



Christmas 2023

Dear Faithful friends,

It was Dec 1978. Jimmy Carter was president and had just normalized relations with China, inflation was at 8%, over 900 people had just committed mass suicide in Jonestown, Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat had just signed a peace accord between Israel and Egypt, and we were packing to leave for the mission field. We were being sent to an unreached people group with no known Christians. We spent our last Christmas with family and friends in what we knew as familiar. In a few short weeks we would drive away to the unknown, with a sacred trust in a God who would take us through many adventures, heartaches, and victories. We always cherished the memories of that Christmas.

The world doesn't seem much different. 45 years later. For sure, one thing remains the same, our trust in an ever-faithful Heavenly Father. As we gathered for fellowship last Sunday we began to count off the ones who were at the finish line, in Heaven, cheering us on to complete the good work begun in us. The St'at'imc Nation is represented before the throne! We sang a song our good Muskogee Friend, Joyce Hamblin taught us, "I Will Bless Thee, Oh Lord." As we finished, each of us lifted our hands and took a turn to bless the Lord. You see, this past month, Joyce crossed the finish line.

As we prepared for Christmas this year, we began to reminisce. Kamie, who's life literally hung in the balance, is now a nurse. She is now working in a facility for babies and toddlers who are medically challenged. All the years of Trails camp, Bush Camp, Snow Camp, and Waymaker Conferences changed lives. One former youth visited with us last week. As our conversation drew to a close she said, "Without those times in my life, I wouldn't be where I am today. I might not have made it." We thought of all the Ladies and Men's Bible Studies that sometimes helped one to make it through a tough lonely week. Many of the families we grew to know and love and celebrate with, replaced the unfamiliar with the familiar. One family called us up one day to join in the celebrations. They had just found their lost son who had been adopted out as a baby. As we were introduced, his Mom, with a big smile, told us he was a Christian. Later his Mom and Dad also became followers of Christ. Last week, His Mom took her place at the finish line, as we gathered with this family to celebrate her life. This Sunday her daughter in Vancouver went to church for the first time. Do we know what footprints we leave behind? Where will they lead others who follow?

There is one thing that will change this next year. As of Jan 1st, we will move to half time. We will just continue on doing what we have always done, but we are also hoping to spend more time with our grandchildren. Mark will continue also with 3 projects he is working on. The radio station installation, the video project, and the youth networking conference across Canada. He will also continue on as pastor in the fellowship with all it's programming and community outreach. Perhaps this will free you up to give to some other young family who is just starting out on their adventure with an ever-faithful God. So, for the 45 years of giving and encouraging you spent on this ministry, we along with many St'at'imc raise our hands and bless you. Our lives were changed because you prayed. We might not have made it if you didn't give. Thankyou.

Christmas Blessings,

Mark and Babe