

# Happy 2013

## From the Andersons

### *No Resolution Necessary...*



We came to the realization today that not only are we late sending out our annual Christmas letter, but if we don't get on the ball, we'll miss New Year's as well.

We've always taken a different approach to Christmas letters, choosing not to bore you with a recap of our year but rather to share with you (and hopefully not bore you) what God has been putting on our hearts regarding the Season.

What has been different this year is the fact our lives have been moving at an accelerated pace for the past six weeks. From the week of Thanksgiving, we have fast tracked our way into 2013. Our final days in Mongolia were full of taking care of business at the Grain of Wheat Community Center, packing for our trip to the US and packing/cleaning out in preparation for Cori's return to the US. Our one Christmas event was a wonderful evening with students we've come to know and a wonderful staff we have the privilege and joy of working with on a daily basis. Being a part of celebrating Christmas for the first time with some of them was icing on the cake.



After a week's vacation in Turkey, we blitzed through New York, Atlanta, Greenville, Franklin and on to Adamsville where we settled for about 10 days. Those days were filled with trying to finish shopping, Christmas baking, laundry - all while recovering from jet lag. If we sat down long enough to really contemplate the incredible truths of Christmas, we fell asleep.

Over the years we've been increasingly aware of the wounds, pain and brokenness we see in so many around us. Brokenness is amplified at the holidays. Our first morning in the US, the news was of a mall shooting in Oregon, followed days later by the horrific tragedy which took place at the elementary school in Newton, Connecticut.

In America, we are grappling with this violence, along with financial uncertainties and the overall precarious days in which we live. It's easy to identify with the words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow when he penned the carol, "I heard the bells on Christmas day."

*"And in despair I bowed my head  
There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong,  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"*

It is tempting to join him. Many times we go into the New Year and it's a repeat of the previous year. So we make resolutions and try to to make change happen in our lives. But there is no "resolution" necessary for the families of the Newton victims. It will be a very different and potentially difficult year for many of you, as you face difficulties and challenges in your life. Sometimes the New Year brings unsought change. For our family, 2013 will not be a mere repeat of 2012. We are about to return to Mongolia as two and leave Jonathan and Cori behind. While we don't pretend to all experience pain and loss at the same level as many others, it isn't going to be easy either. There is no resolution necessary to force change into our lives this year, and we're frankly not too sure we like that.

Interviewers and pundits of recent days are asking the question "Where is God?" It's a legit question. Those who choose not to believe, take the opportunity to say things like "there is no God" or that He is without power or perhaps He's malevolent. But we choose to go back to the Word of God. We go back to the song of the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace *among those with whom he is pleased!*" We go back to the promise to His father, Joseph, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)."

Longfellow knew tragedy. He lost his wife, the love of his life in 1861, who gave her life to protect their daughters from fire. Two years later, he nearly lost his son who was severely wounded and almost crippled in battle during the Civil War. But on Christmas of 1864, the pealing of the church bells brought him to the place where he could say:

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!  
The Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"*

For us, looking back to the message of Christmas brings hope to the year ahead. We can walk with eyes open into pain and separation and loss because God is with us. Not only is He with us, but He is actively at work in us and for us and around us. And if God is for us, who can be against us?

There are no quick fixes. There is no political legislation or "fiscal cliff" negotiation that will eliminate wrong or injustice. But there is hope. His name is Jesus. He will save His people from their sins. And though it seems that sometimes wrong prevails, we have yet to see what God has prepared for those who love Him. This is a year to hope in Him.

In whatever you and your loved ones are facing in 2013, whether it be joy or sorrow or, more than likely, some patchwork of both, we wish you a blessed year, filled with His hope and presence.

Happy New Year!  
Bernie, Renee', Jonathan and Cori