



We love you! -- Dan, Nancy and Ray

Dear Ones,

2022 is nearly over, and while some of what it brought was expected and long anticipated, some was certainly surprising.

We began the year with hopes that we might soon be beyond the reach of COVID, and yet my building is quiet today because so many teachers have COVID right now, that we are closed for three days.

This is the first full year of Dad's residency with us here in Connecticut. It has also been a year of "first events without Mom." When special days arrive, Dad and I tend to gravitate to Mom's favorite restaurant (Longhorn) and recount some of the ways Mom was a special gift to us. We are still missing her all the time.

In March, Nancy had surgery to repair rotator cuff damage. She was exceptionally diligent about the exercises, did really well, and is now enjoying the benefits of increased use of her arm. She continues to work as the CCS Librarian, but this fall she also subbed for the school music teacher on her off day. The kids were delighted to sing with her . . . which is a surprise to no one.

Easter week was the weirdest ever. For the very first time in 41 years of pastoral ministry, we watched Easter services online from our couch in our pajamas. Nancy and I tested positive for COVID in the middle of Holy Week, and were sidelined for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Sunrise and Easter Morning services. Fortunately, our new Associate Pastors (Julia and Chima Ezeigbo) filled in expertly. They didn't have a lot of time to get all those sermons ready!

In May we traveled to niece Sarah Whitney's wedding to Owen Paulus in Ohio. It was great to be with family and friends! That wedding was followed by the Henniker wedding of Matthew and Julia Bartolotti, and was another great family affair. The wedding season ended with the one we have anticipated for the longest.

On August 27, Jonathan Richard Raymond and Noelle Jacqueline Milnamow were married in Upstate New York. The wedding was perfect in every detail. Noelle's parents (and especially her mother, Cyndi) invested hours and hours planning a perfect day for all of us. I could write for pages about the attention to detail, the consideration for the guests, the above and beyond hospitality and kindness that was expressed in every facet of the event. We won't mention that Greg got a bit lost on the way to the rehearsal . . . or that a wreath fell on Nancy's head . . . or that someone talked Dan into joining a Conga-line. It was impossible to wipe the smile from our faces for many days after the event. We are so grateful to have been able to enjoy such a weekend with our family.

To introduce you to Noelle, we will simply say that she is a wonderful girl (animal lover) from Upstate New York that Jon met at Sweet Frog. Since their meeting, she has graduated from college, finished her Doctor of Physical Therapy degree and has passed her "Boards." She is now a working PT in Connecticut, and regularly beats us at a variety of board and card games. We are delighted to have another "NJW" in the family!

At the moment, we are waiting for Greg to return home. While visiting a friend in Hawaii, Greg had an accident with a dirt bike and seriously injured his ankle. This has thrown a significant wrench into his plans. He is in a great deal of pain, is on short term disability from his job and has not been able to fly back home. There will be no pictures from this event, but whisper a prayer for him, if you will. We'd like him home for Christmas, though we know the rehab will take several more months.

We are grateful for all the blessings of God we have experienced this past year. These are challenging days in many ways, but we are thankful for the message of Christmas. We remember, day after day, that God came to make sure we understood that He is FOR us, that He is in our corner, that He loves us, that He is anxious to receive us, that He grieves when we grieve, and that He has prepared a place for us. We pray that we can model that kind of love for all we encounter, as well. Of course, loving friends and family like you, that part is easy!

We hope you all have a wonderful Christmas, filled with Joy!