



Merry Christmas!

2020



Dear Friends,

Oh what a year!

Like all of you, our lives have been disrupted, put on hold, stuck in limbo, and yet we have been provided many opportunities for growth. Linda and I were heading back from Tanzania to Minnesota in March anticipating a quick turnaround to South Africa for our daughter Sarah and Stéphane's Wedding Day. Little did we know that not only was the wedding celebration delayed but that we would still be in Minnesota for Christmas 2020.



Oh what a year!

A year of working to avoid the virus while not losing contact with so many friends and family around the world. A year of losing good friends to Covid. A year of rude awakening to systemic racism our homeland. A year of unbelievable political turmoil. A year of dramatic evidence of climate change.

Oh what a year!

Yet a year of growth as we explored our own white fragility and privilege and struggled to find ways that we could be a part of the needed change in us



and in our society. A year of growth for Linda as she completed a course on sexual assault advocacy and joined the team of volunteer advocates with SOS Minnesota.



A year of growth as we both sought to find a church home and do it virtually! We joined Redeemer Lutheran in Minneapolis as one of the more diverse congregations in the Twin Cities. A year of growth for us as we experienced four consecutive seasons in Minnesota with all the richness of color and change.



Oh what a year!

We both continued to transition from full time to part time missionaries. Mark continues to consult for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with special emphasis on our hospitals in Arusha, the Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center Cancer Center in Moshi, the new ELCA clinic in Juba, South Sudan, serve a support role with Global Health Ministries and also with a small maternity and children's hospital in Bangladesh. Some highlights are the opening of the new campus for our ALMC School of Nursing and seeing the new Cancer Ward open at KCMC.



It's been an engaging year for sure, to learn to advocate and consult virtually. Mark was invited to assist Alight (the former American Refugee Committee) in

considering and planning their response to Covid. This was first with information and PPE, mental health, maintaining existing services, and now vaccination. It's been exciting to learn another organizational culture and language and see real leadership in human centered design for programming.

Oh What a Year!

We've had the joy of our youngest, Katherine, living in Minnesota as she



works with Alight as well (hired long before me). She's living in St. Paul and has been making the most of camping and hiking opportunities in the area, favorites this year included trips to the Boundary Waters and the North Shore. Laura and James are in



New York where Laura's work with informatics for the public hospital system of NYC put her into the maelstrom of trying to track and share relevant information about the surge that hit in

Spring. James continues to love his role as a career coach for students and alumni of the Columbia Business School. They managed travel and quarantining and testing to visit us for lengthy visits this year. The virtual workplace is one of the blessings of Covid.



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Sarah and Stéphane have hunkered down in South Africa which has one of the higher Covid rates in Africa and some of the most stringent lockdown responses as well. It was poignant and then sorrowful to see the plans for a beautiful wedding celebration in the wine country of South Africa change from expected, to doubtful, to postponed, to we just can't know when. They are wonderful support for one another and bring each other joy and laughter. Sarah works

in the leading edge field of digital health with and through telephone apps for front line workers. Stéphane is an engineer with a ship building company specializing in yachts. It's pretty cool to see photos of him test piloting some of the beauties they build.

Oh what a year!

In a strange way, the coincidence of Advent and the arrival of the covid vaccine are a powerful image of awaiting and preparing for the gift of life. I am very much reminded of how I felt as a small child when I would see, a few days before Christmas, a package under the tree with my name on it. The two or three days that I had to wait felt interminable. And so, it is now for both the coming of Jesus into this world with love and hope and our anticipation of a vaccine which will allow us to return to beloved Africa.



Oh what a year!

Merry and Blessed Christmas,

The Jacobsons