



Dear Family & Friends

Christmas 2012

In this day of Skype, Facebook, Twitter, even emails, all of which enable almost instant communication, an annual Christmas Letter may seem hopelessly unfashionable and out-of date. But many of our friends and family are not “on line”, and many of us, although we may think of each other from time to time, somehow never get around to actually writing. And while it’s quick and easy to “forward” an interesting or humorous email, it takes a disciplined effort to take some time to compose a letter. And as it says, on p. 555 of the Book of Common Prayer, everyone should from time to time consider framing a rule of life for themselves in which they consider how they are living out what they believe. So an annual review is not only good for the soul, but a reminder to keep in touch!

First of all, aside from the normal aches and pains of aging bodies, we continue to be blessed with good health and mobility, although Bill has acquired “new ears” – aids which help him hear the higher frequency portions of speech, etc. much to Jette’s relief. He continues to spend a lot of time with things naval – weekly gatherings with the Burl-oak Naval Veterans; monthly with the Toronto Branch of the Naval Officers Association, its Hamilton Area Group, RCNA Burlington, and the Friends of HMCS Haida; and more irregularly with the UNTD Association, the HMCS Sackville in Halifax , and now HMCS Ojibwa in Port Burwell. And he still covers mid-week services and occasional pastoral emergencies for the Cathedral. As Jette is fond of saying when we sit down each week to update calendars, “explain to me again how retirement is going to be *different!*” But indeed it is much less stressful, and conveys the privilege of saying, without fear of consequences, “No, I won’t do that”. Jette clocked over 1000 hours this year knitting blankets for the McMaster Children’s Hospital, continues to finish off a cross-stitch project every couple of months, and to solve about two 1,000 piece puzzles a month, in addition to maintaining the household and grounds, while preparing a variety of really delicious meals for family and friends, as well as proof-reading all of the Cathedral Service pamphlets each week.

Kim is now the most experienced staff member in her elementary school, and continues to enjoy the antics of her chinchillas “Smarty” and “Bailey”, her bi-weekly shopping trips to the GTA Malls, and dinners out with a widening circle of friends. Ian continues to enjoy Guelph, his success in turning his photographic hobby into a self-funding venture, and his business travels around Southern Ontario – with side trips to Winnipeg and Montreal. And, we should add, the frequent reciprocal trips to Toronto to see Shaelyn.

On a sadder note, we’re now reaching the age when funerals are becoming a monthly (and a couple of times, weekly) events, as older acquaintances, and contemporary friends, move on.

Our travels this year were all eastward, beginning with our annual May cruise with Ontario Inland Waterways aboard the Kawartha Voyager. This time we sailed for 12 days from Kingston to Ottawa and back on the Rideau Canal, including a day trip down the flight locks to the Ottawa River, and back up. The two nights in Ottawa tied up next to the National Arts Centre gave us a chance to see the Ottawa Marathon (and Bill’s cousin Dannie and her husband Bill who were volunteer officials.....). We also walked over to Rideau Hall for a look around the grounds, and to the War Museum, to see one of only 8 scarves knitted by Queen Victoria for Valour in the Boer War – the one awarded to a distant relative of Jette’s. Immediately following the cruise, we returned to Ottawa for the AGM of the Naval Association of Canada, during which Bill was one of the 60,000 “distinguished” Canadians who were awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, in his case for his work with Naval Veterans, in community service, and for his “bringing credit to Canada” for his work with the International Association of Conference Centre Administrators, and the Interim Ministry Network.

In July, we headed east in our “new” Kia Soul (much easier to get in and out of than the Ford Focus) for the AGM of the Canadian Naval Memorial Trust, and to enjoy the hospitality of friends we’ve known for 40 years. That also allowed us to make our now annual trip to our favourite NS winery and to pick up some of Willy Krauch’s cold smoked salmon. By the way, when visiting Prince Edward Island – go over by ferry and come back by the bridge – it’s much cheaper that way. The last time we were on the island was in 1973, and

there have been some (but not many) changes – including four wineries and three distilleries, which contributed two very pleasant days of sampling and touring, including receiving a certificate for having done the “end to end” tour from the light house at East Point to the one at North Cape.

The summer was spent around Hamilton, working on the Haida or yard, riding our cycles along the waterfront and beach trails, with a very pleasant week with more friends (again of more than 40 years standing – indeed more like family) at their water-access cottage near Bancroft – where Kim, along for the first time, learned that you can experience enjoyable entertainment without internet or television access, shower outdoors, and survive using an outhouse with a spectacular view of the woods and lake!

This fall we flew to Denmark to visit Jette’s family (especially her 93 year old uncle) and explore the countryside and towns. Jette’s cousin and Maid of Honour hosted a delightful dinner with other cousins from the Houlberg side of the family living in the area around Copenhagen.



Jette, Nete, Uncle Erik



The Houlberg Descendents



Marianne, Troels, Jette, Tenna



Ulrich & Charlotte



Jette & Tine

Then we were off to Jutland, by fast ferry, to spend a week enjoying the very comfortable “sommerhus” of another cousin, while touring around and dining with two more cousins, this time from the Petersen side. After which, back to Copenhagen for a dinner (local venison – Ulrich is a dedicated big game hunter) with yet another cousin, and luncheon with her uncle and his daughter.

We then flew back to London, for two days at, as Bill likes to say, “my Club in London” – the Victory Services Club, while he delivered some thank you certificates to naval personnel involved in last year’s tour, and for a look at Harrods and the Royal Mews. The journey continued by train to Portsmouth, and by ferry to Ryde on the Isle of Wight, for two nights enjoying the hospitality of one of Bill’s predecessors as Canon Pastor at the cathedral in Hamilton. The return began with fast ferry to Southampton where we boarded the Queen Mary 2 for a seven day crossing back to New York, and finally home by air, train and a friend’s car.

Clearly a month of travel by plane, train, automobile and ship – made not only possible but very enjoyable through the generosity of family and friends.

No sooner did we return than we were off to Kingston for a General Meeting of the UNTD Association, which confirmed Bill as President for another year, and celebrated with a “Dine In” for a little over 100 folks at the historic Fort Frontenac Officers’ Mess. Fortunately, the winter settles down into a less hectic and more routine pace, although this year the Cathedral is experimenting with a 7 week long Advent season, in part to resist the tendency of society to start focusing on Christmas right after Halloween – although now we seem to be increasingly cursed with the American God known as “Black Friday”. And now, on to shortbread making, and Christmas decorating!

Wishing you a Very Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

Jette & Bill