

2011 Christmas Greetings from the Helgrens (www.helgren.com)

December 27, 2011

Is the nest half full or half empty? That is the question of the year. With the purchase of a home, Jonas became a homeowner last year and now, after 48 weekends of hard labor, Jonas is a home-occupier. Yep, after 24 ¾ years of living with Mom and Dad, Jonas is on his own. And so the “family” Christmas letter starts a change that may eventually come full circle. It started with just the two of us in 1981 and now, 30 years later, we could eventually become “just the two of us” again.

Speaking of just the two of us and 30 years, Debbie and I celebrated 30 years of marriage on December 19th. We spent 5 days in London sightseeing and relaxing and it seemed only fitting that we spend #30 overseas when #1 was spent in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (Peace Corps). God has blessed us richly in these 30 years. We give thanks to Him for all He has done!

Jonas still works at Mediaport and now has a use for that income, dealing with the realities of home ownership. He got in his two trips to France but I think the house will become more of a focal point for him. Cleaning, cooking, making repairs....say goodbye to free time! We still have a few small projects left to complete but the BIG projects, and those that require an unscheduled trip to an emergency care facility, are over (we hope)!

Sam continues to “pursue” studies at the University of Utah. He still is following the International Studies track with a graduation ETA of fall 2012/Spring 2013 but there is still more work to do and a study abroad requirement plus the occasional collegiate “distraction” that could change the timing. He continues to work part time at Epic Brewery. With Jonas vacating his room, Sam now has more traditional space to live in since he moved back home in June. For a while we had **three** young men living in the basement as Sam's friend, Justin, moved in for a few months but now we are down to just Sam. When we see him he seemed to be doing just fine....

Debbie continues to balance her activities between working at the University of Utah Orthopedic Center and BSF. The “temporary” job as a Physical Therapist there has lasted 20 years and we are grateful for her consistent employment (in this economy especially). Although I think she would “retire” if my employment situation was more stable, she still enjoys the work and her close location gives us a reason to walk a mile or two a few days a week. BSF continues to be the real passion for her and her “job” as Teaching Leader brings her great joy. Deb's folks still deal with some health issues (stroke for

Deb's mom and cancer for Deb's dad) so we try to head north to Boise when we can and her folks have actually come to visit us, which is always a treat. We had the ultimate family “close encounter” as the Hein Clan gathered at Debbie's brothers cabin near McCall, Idaho. 25-30 of us in 4 room cabin (and some above the garage and sleeping in the meadow) made for a fun filled weekend.

We have all traveled this year. I head to Alaska a couple of times a month. Jonas still has his two trips to Cannes, France to deal with (poor guy...). We sent Sam as emissary to my nephew's wedding Michigan in August. Deb has taken a couple of trips on her own up to Boise. We all traveled up to the Hein cabin on a few occasions and of course Deb and I in London just a week ago....

No changes to my world. Consulting work and related travel keep me on the road. A few conferences to speak at (one in Milan, Italy!). I have been (technical) writing a bit. I hope to have a magazine article published in 2012. Blogging, tweeting and all the other “networking” activities which are now required in order to stay “visible” in the industry also keep me occupied. I also get to serve as Teaching Leader for the BSF evening men's class here in SLC which has rewards and joys found nowhere else. Indeed I am blessed to have such a full and free life.

The bottom line is: God has blessed each of us richly and beyond measure. As we reflect on the difficulties and dangers in the world, we recognize that we truly are privileged to live in these United States. In this increasingly divided land, we know that we are ultimately governed by the one true God and pray that we as His people can find oneness of purpose in Him.

In this new “instant” world of Facebook and Twitter perhaps the traditional Christmas letter has become passe and unnecessary, but we want you to keep in touch, using whatever works for you. We will continue to pass on not only the news of the Helgren household but also the Good News that we have a Savior that reconciles us sinful people back to God. How **can** it get any better than that?

God's Blessings to you and your household for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.