

2023 Christmas 'Howdy y'all' from the Helgrens www.helgren.com for the latest!

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Interesting year, 2023. Seemed like there was no end to the challenges and changes. And yet, there were still some things that didn't change all that much. Let's take a look....

Jonas continues to work for Red Touch Media in various and sundry ways. If "variety is the spice of life" this guy is living a very spicy life indeed. I haven't kept track of all the roles he fills, but I know that he is the Directory of Technology at Red Touch, CTO of Laduma and spends a bit of time in South Africa as ...? There is destination business conference center project his company has been developing for multiple years in South Africa and Jonas has been responsible for the technology implementation there. Like I said: Variety.... Heather continues her work at Cementation, Inc. With the ebb and flow of the mining industry, she has continued increasing her role in accounting/HR and is well established there. Both she and Jonas have been blessed with job longevity. Jonas joined us at Paddy Flat this summer.



Sam has had a challenging year in a few ways. A ski trip to Japan resulted in not only great memories, but also a torn ACL. While awaiting scheduled surgery, he still managed to get some fishing in at Pyramid lake for Lahontan trout (annual trek). When Sam isn't fishing, or running, he is looking for a new position with a new company. His 10 years of tenure with CR England transitioned to new opportunities this fall. Fortunately, I had already arranged to have him come to Texas for my birthday fishing excursion. We did pretty well on a cool, windy morning just before Thanksgiving. Always ready to fish when Sam comes to town. We are looking into an Alaskan fishing trip next summer...the first since COVID.



For me it has also been a challenging year as well. I have been in a bit of limbo over the past 4 years as Bible Study Fellowship outsourced almost all of their software development. Since there was uncertainty about the future, I decided it was time to go back to school full time while I also worked full time. So, I started studying for a Masters in Cybersecurity Management at the old alma mater: University of Utah. There's been a wee bit of change since I graduated 40 years ago. Fortunately, Cybersecurity is my forte, along with software development, so it was actually a fun and informative semester. With some luck and if the brain synapses hold, I should be writing about my imminent graduation about this time next year.

The irony in starting school as a job backup plan is that just about the time I started school, I took on a new role at Bible Study Fellowship that has filled my sails a bit and has taken some of the uncertainty out of the future. I am heading up a new project which could lead to a new software platform and a new way of doing development: A possible swan song as retirement looms in the 4 year future.

Debbie continues her work with Methodist Oncology Rehabilitation. She has adjusted to the new location and, in particular, the new medical records system, but still enjoys the real work of PT while putting up with the "paperwork". She continues to volunteer at the Pregnancy Care Center, as a BSF Children's leader and, since she can't seem to get enough of being with children, also teaches third grade at Redeemer Presbyterian Church where we worship.

We managed to have some fun together and with family throughout the year. My "aging" (ahem) older sister celebrated her 70th in Sedona, AZ with the other sibs and spouses. It's been a while since we have been to Sedona and we had some great weather while there. Lots of hiking and a jeep trip to see the countryside made for a memorable trip.

For those of you unfamiliar with sweltering South-central Texas...it was, well, sweltering this summer...a record breaker. Our escape, since we have yet to find a place in Utah we can afford, is to count on the largess of Debbie's brother and head to his cabin in Idaho for some respite. We did do that this summer and Jonas came along as well. Our "off the grid" experience mitigated a bit by Jonas bringing along some Starlink gear so he could keep in touch with his job...but we kept up with the usual cabin work of minor repairs and tree-felling for winter fuel. We'll return this year for a Hein reunion and I may negotiate with Jonas to bring along his Starlink gear. There is much to be said for being off the grid, but with schoolwork to be done and finals being a couple of weeks off by then, I may need Internet in order to "survive".



We have a deep sense of God's movement in our lives over the past year. We see His hand in so many ways. We are grateful for Sam's recovery after ACL surgery and Jonas and Heather's continued safety despite all the travel they do. We are thankful for our health. But more important this time of year, we are grateful to God for His Son Jesus, who makes life abundant a gift to us & all who will receive it.

