



I always read last year's letter before beginning this year's, and I am astounded by how far we have all come as a family in a year's time! I will just hit the highlights of the year for our family. Since the winter months are the slowest for me, personally, Tim and I began the renovation of the basement starting on his Christmas break last year. By his spring break, we had torn up all the carpet, replaced it with laminate flooring, re-painted the entire basement and he trimmed all the doors and windows that had never been trimmed. He also did a beautiful job of trimming around the wood stove and the corner where we stack the wood for it. I literally sit there every morning and thank God for how beautiful it looks now. We officially have no carpet left in our house, and I really like the look.

We ended up with a total of 10 goat kids in March. We had a few bumps along the way, but overall, it was good. Of the ten, eight were boys! That represented a challenge because I always sell all the boys. As of now, only one is left and he is living the good life with the rest of our adult male goats, so he is good. We kept the two girls, who are doing well.

In May, Anneliese finished her studies at Wisconsin and received her master's degree. I traveled to WI for her graduation. She stayed for about a month after that to complete research she could do only from there for her ongoing project on the history of organic agriculture. Then, on Memorial Day, I stuffed Tim and Liz into the back of my little pickup truck and we headed through Chicago to Madison. There we rented a U-Haul and loaded Anneliese up and returned through Chicago on Memorial Day! The traffic got heavier as we neared Chicago on the return, but we could tell when we hit the halfway mark and then it lightened up and the traffic returning to the city on the other side was at a standstill while we sailed along.

We took a family vacation in June to the Traverse City area, then to the eastern side of the Upper Peninsula. We rented a cabin in each location and hit Mackinaw Island the day in between. It was nice going a bit later because we were able to take advantage of chore help who can't help during the school year. But it did interfere somewhat with the beginning of our gardening season, so we will go in May again this coming year.

We had ten CSA customers this summer getting baskets of vegetables from July to October. It was a good year for the garden. It was also the first time in five years my bees did well. I had some small field days over the summer for beekeeping. I have had more and more people coming to get goat milk in herd shares this year.

Tim worked at Zoetis, the animal pharmaceutical company, over the summer. It was a good experience, but he will look for something different for this summer. He is coming down to the homestretch. He will finish his degree in a year and graduate in December of 2023. He feels much more relaxed this semester and even if the next two are challenging, he feels ready for them.

Laura left Mezzo Coffee House in November and found a new job at River Road Foods in Plainwell, MI. They do catering, and also ready-to-eat meals made from fresh, local food. She has also started baking from home and honing her skills. She is perfecting sourdough bread and made the most amazing little pumpkin rolls for Thanksgiving! She took a much-needed weekend off in November to visit Boston with a friend to celebrate their quarter century birthdays. She also works with the children's ministry on Sunday nights at church.

Elizabeth went on a youth group trip as a leader this summer and also a backpacking trip to the Porcupine Mountains with Anneliese in August. Always on the move, she also spent a week in Florida with a friend in October. She painted her first mural in downtown Otsego in September. It depicts all the businesses that occupied the building where Mezzo Coffee House is located throughout its history. Although she is still working at Mezzo Coffee House now, she has a big trip planned to start in January. She will travel to Chile to spend six weeks working at a Word of Life summer camp (it's in the southern hemisphere). She really wants to



get fluent in Spanish and this was a great opportunity to do that. She will work in the kitchen at the camp and will bunk with the teenage workers.

Starting in September, I did a work-training program with some of the special ed. kids from the local high school. We completely dug out and restored a large, round flower bed in the middle of the community garden I manage in Otsego. If you would like to see our work, the story is in our blog on the otsegocommunitygarden.com website. We all enjoyed the project. Now I have to think of something good for them to do in the spring!

There were a lot of losses this year in our extended family and among friends. God gave me opportunity to be able to comfort others with the comfort I have received in my grief journey. I feel like each of us is doing better than we have done in four years, but each time I hear the bad news of someone else's loss, it is like another punch in the gut. But it passes with less pain and more peace each time. I feel very blessed and so grateful that time does heal. I am also learning how to intercede for those who are hurting without taking their pain on myself. That is God's job, and only He can bring comfort, healing, and strength to those who are hurting.

I sincerely pray that God will be with you and comfort you this Christmas. I am still directing the choir, and we will be doing three pieces the week before Christmas to celebrate. The first is "How Great Our Joy", the second, "In the Fullness of Time" and the last will be "Your Presence for Christmas". Each of them embodies an important message we need to remember this season. We need to remember that because of Immanuel, God with us, we can have joy, no matter what our present circumstances are. Christ came in the fullness of time, at just the right moment in history, as God determined it to be. We are blessed to have been born and have lived after He came. God knows the perfect timing for everything in your life and will bring what you need just when you need it. Lastly, we need to remember that the greatest gift we can receive this Christmas is His presence. He is God with us, and He will never leave us or forsake us. If you want to hear us live, we are at First Baptist Church of Otsego, 247 E. Allegan St., Otsego, MI 49078. We will do the three songs on December 18th. The service begins at 10:45 am. We will also do "Your Presence for Christmas" at the Christmas Eve service at the same location at 5:00 pm December 24th. Our ladies ensemble will also do a rendition of "Joy to the World" that evening.

I pray you will truly experience His Presence this Christmas, no matter what your current situation.