

Christmas 2021

Dear Family and Friends:

The pandemic has been for us a time to slow down and to appreciate things we have long taken for granted. It has provided opportunities to reflect and pray with a sense of urgency that we have lacked in the past. With life returning a little more to normal, this year has offered occasions for us to appreciate the simple pleasures of everyday life.

Let us fast-forward to our anniversary. RV was hoping that a carriage ride in one of Williamsburg's gilded coaches would not be the stuff of inspiration. False hope indeed! Our ride proceeded down the Duke of Gloucester Street just prior to the start of a fife and drum parade. Crowds lined the street in preparation for the parade. Dottie, suitably dressed to the nines, started using the Windsor royal wave to the crowd from our open carriage like she was the Queen greeting her subjects from the balcony of Buckingham Palace. The crowd loved it and started waving back, playing up to this pretense. Dottie was in her element and ate up the attention she received. RV was mortified. If the carriage had had a trap door to get him off that stage, he would have used it in a heartbeat. One of many moments this year.

Christians in the past have oft reflected on the preciousness, even the sanctity of our common life. Early Christian missionaries spoke of “thin spaces,” their way of describing the confluence of attitudes, customs, time, space, and circumstances that encouraged an openness to God. It is a perspective that deliberately draws up short in the tidiness of our living, or the busy-ness of our schedules, or the consuming nature of our work-a-day world and gives God space in the routines of life. Certainly, devotional times and services are part of that. So are walks at dawn or dusk, rides in pleasant locales, and lingering conversations over meals or coffee breaks. “Thin spaces” of common experiences that enhance the opportunity for the quietness of soul that gives God room.

Christmas is a season that beckons us to this perspective. God is in the person of Jesus Christ, incarnate in human flesh, manifest in space and time, with our redemption in view. It is a time to pause and appreciate His blessings, to put our heartaches into perspective, to experience a hush of soul and hear His still, small voice.

At this Yuletide, may God graciously grant to each of us glimpses from this vista. From our home to yours, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.