

# CHRISTMAS 2018

## OKLAHOMA STRACKBEINS



Psalms 27:4, "One thing I ask of the Lord. This is what I seek, that I live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in his temple. (EHV)

David's request has a lot to do with Christmas. You have to ask why he wants to live in the house of the Lord and gaze at the beauty of the Lord? Well, that is where the sacrifices were held which pointed to the Sacrifice Christ would offer for the sins of the world. David needed that forgiveness and loved to be told God freely gave it to him. That is what Christmas is all about. It is a simple message and it radiates the beauty of the Lord.

God loved us enough to live a holy life and pay the penalty of our sins, so we could have the holiness we need to live with him forever. If we believe that, we will get to spend a life without end living in his temple in heaven gazing at his beauty and worshipping him from our hearts. It is with the same desire of the Psalmist that Barbara and Pastor spent this year. Part of the year was family time through visits and vacations and the rest of it was doing church work.

Last Christmas our sons, Isaac from San Francisco, Daniel from Japan and Peter with his family spent some quality time with us. In March, Ben, Isaac, Tom, Peter and their families came for a week of fun. They rented a house close to the parsonage. All 11 of our grand children made it. They had a lot of fun visiting the train museum down town.



Left to right: Ambrose, Evelyn, Erica, Henry, Estrella, Christina, Lizzy, Samuel, Eli, Josiah, on floor, Caleb

In the summer we took two vacations each over 3,000 miles. The high-lights were the WELS LWMS (Lutheran Women's Missionary Society) convention in Green Bay, seeing all our grandchildren again and visiting Barb's mom and Pastors'. Pastor's mom celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and most of Pastor's siblings came to celebrate in Minnesota. The biggest highlight of the second vacation was Pastor's trying to answer a phone call while rushing to the basement of his son Ben's home. He fell down the steps and broke his ankle in three places. Surgery was done in New Ulm giving him a plate with three screws on one side and two screws on the other. Fortunately, Barbara had retired in May from her cooking job at John Glenn Elementary School in Oklahoma City. It allowed her to drive Pastor around for many of his visits and hospital calls. Many people in the church also stepped up to the plate to help get Pastor around. Leading the church services was difficult while Pastor was in a wheel chair. A small table was placed over Pastor's legs from the center of the chancel and that is where the sermons, liturgy and sacraments were given. At this point Pastor is able to walk fairly well but not perfectly. He and Barbara have started swimming as a form of exercise instead of walking.

Barbara has had more complications from her Waldenstrom's bone marrow cancer. The main treatments are plasma exchanges and she needs to have them more often. Extreme fatigue, headaches, nose bleeds are the symptoms that show up when it is time for these exchanges. She continues to take huge doses of vitamin c intravenously from a DO every week as she has done for the last 12 years.

The church work at Holy Cross was beautifully blessed by the Lord this year. Barb continues to teach Sunday School, attends the LWMS meetings and is an Alto in our church choir. Pastor was privileged to be able to usher three members and a prospect into glory. By God's grace 5 adults and one infant were baptized, 10 adults were confirmed as members, another one by affirmation of faith and six more by transfer.

As we prepare for another Christmas Barbara and Pastor wonder how many more Christmases we will have here on this earth. We all are coming closer to the day God will call us home. Of course, whether it is serving and worshiping our Lord here on earth or there in heaven, one thing doesn't change. That is, the words of the Psalmist that we apply to ourselves, "One thing I ask of the Lord. This is what I seek, that I live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in his temple. (EHV) Psalm 27:4. The neat thing about that beauty is that through faith, it has become our beauty. When God sees us as forgiven redeemed saints, he sees the beauty and holiness of Christ that we need for salvation. That is our reason for living and our only hope when dying. Merry Christmas!



*Sarah and 1st born, Ben*



*Peter our third and Rachel*



*Isaac (2,) Grandma Staats, Dan (4)*



*Tom our youngest and Amy*