



Merry Christmas,

It briefly crossed my mind to just sign the *Christmas* cards and send them on their way this year... However, I have testimonial and written proof that some of you actually read this letter. It has given me inspiration to carry on in my annual writing endeavor for another year!

Can you tell from my opening paragraph that Stacia is watching "Anne of Green Gables" (for the 562nd time) as I sit here before my computer keyboard? If she watches it only 3 more times, she will truly be a kindred spirit. This is the kind of thing that Stacia loves—drama, musicals (she was thrilled to get "White Christmas", "Holiday Inn", and "Going My Way" for Christmas), good books, hugs, and her friends. She has been very busy this fall. She ran cross-country and played volleyball on the Holy Trinity teams and has recently been chosen to play on the U-14 Westmont Wildcats club volleyball team. She will sit for the entrance exam at Benet Academy in January and hopes to attend high school there next year. She and her friend Stefanie are also preparing their science fair project for this year's competition. Stacia did a project on the melting points of chocolate (Yum!) last year and earned an "Outstanding" at the school, regional, and state competitions. As if that is not enough, she could be occupied full-time babysitting. All of this is just the momentum needed to start us careening downhill toward the last semester of 8th grade, confirmation and graduation.

Christopher is Christopher. Ya gotta know him (and be heavily medicated) to love him. He loves to talk, make noises, pester his sisters, and play his GameBoy. On the other hand, he is the picture of love and kindness when he has the responsibility to care for Hannah. I guess these personality switches are to be expected in a pre-adolescent boy. He, too, is busy—schoolwork (although I keep threatening to call his teachers and tell them that he needs more homework), practicing piano, Cub Scouts (he is a 2nd-year Webelos), serving at the altar, and he has taken up the clarinet. He also played volleyball this fall. He says it is his "life-long dream to be the first man to clone a human being." He does have a great fascination with DNA and genetics—now I just have to enroll him in a good bioethics course. His other fascination is the NFL—and the little traitor is a Packers fan! He probably wants to clone Brett...

Hannah, likewise, is busy, busy, busy. She got a new dolly for Christmas and she has not stopped bathing her. Her other big thing lately is playing with the Thomas the Tank Engine trains. Go figure. The rest of her days are occupied with reading books (Dr. Seuss, any variety), watching the VeggieTales or a Disney movie, visiting school or the rectory (and the respective candy dishes—that has not changed), and being alternately adorable and maddening. She was potty-trained in 1 day over the Labor Day weekend. (I would love to brag, but considering that she was about 6-weeks shy of 3-years-old, it wasn't that great a feat. My secret—the Hail Mary.) Basically, she summed it all up for me about a half-hour ago: "I am not a baby anymore. I grew up to be a big girl this morning."

Matt and I continue to chase after all of them while attempting to accomplish what we must as well. He is single-handedly keeping Lucent afloat, well at least the volume of work makes it seem that way. We are thankful that he has this job, that he enjoys his work and the colleagues with whom he works, and we have a glimmer of hope for a turn in the cycle. He also continues to help to coach Stacia's volleyball team and, of late, he has been readying the workshop. I feel a *MAJOR* project coming on...

I am staying busy with all of my usual activities—church, choir, lunch duty, health records, driving kids, etc. I also took on some freelance medical writing projects for a pharmaceutical company which added some new activity to my days—very interesting work and a good creative outlet. The other big change this year was that my mom's eyesight took a major down turn and she had to stop driving—so, Hannah and I travel to Aldi and Walmart and the bank and doctor's appointments with her. She is still living in her home, but needs a bit more help to travel around and someone to read her mail and pay the bills.

And so we come to the end of another year and another letter. I had fun—How about you? Photo and tree/hearth decorating credits go to Matt's sister, Donna (thanks!)

It is our prayer that God will bless all of you with happiness, health and peace in the new year.

Love,

Matt, Pam, Stacia, Chris, and Hannah

