

Merry Christmas!

December 2016

Dear Family and Friends,

Well, here we are nearing the close of yet another year! It was a toxic year for our nation, and hardly anyone was left unscathed by the volatile and explosive political atmosphere. It was definitely "one for the books!" And now we stand poised at the precipice of a new year, which promises dramatic changes for our nation.

We welcome some changes for sure!

On a personal level, 2016 was a year for all the changes we underwent over the past three years to really settle in on me. Most of the magic of 2013, when we moved here to Indiana, has worn thin, and I am realizing on a whole new level just how much this change has affected me. In a nutshell, I miss my family and friends and the culture we left behind in Michigan. I am pressing in for a better understanding of my purpose here in this place and at this stage of life, as well as doing the hard work of building new, meaningful relationships here.

As this letter also serves as a means of documenting our family history, here is a rundown of some of the highlights for the Mueller family in 2016.

January

✿ On January 10, we got the call from Aaron and Adrienne that baby Mueller would be joining us in September! On Christmas Day last year, we talked about whether there would be a baby this year. It sure didn't take them long! Actually, unbeknownst to any of us at the time, Titus was already conceived at Christmas.

✿ In January and February, I finally got around to writing the account from our trip to Wales in 2014. I ended up with eight stories, which were published on our church's web site. This was challenging to me as seven months had passed since we had gone. I relied heavily upon my memory and a few scribbled notes.

You can still read the stories at www.heartlandfw.org/heartland-writers-blog.

February

✿ I turned 60 in February! I still can't wrap my mind around this one, but I am thankful for relative good health except for some fibromyalgia symptoms and increasing blood sugar, which I am nipping in the bud with weight loss. Larry is an example of great health to me, staying fit and trim.

✿ Also in February, I began our initial planning for our annual spring women's retreat along with a team of women from Heartland Church.

March

✿ I was invited to participate in Spiritual Emphasis Week at Charis House, an outreach of The Rescue Mission in Fort Wayne. Charis House provides intensive services to enable women to move past root causes of homelessness. During this week, one of our pastors taught sessions, while I and a few other women, gave daily devotionals and prayed with the women. What an honor it was to get to know some of these brave women!

✿ Also in March, we kicked off Beyond Words' new book study, "Living From the Unseen," by Wendy Backlund. I loved this book, which taught me more about walking in the Spirit and living by faith.

April

✿ Our women's group made "Mommy Survival Kits," Mason jars filled with mom essentials, and delivered them to Redemption House, a transition home for women who are leaving a life of addiction and developing a faith-based lifestyle. Most of these women are moms who are separated from their children for the time being. Knowing that they may not receive any Mother's Day gifts, we wanted to bless them with these fun kits.

✿ At the end of the month, I finally had two wisdom teeth extracted at the age of 60!

✿ Adrienne's ultrasound gave us a pronoun to use in reference to the baby...him!

May

✿ May brought trips to Kalamazoo for a college graduation party for Adrienne's brother, Daniel; Aaron's last sermon at New Day Community Church; and the first baby shower for Adrienne hosted by her Aunt Andy with her parents being able to be there all the way from Japan! Adrienne's grandfather passed away the following day, which was Mother's Day.

✿ Our women's retreat with the theme of "Living From the Unseen" was held May 20-21 at Michindoh Conference Center in Hillsdale, Michigan. It far surpassed our expectations, as God moved among us in wonderful ways.

✿ We ended the month with the triple A's visiting us, including Adam all the way from Minneapolis, for a Memorial Day barbecue.

June

✿ June kicked off with another trip to Kalamazoo to help Aaron and Adrienne with their much anticipated move to Grand Rapids. Aaron had been commuting to work since September and was eager to get settled in their new city. He is now the Communications Director for a non-profit organization, Crossroad Bible Institute.

✿ At the end of June, I began my weight loss journey with Weight Watchers, which continues to this day.

