



CHRIST THE SAVIOR IS BORN

Advent, 1992

Dear Family and Friends,

It has been many years since we have sent out a "family" Christmas letter. This year we want to make up for lost time. For those with whom we have been out of contact, we'll fill you in on significant events of the past few years.

We have experienced several deaths. Bill Deutschmann, Bob's sister's husband, died with a massive heart attack in April of 1985. He was less than 55 years of age. Suzanne still lives in Columbia, Maryland.

Bob's Mother died just a year later, in April of 1986. Bob's Dad remained by himself in their Florida condo for a few months, then moved in with Suzanne in the fall. Dad died in November of 1990. (Jeannie's parents remain in relatively good health, living in their own home near Erie, Pennsylvania.)

Our oldest son, Ray, (Robert III) died on June 21, 1991. He had lived in California and had just completed designing his own line of men's clothing, which he had called "No Regrets." His death was most difficult for us to bear. We have been actively working at our mourning and are doing much better now. We even took up square dancing and belong to a square dance club here in Vinton County!

In the meantime, our book, Montgomery - A White Preacher's Memoir, was published by Fortress Press in 1991. Though it has Bob's name on it, the book was truly a joint enterprise. It is our personal memories of the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott of 1955, led by Martin Luther King, Jr., the beginning of the modern civil rights movement. We continue to do a great deal of speaking on those subjects.

In the summer of 1990 we led a tour group to Germany (consisting of members of Bob's extended family). In addition to the standard Martin Luther historical sites, our itinerary included the ancestral homes of Bob's great-grandparents. The climax of the trip was the famous Passion Play at Oberammergau, in southern Germany. We are already planning to organize another group for the next presentation in the year 2000. (Anyone interested? Let us know.)

After the tour we spent a few days in Salzburg, Austria, with Bob's sister Suzanne and his Aunt Emma, then went on to visit Bob's cousins in Teningen, in southwestern Germany, and our daughter Kathy and her family near Paris. While there we met our grandson Soufiane for the first time. This year they added another son. So we went back to Europe for visits with a family from St. John, our Teningen cousins, and Kathy and her family. We also spent a couple of weeks seeing the sights in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and France.

While we're talking about family, we'll fill you in on the rest of them. Our oldest daughter, Meta, manages a farm in northern

California. Her daughter Elysia graduated from high school this year and is now studying to become a nurse. Her adopted daughter Joey is married to Bob Weld and has a daughter also, Jamie, age 6.

Diann teaches English as a second language. She is presently here with us during a several-month swing across the country to visit family and friends, driving her pickup truck with a camper top. Her David (Findlay) is still back in California managing his recently-expanded produce store, "David's Finest" (it really is). He'll join Diann at his parents home in Ottawa, Ontario, for Christmas. We'll be visiting them in California next January.

David and Gale finished their 4-year ministry at Highland Brethren Church in Pennsylvania; then David spent a year at Riverside Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, in chaplaincy training; now they are in Louisville, Kentucky., where David is a chaplain at the VA hospital. Their new daughter Rachel arrived last October to join Sarah, age 5.

Kathy and Hamid Yakdi, along with their three sons, Ousama, 7, Soufiane, 3, and Jalel, 1 1/2, are still living near Paris. Hamid is also in produce, working in a store just yards from their house. They have bought a huge stone barn and adjacent land, which was part of a villa built in the 1600's, west of Paris, as their summer home.

Jon and Pam are living in Dayton, Ohio, where Jon teaches math and computer science in a private school and Pam serves as a social worker, teaching at Wright State Univ. and working with a counselling service. Their son, Jeffery, is now 1 1/2, with a new baby due in March.

Carolyn and Jon have also moved. Jon is finishing his Ph.D. in accounting at Ohio State Univ. and is now teaching at Carnegie Mellon Univ. in Pittsburgh. Carolyn graduated from OSU in 1989 and is now home-schooling Jared, 9, as well as providing special care for Elizabeth, 3, who was born with multiple handicaps.

Bob has been serving part-time since 1983 as pastor at St. John Lutheran Church, a small country church near Logan, Ohio. The relationship is a happy one. We hope to remain there until his mandatory retirement in a little over five years.

Jeannie's major volunteer task for a number of years has been the coordination of Red Cross bloodmobiles (quite successfully) in Vinton County, an enormous responsibility! We've both kept busier than we should be at a long list of volunteer activities, as well as just surviving. Recently we have become involved in organizing the Vinton County AIDS Task Force.

We're still living in the Promised Land, our 40 acres of what used to be wilderness (and mostly still is) in southeastern Ohio. We now have electricity and some plumbing; though we still follow the path down the hill to our out-house, and we still heat and cook with wood. The simple life is not an easy one!

As we prepare to celebrate the birthday of the Prince of Peace, we pray God's richest blessings for you, especially the gift of God's peace in your hearts. More than ever before, the world needs us to be aware of the importance of God's gift to us of his Son, and to share the gift of his love with all people of all nations and all ethnic groups.

Bob and Jeannie Graetz, Rt. 1, Box 264, McArthur, OH 45651