

**“O hearken ye who would believe, the gracious tidings now receive:
Gloria! Gloria in excelsis Deo!”**

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Dear Family, Friends, Neighbors & Colleagues around the World:

December 2017



We're glad for this means to connect with y'all (as they say in Florida) again this year. We've all had our share of joys and sorrows during the year, but we rejoice that we can once again refresh our lives with the Good News that the Prince of Peace, the Bread of Life, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way the Truth and the Life and the Good Shepherd arrived in this broken world in the person of Jesus Christ some 2000 years ago to bring us healing, forgiveness, salvation, peace and hope. With all the turmoil, strife and rancor in the world and in our country these days, how we need that reminder to lift our spirits and to motivate us to strive to make a difference "where we've been planted."

Our sorrows this year included the loss of two of our brother-in-laws – sister-in-law Evelyn's husband, Jim Dodenhoff, in January and sister Nancy's husband, Tom Long, in September. We give thanks for the blessings these two special men were in our lives and in the lives of many others, and we rejoice in the hope of the resurrection.

Our joys included brother-in-law, David Hughes', 90th birthday celebration in Greenville, SC in September and son Steve's healing from mouth cancer. After returning to the States from China in November last year for four chemo infusions and five weeks of radiation therapy, we are thrilled to report that there is no trace of cancer anywhere in Steve's body! He returned to Qingdao in April to re-join Pelesia and to resume his teaching responsibilities at the International School there. Thank you all for your prayers on his behalf. Meanwhile, daughters Penny and Katrina continue to live in the family home in Anna, IL where they attend college and work on their Mrs. degrees. Katrina became engaged in August and Penny now has a 'steady.' It's been a joy to be able to spend time with them on several occasions during our travels.



Speaking of travels, this year found the two of us traveling through 20 states and Wendell making a trip to Hong Kong and China. All along the way, we enjoyed visits with children, grandchildren, siblings, nieces and nephews, aunts, cousins, friends and colleagues. How good it was to see you all again! In short, we spent a weekend with the Custer cousins in Orlando in March and drove up the east coast as far as Connecticut, then west to Michigan, then south to Illinois in May-June. We then flew to California and back, drove to Kentucky for a two-week stint as volunteers and back to Illinois in July. Wendell then flew to Hong Kong and China while Renske spent three weeks visiting friends in Illinois and Michigan in August. We met up again in St. Louis just in time for us to be present when brother-in-law Tom died. We then drove to South Carolina for brother-in-law David's birthday, back to Illinois to participate in Tom's funeral and finally home to Florida in September. We were grateful for safe travel, good health, a host of good visits and some relaxing weeks along the way.



What was Wendell doing in Hong Kong and China, we hear you say. On August 1 he received a gracious invitation from Union Church Hong Kong (where he once was the pastor) to come to Hong Kong to participate in the last service to be held in the old sanctuary on August 27 before it would be demolished to make way for a new church structure along with a 23 storey tower. He had to move a lot of pieces of our summer travel puzzle around, obtain a China visa, make flight arrangements and all the rest, but he

managed to do so and took off for Asia on the 15th so he could first fly to Qingdao to spend a week with Steve, Pelesia and Courtney before flying on to Hong Kong. As providence would have it, he was able to participate in the grand opening of their school's new campus and to observe Steve and Pelesia at work and Courtney in class.

Then it was on to Hong Kong for a week where he met many old friends and colleagues, preached at the Filippina service and participated in the final service at Union Church. The church was jammed, the music and singing were thrilling, the service was inspiring and the joy of seeing the fulfillment of a process that had begun under his ministry 20 years before flooded his heart. During the week, he was taken out for lunch and dinner every day by friends and colleagues (a process known as “eating your way out of Hong Kong”) and was also able to visit Union Church's impressive interim worship facility on the 20th floor of the Sun Centre Tower. The building project should be completed within 3-4 years. The week was complicated by *two* typhoons (one of which, an unprecedented signal #10) did major damage throughout the territory just before his arrival and the second of which came close to derailing the services he had come to participate in.



In November, we made our annual trek to Illinois to participate in the Long family's Thanksgiving-Christmas festivities and to visit Katrina and Penny. In December, we went on a 15 day cruise that Wendell “the happy wanderer” and amateur travel agent had spent a year arranging at the bargain basement level. We rode Amtrak to Miami where we boarded the Norwegian Sun, sailed through the Panama Canal and stopped at two ports in Columbia, one in Ecuador and two each in Peru and Chile. We then flew a “red eye” from Santiago, Chile back to Miami and Amtraked home. It was a very enjoyable and informative experience which we prepared for by reading several books on the history and current situation in Latin America.



Meanwhile, “back at the farm,” we continued to enjoy life in the wonderful community in which we live –

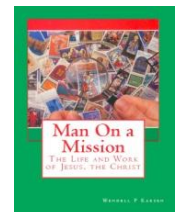
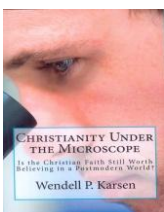
Penney Retirement Community – where we have many opportunities for preaching, singing, serving, teaching, nursing, working in the PET factory and the like. Wendell will take on the major responsibility of coordinating the chaplains and pastoral care programs here beginning in January. Meanwhile, his 500 page volume, *Christianity Under the Microscope*, was published in January and his completely revised 282 page volume, *Man On a Mission*, was published in full color in May.* Health wise, we've both

done quite well although Renske is scheduled for hip surgery on 27 January. We appreciate your prayers for that.

We send our greetings and our love to each one of you. Thanks for being a part of our lives. May you have a Blessed Christmas and a Hope-filled New Year.

Wendell & Renske

*The books may be purchased on Amazon, but if you order directly from Wendell, he can have Amazon send you a book for the author's price. *CUM* retails at \$19.95 + \$4.00 shipping, but is \$14.95 if ordered directly from him. Full color *MOM* retails at \$35.95 + \$5.00 shipping. His price is \$24.95 + shipping. *MOM* black & white retails for \$14.95 + \$4.00 shipping. His price is \$9.95 + shipping. His other books listed on Amazon can also be purchased directly from him at comparable savings. (Just send a check made out to him and he will arrange to have your book(s) shipped directly to you).



**“The mighty Lord of heav'n and earth today is come to human birth!
Gloria! Gloria in excelsis Deo!”**