

# 2005 Christmas Greetings from the Helgrens

(www.helgren.com)

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If you have the distinct feeling of *deja vu* while you read this, you are not alone. In many ways this year has been like the last. Much travel, home projects, kids having success (and challenges) in school. Still on that “Amazing Journey with Jesus”. Yeah, some of you can stop reading. It's YACL (Yet Another Christmas Letter).

**B**ut some things that happened this year were quite extraordinary. Take the number 50 for example. I visited my 50<sup>th</sup> state this year. It was the Hawaiian vacation we have always wanted to take. We spent 4 days on the Big Island and 2 on Oahu. Very Cool! I turned 50 this year (yikes, that is ancient!) It took about 50 days to demolish and rebuild our garage. Debbie's folks celebrated 50 years of wedded bliss. 50 is anything but ordinary.

**O**n the educational front, we had something extraordinary happen. Jonas graduated from High School! Not that his academic wherewithal was ever in doubt, it's just, he was **just** standing in our front yard with his little backpack on and lunch box in his hands, heading off to Kindergarten. He is now in “geek school” (in college I was a “Greek” and he is a geek....). He is attending ITT Technical College in Salt Lake working on a BS in Computer Science (what a surprise!). On the other hand, it seems that Jonas didn't graduate at all. He spends vast amounts of his time at Lutheran High updating, repairing and otherwise restoring the computer systems he has lived with over the past 4 years. He is beginning to understand the full implication of being a “personable” geek. He also spends a “few” hours a week working at my company, Timpanogos Technologies. He lives, breathes and eats this stuff (sound like anybody you know?)

**S**am and I had an extraordinary time in Alaska again. Driving permit in hand, Sam drove all over the Kenai Peninsula in search of salmon. Oh, he had to take Dad to the ER for a fishhook-ectomy as well. Nice to have an extra set of driving hands when you are fishhook impaired. We also had the extraordinary experience of having a Northern Ireland teen stay with us for a month in July. David and Sam got along famously as both traded experiences of growing up “teen”. Trips to canyons, deserts, inland seas and river rafting made it a memorable experience. Sam continues to voraciously read. He writes for the newspaper at Lutheran High and is on the yearbook staff. We blew the dust off of my two old Minolta SLR's, had them repaired and began to use them once again. Digital photography?! Ain't nuthin like the old 35mm manual SLR cameras. Sam feels like he is using antiques (I hope is isn't referring to me...)

**G**od works in extraordinary ways as well. He has allowed Deb to manage and balance her commitments to Bible Study Fellowship with her PT life. 20 hours doesn't sound like much but add “helpful automation” that causes her hours of unpaid “charting” time, and it is a full time job. Deb also

performed “triage” on our garage contents determining what should stay and what should go as we sifted through the demolition rubble. Amazing what accumulates over the years.

Speaking of accumulation, we now have well over 1.5 terabytes of storage in our accumulated server farms and PC’s at the Helgren digital household . Yep, 1.5 million, million bytes of stuff that has accumulated over years of saving, copying and downloading and I haven’t a clue as to what is where. Our lives can get to be that way: Lot’s of accumulation with no way of knowing what is there. Bucking the trend, this Christmas we drove to Illinois (!) spent time with family (great times!) and accumulated more memories. THESE we won’t lose track of. These memories are always with us, unlike the ephemeral, ethereal digital stuff that clutters our lives. Jonas and Sam will be telling their offspring of that 20 hour drive to Chicago just to be with family for the holidays just like I remember 36 hour train ride to do the same. Extraordinary memories.

Extraordinary things in an ordinary life? Gifts from God, we say. Same ol', same ol' to some. We are in constant amazement what God can do through ordinary humans. Think on that. A small babe, lying in a manger, Creator of the Universe. Extraordinary from ordinary. We see evidence of that in our lives. We pray you also see it in yours.

**Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year.**