

# 2017 Christmas 'Howdy' from the Helgrens (www.helgren.com)

December 20, 2017

Every Christmas season has it's own 'flavor' and we were blessed enough in South Texas this year to get a wintry blast of snow (!) a couple of weeks ahead of time to remind us that "Yes, Virginia, there is a winter out there" (somewhere). That snowstorm was just another "No WAY!" exclamation point in a year that defies definition.

Major events were few, but you really can't handle too much at my advancing age...

Another "No WAY!" was Jonas' 30 birthday which we celebrated in Salt Lake under the direction of Heather, who had planned a surprise birthday bash. Having a 30 year old son puts another nail in the coffin...a grandchild, should that ever happen, would officially make me "old". Jonas also celebrated a 10 year anniversary with his company, "Red Touch Media" How many 30-somethings do you know who have been with the same company for 10 years? The "company man" is not dead (yet). Heather continues to work and advance at Cementation, Inc. Jonas followed in Dad's footsteps by adding solar to his electricity grid and he finally got the new service entrance installed after 6 years of "Rube Goldberg" connections. Heather and Jonas have done wonders with their house...we'll see how it survives "Ty" (their dog)...

Sam continues to work for England Logistics as National Sales Manager. Unfortunately, "national" has not included the "nation of Texas" as part of his territory. Most of Sam's travel has been to the "left coast" and although he has racked up a few frequent flier miles, we'd love to see more of him here in the steamy wilds of South Texas. He has purchased a new car, replacing the 1996 Jeep we left him with, giving him plenty of incentive to rack up sales commissions (make those car payments!) so we are hopeful his sales calls will bring him our way. We were blessed to have him here over Thanksgiving and spent a few lazy days just hanging out with him.

Deb continues to spend most of her time with Bible Study Fellowship commitments. BSF has been going through quite a few changes and those changes have made a busy job even busier. As a volunteer, she seems to rack up more BSF time than I do, and I'm employed by BSF! But, you can tell that she loves to serve God this way, even though it can be a challenge to keep up with changes in her leadership needs and class format. With sister Karen now taking care of mom Stella on a full time basis, we provide some respite care from time to time. Karen also joined the BSF leadership ranks and helps out in

Debbie's class as a children's leader. Yeah, we are a BSF family....

As I mentioned, I still have the best job in the world, writing code with people I love and for a God I love at Bible Study Fellowship. It isn't all "sunshine and lollipops" but I love what I do. It hasn't been ALL work, and no play. At just about the last minute, I took a 17 hour drive to lovely Glendo, Wyoming to watch my first total solar eclipse. It was THE most amazing thing I have ever experienced! The 24 hour drive back, with most of northern Colorado filling I25, was not as memorable. And, as if to add an exclamation point on the eclipse, hurricane Harvey came to visit south Texas later that week. No WAY! We were spared the worst of the storm but most of southeast Texas, particularly the coast, is in need of help (if you are looking for a tax deductible contribution, the south Texas coast could use the help!)

Deb and I spent a wonderful week in Chicago prior to my impulsive drive to Wyoming. We had great fun with family there: Horse racing, dinners, walks around the city (I love Chicago!) We also met family again in Coronado for my sister Holly's 60<sup>th</sup> (GASP!) birthday. I love my sisters! So much fun!

I as look at it, August – November was our busiest time. Deb and I helped out with the "Sheds of Hope" project to assist folks impacted by Harvey. We also helped out with "Christmas boxes of Blessing", packing food into boxes for folks in need in San Antonio.

Now we need to slow down and enjoy the seasons of Advent and Christmas. To that end we'll drive up to Utah, taking in and enjoying the scenery and peace, to spend time with Jonas and Heather as well as Sam. We'll try to squeeze in some time with friends and other family. But I pray we do not lose the sense of overwhelming blessing that we feel at this time of the year. We are truly and unduly blessed by God. Yeah, I don't particularly like the way the world is unraveling, but I do know that God has it all in His Wonderful Hands.

May you feel His embrace, and find His Peace, during this celebration of Emmanuel, God with Us!

Pete and Debbie