✿ We hiked one of Indiana's most beautiful state parks, Pokagon State Park, and stayed into the evening for a patriotic pops concert with the Fort Wayne Philharmonic Orchestra.

July

✿ I co-hosted a Teddy bear themed baby shower for Adrienne in Kalamazoo where over 60 women and even a few men showed up! It was tons of work but the end result was so beautiful, and they were blessed with nearly everything they needed for baby Titus.

✿ I also taught a workshop at our church on the subject of holy imagination, which was great fun.

✿ I think we made a couple more trips up to Kalamazoo and/or Grand Rapids. All in all, I believe we were up there eight times over the course of six weeks!

August

✿ For our 33rd anniversary, I wrote a series of three short stories regarding our marriage and gave them to Larry as a gift. You can read them on my blog, janetmueller.wordpress.com, under August 2016. We had a great time celebrating at Sylvan Cellars, a new brewery and event center in a restored centennial barn in Rome City, Indiana. We followed this with a trip to historic Winona Lake, where we had dinner at the Boat House, and a moonlight cruise on the Historic Dixie, a sternwheeler tour boat on the waters of Webster Lake complete with Cap'n Bob, who serenaded us along the way.

✿ August also was "home improvement" month at our house. While Larry did some restorative work on our patio, I did some painting.

September

✿ Over Labor Day weekend, we went back to Winona Lake where we did lunch at the Cerulean, a tour of the Billy Sunday museum, and a walk through the village shops along the lakeshore.

✿ Larry started working the dayshift permanently at R.R. Donnelly! 6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. three or four days a week. He sleeps much better, and we are both so grateful!

✿ Titus arrives! On Sunday, September 11, we were visiting with friends at their lake house. When we got back to their cottage, we got "the call." Adrienne was in labor. We decided to cut our visit short with our friends and head home to pack some bags and leave for Grand Rapids. What followed was a very long night, most of the time spent in a waiting room, texting back and forth with Aaron in the labor room and Adrienne's parents in Japan. At approximately 5:40 a.m. on Grandparents Day, Titus made his appearance. There is nothing like the moment when you lay eyes on the baby of your own son! We spent a couple of days in Grand Rapids following the birth, and I returned later and spent a week with them helping them out.

October

✿ Adrienne's parents came to the U.S. for a visit with their new grandson. Together we organized a surprise birthday party for Aaron with old friends from Kalamazoo, as well as new friends and coworkers from Grand Rapids. However, Aaron became suspicious when Adrienne hadn't announced any special plans for his 30th birthday so he knew something was up. It was a fun-filled afternoon with lots of laughter.

✿ One of our hopes for many years has been to visit Texas again, the state where Larry and I met 33 years ago. My youngest sister, Suzanne, got married to Paul last December and decided to have a belated wedding reception over a weekend in October at their home in Tyler, Texas. We were happy to oblige and attend! It was the makings of a mini family reunion, as most of my brothers and sisters were able to come, as well as some nieces and nephews. Larry and I extended our visit a few days and stayed with my other sister near Fort Worth and did some sight-seeing with them.

November

✿ I spent a week up in Grand Rapids helping Aaron and Adrienne with Titus, who was very colicky. It was my joy to do so! On November 3, I had the distinct pleasure of watching the Cubs win the World Series with Aaron and Titus, who was conveniently sleeping most of that time. What a night!

✿ November brought us all together again at Thanksgiving here at our home. We always seem to celebrate Adam's birthday along with Thanksgiving since they are so close together. Aaron and Adrienne stayed over the weekend so they had some date time together while we watched Titus.

December

✿ Up until about a week ago, we were having pretty decent weather. Then all hell broke loose, well snow and ice actually! We've been packing in some holiday activities and are looking forward to Titus' 1st Christmas. We are so grateful to see our children and grandchild as often as we do!

Our Christmas Prayer for You: May you know God's personal love for you on a deeper level in the New Year! Merry Christmas!

Larry & Janet Mueller