



The Johnsons and the Wengers, New Year's Day 2005

Dear Family and Friends,

December was busy and a little bit crazy; much was accomplished but some things just didn't get done, like sending out Christmas cards! I'm truly thankful that this was our healthiest Christmas ever—the first December in many years that my viral infections didn't turn into bacterial ones. YAY! We thank the LORD also for an uneventful Christmas (seeing as last Dec. 25 was spent in the emergency room at Sibley Hospital). We drove up to Lancaster in good time, no bad weather, no bad traffic, had a great Christmas Eve and Day with Harold & Jody & family; I flew to and from Ohio—to spend a few days with my folks—without a hitch, and then to top it all off, New Year's Day was delightful and WARM!

This past year we have continued with our Pastor Dennis Edwards and others to plant a new church in Washington called Peace Fellowship. I play keyboard pretty much every week; Phil plays guitar when he can and works with several of the senior high boys, running the sound system with Noah Ward and meeting for Bible study with Alvin Mason. We've been meeting in the gym at the Kenilworth-Parkside Community Center, which is, in DC parlance, East of the River. Currently we're exploring the possibility of leasing a space (not necessarily a traditional church building) that we could use seven days a week. *Please pray with us that God provides the right place for Peace Fellowship!*

In March we flew to Montana for Kellie Gaston and Aaron Sironi's wedding. We had a great time and were honored to be there. Kellie came to DC over 10 years ago to work for Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT), and was one of the first people to stay with us after we bought our house; the connection: (then) girlfriend of a friend's brother. While in Montana, we invested in some cross country skis with the hopes of using them in future winters. (I'm holding Kellie's dad's dog in the picture - now why would I be fascinated with TINY dogs?!)



Megan, Gail & Phil on the beach in Ashtabula, first leg of the trip

In May we took a two-week driving trip to Dryden, Ontario for the wedding of our nephew Scott Hoover and Beckie Finlayson. Our 16-year-old niece Megan from Bowmansville PA did much of the driving (practicing for her license) and did a wonderful job, even as we crawled across the top of Lake Superior in thick fog. (Megan drove, Phil instructed, Gail was in the back seat praying.) Visited family and friends along the way in Ashtabula, Toledo, Chicago, Traverse City MI, Three Rivers MI, Lima OH and Zanesville

OH. Before and after the wedding Phil and his brothers enjoyed wandering in the woods trying (and failing) to find a confluence (or confoundance, as we prefer to call it) of latitude and longitude somewhere in the Dryden area that they wanted to document. (It's a geek thing, Phil admits, and he would love to explain it to you should you remember to ask him.)

These were nice breaks from work for both Phil and me—believe it or not, I actually was gainfully employed the first half of 2004. I managed to stick it out for the entire school year working at the Neighborhood Learning Center after-care program, located just a few blocks from home. I didn't enjoy it a whole lot and it wore me out, so it makes some sense that I didn't re-up for the next year. In January I got another part-time job doing accounting work on Wed. & Fri. for the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (just around the corner) where I had previously worked for many years. It provided a good balance to the Tues. & Thurs. after-school job with the kids, for which I was grateful. Both jobs, though temporary, were very specific answers to prayer, but now I am once again unemployed outside the home and trying to use my time constructively.

In June we had the pleasure of hosting a lovely young woman named Joy who came from South Carolina to work for Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC). Joy stayed with us for seven weeks while she looked for permanent housing; the connection: college roommate of family friends' granddaughter. Joy experienced first-hand what a small world it is living here—her first week, standing on the corner trying to get a clear signal on her cell phone, someone driving past on 8th Street recognized her and stopped to say hello!

Phil's major highlights this year: In June he was shocked (and humbled) to receive a Distinguished Service Award—one of the highest awards given to government employees. And in December he achieved a long-time goal of taking (and passing!) a black belt test in Hapkido. WOO-HOO! He's been working on this for about 10 years, and is quite proud of this accomplishment.

In September we began our foray into home improvement: First, Phil put in a long-desired front porchlight—I'm quite proud of him for THAT accomplishment!—which required tearing out a wall in the entryway (I didn't even mind, I was so thrilled to have the porchlight). Next, workmen came to repair the wall and the rest of the entryway and paint it (cool lilac), then electricians came to put in a new fusebox. (Then Phil tampered with the wiring—uh, I mean rewired the basement so that our fuses wouldn't blow—and our doorbell didn't work for a couple weeks!) My job, since I'm "working at home," was to keep the dog from eating the workmen and whatever else was required to facilitate their getting the job done. We learned the Number One rule of home improvement: Projects always take longer than you think they will. Good to know for future projects, which will involve heating, a/c, windows and plaster work (groan). *Feel free to pray for us if you are so compelled.*



Speaking of the dog, in case you're wondering, he's still big, he's still neurotic, he's still Always In The Way, and he drives me nuts. But what can I say—I'm quite fond of the big puppy, even though he loves Phil the best.

And so we keep plugging away here in DC, trying to be faithful stewards of our time and resources and faithful servants to those God calls us to serve. In these often unsettling times, we're thankful for God's love for us and for each of you, and we take comfort in knowing that we need not be afraid, for we know Emmanuel, God With Us—the Lord Jesus Christ: *The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?*



Rushmore and Joy

Blessings to you and Peace in the New Year