

# 2014 Christmas 'Howdy' from the Helgrens (www.helgren.com)

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Three's company! Well, three women at home is plenty of company and I have been blessed this year with an opportunity to not only get to know Debbie's mom better now that she is living with us, but I also got the bonus of having Karen, Debbie's sister, living with us as well (since July). My "bachelor pad" was quickly transformed over the past year.

So, we have re-feathered the empty nest! Karen found work at a local Christian school and she has now purchased a home and should be moving out/in in January after some painting and tile work at her new home. I am not sure how I feel about her leaving; It HAS been convenient to have her stay behind and care for Stella on those rare nights where Debbie and I have a night out. Karen's new home is only 20 minutes away and "our" house shopping landed her a nice three bedroom place with room for Stella, should we need more than an overnight of respite. I am quite certain Karen is looking forward to her own space.

Houses have been very much on our mind and part of our lives. Since our home here in Texas is relatively new and not in need of remodeling or repair (with the exception of an occasional "Griswald" moment where I have stepped through the ceiling from the attic [twice!]), I needed an "epic" project to occupy my time so I traveled to Salt Lake to destroy Jonas' guest and master bath with the intent to quickly rebuild it "better". Despite working for 7 days after last Christmas AND a long weekend in January it took a weeklong visit in July to get the bathrooms completely functional (yikes!) I haven't gotten an invitation to "help" on a project since....

Jonas continues his work at RedTouch media in Salt Lake with trips to England, France and South Africa during the year. Heather continues her work at Cementation, Inc. so they are both very busy with work lives. We very much enjoyed being with them in July. They have wisely chosen to have their roof replaced and their landscaping done by professionals and they also acquired a cat, but despite those attempts to keep us at bay, we will visit them this Christmas. It should be less nerve-wracking for them knowing that I don't \*currently\* have plans to leave a trail of destruction in my wake....

Sam is currently working with England Logistics in Carrier Services (I think) selling fuel contracts to truckers and trucking companies. Sam has enjoyed passing a few milestones this year. After being abandoned by his mom

and dad he is settled into a new living situation with three other guys, started a new job and did well enough and gained enough sales experience to parlay that job into a position at England Logistics. I am proud of him for hanging in there and he presented me with his diploma while I was in Salt Lake during an unexpected long layover. You couldn't ask for more for your adult child's future than a college graduation and a solid job. I think he would like to be fishing more (who wouldn't?) and I think he also misses mountain biking and getting outdoors but that transition from student to work life IS an adjustment for all of us. Perhaps I can feed his fishing need by hauling him and his brother down here to Texas for some sport fishing in the Gulf.

Debbie continues to serve God by being a childrens leader at a BSF class here in San Antonio and continues to volunteer in many and various ways at BSF HQ where we can have lunch together and occasionally pack a box of lessons together. She has kept up with Texas licensing requirements for Physical Therapy so I guess she is ready for just about anything, should God call her. Caring for Stella also occupies quite a bit of her time and again, we are both thankful that her sister Karen is here to help.

I couldn't ask for a better job or a better work environment than the one I have at BSF headquarters. Just when I think it couldn't get better, it does! I love my work, my co-workers and the God that I serve. I continue on that amazing journey with Jesus! I still serve on the board of directors of the Common user group and blog, deliver sessions, and generally do tech-tinkering in my "free" time. I still look forward to enough downtime (sometime!) to play with a weather station and security system I want to get. In tech there is so much to learn and every day it's something new. I love this stuff...

Debbie and I are still on an amazing adventure. We pulled up stakes, moved to Texas and went from empty-nest to caring for an octogenarian and sharing our home with TWO relatives. We are still feeling very, very blessed. We are thankful to our gracious God who gives us all we need. It may not be easy, but it is character shaping and blessed. Indeed this season does just that: Shapes us and blesses us. Our prayer for you is that your "shape" be formed by Christ and that you are blessed this Christmas!