

# 2015 Christmas 'Howdy' from the Helgrens (www.helgren.com)

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**Jimmy Fallon** : “Thank you, people who send out family holiday newsletters, for reminding me why I haven't checked in with you for a year”.

OK. I get it! The Christmas letter is SO 1980's....we should Tweet, Pintrest, Instagram, Facebook or text it I guess but, gee, what else would you line the birdcage with?

Another amazing year goes by! Deb and I started the year in Puerto Vallarta (on business, for me) and we have been to Salt Lake, La Crosse, WI and Chicago at one point or another. The whole year seems a blur as we ran from one place or project to another. Here are the highlights:

Worked **hard** to get Karen's place ready for tile and carpet during a few days around New Years.

Relaxed in Mexico for a few days.....

We continue to serve/assist Debbie's mom. She is still healthy and doing well. We do have some assistance with Stella's care 6 days a week (Hospice and Home Care Assistants) which gives Deb a bit of relief during the day. But a hemiplegic octogenarian does add a dimension to living that keeps us on our toes!

It also leads to major remodeling projects! We took a single, large bathroom configuration and made it into two ¾ baths. One of them is “ensuite” so that Stella can access it directly from her bedroom. It also is a barrier-free bath/shower design so that she can get in and out and get help with showering with less stress. OUR stress levels were pretty high during our 3 months of DIY remodeling. Cutting concrete, digging through the foundation...well, “El Chapo” had nothing on me....I am pretty sure our neighbors thought something nefarious had happened when Stella disappeared shortly before all the digging began.....

Even with the major construction going on during the long summer we still made a trip to Salt Lake (Deb and boys/Heather made a side trip a family reunion in Wyoming) and attended my nephew's wedding in La Crosse, WI (on a record setting day of heat...). Right now we are planning to spend the Christmas holiday in San Antonio although I DO plan to finally visit Collin Street Bakery (yes, the fruitcake people) for Debbie's and my 34<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary (and yes, she's coming...)

We got a “family two-fer” this fall with Holly, Mindy and Jeni (with George) showing up on our doorstep the weekend before my 60<sup>th</sup> (YIKES!) birthday. I had such a wonderful time with them! That was almost immediately followed by Jonas, Heather and Sam coming to visit for Thanksgiving. We have been blessed to see the Utah Helgren's in our little patch of Texas a few times since we moved here. I really miss 'em.

Debbie's time taking care of Stella is augmented by some BSF time. She is teaching leader of a class here in San Antonio and I think it adds some normalcy to days that can be anything but. Although officially an “ambassador” and not the permanent TL for the class, she gets great joy and satisfaction to what God has for her there. The class has 400 class members, give or take and the study of Revelation has challenged us both!

I joined a BSF class here in San Antonio and ended up as a group leader. Those 5am leaders meetings on Monday mornings are killer, but leading a BSF group adds a concrete dimension to the work I do for BSF. Some “field experience” is helpful and fun. And, at the other end of the age spectrum, I co-lead a group of middle-schoolers at church (whoa!). In the past couple of weeks we covered what the Bible teaches about sex and marriage. And I thought I'd be doing “arts and crafts”....

Jonas continues to work for Red Touch Media with the occasional international trip. Heather is an accountant for Cementation, Inc. Sam continues to work in sales for England Logistics. Employed and well. Answered prayer.

We love our families very much, although most of them are much too far away but we also love the church family that God has provided for us here in San Antonio. Many of our community group members are also co-workers so the line between my work and our church family is pretty blurry.

As we finish up a year of projects and patience we once again find ourselves blessed! No, it isn't all “easy” but Our Savior is our true source of joy and peace. We pray that you all find that joy and peace in 2016. Whether or not it is an “easy” year, we pray it is blessed!