

Dear Friends,

We're in great health. Ted has a clean bill of health though the bottles of pills he has seem to take more and more space on the kitchen counter!

Both of us have completed major leadership responsibilities in The Church of the Messiah, our local parish, and now we have declared a holiday for a time.

Ted was offered a job, out of the blue, as one of three clergy in a cluster ministry in our Diocese. The Bristol Cluster Ministry is composed of three small congregations an hour's drive west of here: in Taunton, Mansfield, and North Easton. He begins this work on January 5th, and we are both grateful for it and excited about it.

Claire has several ideas about what to do next and likes not having to decide for the moment. In the meantime, she is Ted's unpaid chauffeur to the Bristol Cluster.

Seeing friends during the year has been wonderful. That beats hanging onto even the best of memories.

July in France and Barcelona was a perfect trip. In our rented Renault, we drove through the Loire Valley, Brittany, and then to the area near Albi and Toulouse, ending the French trip in the eastern Pyrenees. The high-light was staying in B & Bs, stretching our abilities to hear and speak French, and giving us a feel for the country and its people that no hotel can. In Barcelona, we feasted on Gaudi's astonishing architecture and Catalan vivacity.

Our children are great friends to us and they make us proud. Ted's six granddaughters and one grandson, John, are a special joy to him. They visit us on the Cape.

With the winter solstice, the season seems endlessly dreary. The political season seems no better. The rule of money and the draining of compassion from our world seem equally dark. In Jerusalem, there is no peace.

It would be easy to say that nowhere is there peace yet then we would miss the flowers that find a crack in the concrete. It would be easy to say hope is only an internal feeling with no external support yet then we would miss faith twisting those things together to make a rope to pull us forward.

So let us pull together in a forward direction into the New Year and into renewed hope. "Break forth, O beautiful heavenly light and usher in the morning!"

Love and blessings to you,

Op.