back to nursing and bottle feeding but still had a naso-gastric tube in place “just in case,” by dark of night she pulled it out herself. This is the developmental milestone of “sovereignty”, when the baby takes over the family!

A quick perusal of the calendar finds nearly every little square filled. Various committees and other responsibilities come up every week. We live in a cooperative building – much like a small town -- and participation is encouraged. We with obsessive-compulsive tendencies potentially make good members. The community loves what Karin does, leading the “Sunshine Committee” and directing the “Card Recycling Group.” Ross is tolerated despite his tendency to propose “politically incorrect” programs such “Highlights from TCCSA” for viewing by Gramercy members, should they be so inclined. It is a rebroadcast of talks previously given to Twin Cities Creation Science Association.

We each lead a Bible study for our respective gender (about which we have no doubt) in the building and we participate in a small group at church. Teaching K – 1st grade Sunday School helps keep Karin connected to kids and she still is a MOPS “Mentor Mom.” Ross teaches science to the homeschool kids who come to MOPS. He helps with the church’s 1st through 3rd grade boys club and leads a men’s Bible study called “SoulShare,” which looks at character sketches of men whose stories are described in the Bible. Ross has been writing these for 30 years as if the characters were to be portrayed on stage. Most recently the focus was on the High Priest Eli, who failed as a father yet mentored the greatest judge of Israel, Samuel. Ross relates to 8-year-olds and 80-year-olds and finds that there is not that much of a difference. He has had regular lunches with grandsons Patrick and Aizec, trying to pass on all he knows... before he forgets.

Concerts and dance performances fill many squares. Our descendants have made contributions to ballet, Chinese dance, the “Chinese violin” (the erhu) and choral music. “Olsons -The Next Generation” having conquered Rubic’s Cube, with a side-foray into bowling, and have moved on to pickleball and videography! The accomplishments are just as amazing as those of YOUR grandchildren! We are greatly blessed to have most of them living nearby.

Karin found that when she got a new prosthesis for her right leg, some of the screws that repaired a fracture in 2021 were beginning to painfully poke through and had to be removed. Combined with hand surgery for a “contracture,” she spent a lot of time healing, including 10 weeks in a wheelchair, using the time for embroidering and reading! The second week in June, facing two surgeries she had made a goal of reading 30 books by September 1, and has reached a total of 39 so far for the year.

Karin is pleased with a new insulin delivery system, Dexcom and Omnipod, with good results for her A1C. She also stopped selling Santa Lucia Dolls at craft fairs but sold 9 to a Scandinavian store in Rapid City, South Dakota and 3 at a banquet of “Young at Heart.” Ross is getting cataracts removed and hopes to read the little boxes on the Twins and Vikings TV screens (and hopes there is reason to care.) We had a visit by a delegation from Evangel Hospital, who came to pay tribute to Dr. Bob Chapman and his recently departed wife, Lois. We shared memories of those Hong Kong years.

We took a rare out of town vacation trip to Maranatha Conference Center in Muskegon, Michigan in October for a Christian Medical conference on transgender ideology. We went by way of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan and returned by way of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, visiting family and longtime friends along the way. We continue to have contact with Chinese friends, inviting students to many family events. Ten Chinese came to our Thanksgiving celebration. Karin continues her 4th year of weekly "WeChat" video conversations with her "conversational English language partner," a student from Beijing, who is studying this year in Ireland.

Our children and grandchildren move on with their lives. We can mention that granddaughter Avery Powers married Kane Piroch and grandson Patrick Olson is engaged to Melissa Glynn (whom he met through pickleball). We pray that their marriages will bring them as much joy as our 53 years have brought us. Granddaughter Laura switched from studying nursing to the physician's assistant program at University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire.

Other squares are filled with funeral services. Many of our neighbors in this senior co-operative have died in their 80s and 90s. Some were ready, some were not. Totally unexpected, however, was the sudden death of Ross' youngest brother, Bryan at the age of 72. It is not morbid to say we will now make an appointment with an undertaker ourselves. But Bryan is with the Lord he loves and served faithfully. He was a kindred spirit with Ross and in some ways the wise elder brother.

Karin and Ross agree with what the angel said to shepherds over 2000 years ago, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for ALL people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

In a world of anxiety and uncertainty may you have a relationship with the One in Whose care there is security. A change can begin in your own heart, to be completed when the new heavens and new earth are unveiled at the return of Jesus, next time, not as a baby, but as a King.

Expectantly yours, Ross and Karin.



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