

Christmas Greetings 2013

聖誕快樂 新年祝福

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock,
"Now they are all on their knees,"
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
"Come; see the oxen kneel

"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

Turned 65 this August, so enjoying the perks of being an old fart – pension cheques, cheap bus tickets, and free pills. I celebrated with picnics and Othello at Stratford with Louise Gamble and Major Barbara at Niagara with Nick. Lovely. Appropriately had two family reunions this year – a summer week at Limberlost Lodge in Muskoka with Karen and Tim and their children; and two Hitch (maternal) reunion dinners - cousins who haven't met for years. And another reunion ...

In June I got an email from China (!) that began "Dear Father, do you still remember me, I am Chen Hao-Ran". Twenty five years ago he was a little aboriginal kid in Taidong, now a factory owner in China. He was the only one of my now 6 "godsons" who went through the formal ritual of adopting me as 義父 godfather – and he had looked for me for years. He has bought me plane tickets and I fly to Taiwan January 10. How's that for gratitude. 感恩!

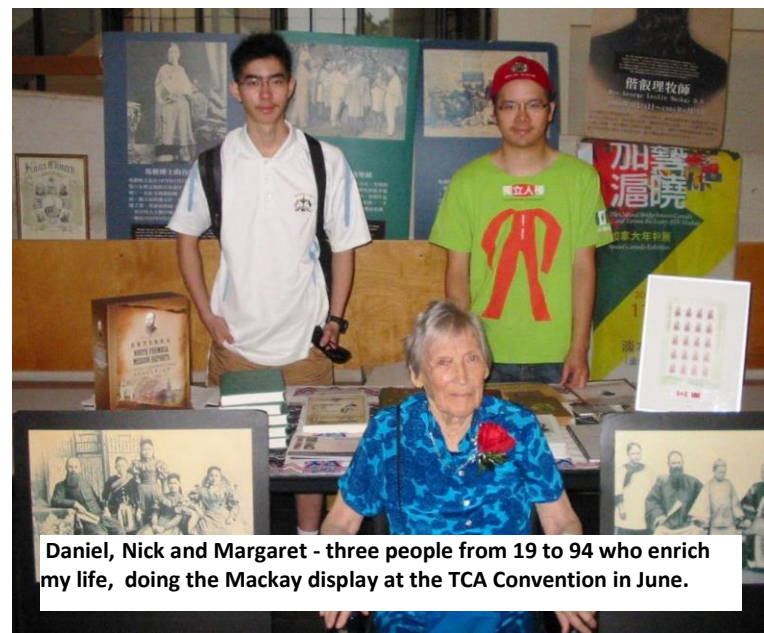
I began a new "career" as travel agent, taking Daniel's family to Montreal, leading a Taiwanese Canadian Association 3 day tour in July, and a 7-day pilgrimage of 47 Presbyterian women from Taiwan in October. NB – more time needed for picture and bathroom stops.

Back in Toronto the minister of Taiwanese United left so suddenly January 6 (don't ask) that I had to preach on 5 minute notice. So a busy year for the chair of the worship committee **and** search committee, which I am glad will end January 5 when our new minister lands. I am still president of Taiwanese Human Rights Assn. of Canada. After two years of trying we got Amnesty Canada secretary Alex Neve as our AGM speaker. Timely, since human rights abuses in Canada under the Harper regime are now worse than in Taiwan. They "protect" us.

On happier notes, music filled my year from jazz vespers to Tafelmusik baroque to organ concerts to opera. This year I blew some of my pension and went to see Ben Heppner in Peter Grimes at the COC. But the best operas are ones with the two Daniels (one Taiwanese one Chinese, both engineering student opera fans) at the UofT Opera school. I could go on but the page is done. I wish you all a 2014 as rich with friends, blessings, meaningful happiness, and music as my 2013 has been. *M*

(For most of you who get the e-letter this empty space left for a few personal words is, well, empty. You can always see pictures of my life and read my rants against the evil harper regime on my facebook page - you should be able to guess which Michael Stainton is me.)

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Daniel, Nick and Margaret - three people from 19 to 94 who enrich my life, doing the Mackay display at the TCA Convention in June.