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December 22, 2006

To our Family and Friends,

I'm so thankful for the Christmas season since it gives us plenty of opportunities to celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to earth. I love to tell the blessed story that Mary gave birth to the Christ Child, who was God in the flesh and He chose to live among His creation. He lived a sinless life that we might follow in His steps. He died a martyr's death as the spotless Lamb of God that we might have forgiveness of sin. And He rose again that we might have resurrected power to overcome the troubles of this life and live faithfully for Him. What more do we need to enjoy our journey here below!!

Thank you for allowing me (Brooksyne) the privilege of sharing with you events that shaped our lives as we traveled, travailed and triumphed during the past year. Many of you already know a lot about these things since you read our Daily Encouragement writings on a regular basis. So please bear with any repetitious thoughts I might share for the Christmas newsletter.

This Spring Stephen traveled to Missouri to officially bury Mom's remains beside his Dad's in a cemetery in rural southwest Missouri. What a blessing to have many caring family and friends gather for this memorable occasion. Stephen, along with his brothers, Mike and Pat, visited throughout the Kansas City area and visited their dad's only sister Mary and his only living brother Don and his wife Mary and other long time friends.



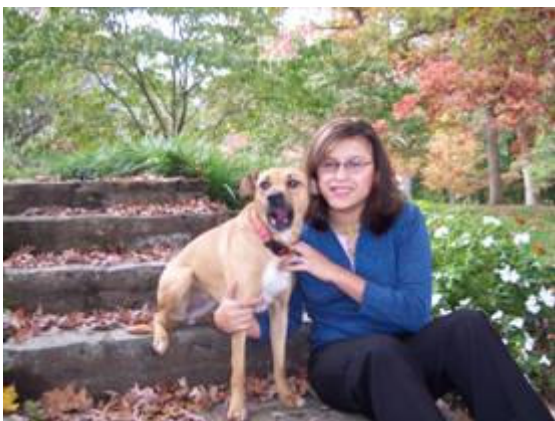
Our most distant trip this year was traveling to Door County Wisconsin for the Steincross family reunion in late June. Only one sister, Frances remains from Stephen's mother's immediate family. She and Uncle Jim made a great effort to be there. There are many cousins, nieces and nephews that gather yearly to celebrate their family heritage. The picture on the left shows Stephen and the other first cousins attending the reunion. He's quick to say that he is the youngest in the photo! Wisconsin is a beautiful state and we thoroughly enjoyed the lake views and great family fellowship. The photo to the right is a beautiful sunset over Green Bay.



It was the first Steincross family gathering without Stephen's mother, Georgia Mae, who died a year ago in November. It was a year of adjustment for us, most especially Ester, not having MaMa with us on the holidays and special occasions since she'd lived with us over the past five years. We miss her a lot! We also missed another dear family member who died due to a quick spreading cancer. Stephen's cousin, Nancy Kay's husband, Jim, passed away in March and had made a very personal difference to so many. The condolences friends and family shared following his death demonstrated how caring and dedicated he was.



I had a lovely display of perennial and annual flowers this summer, despite the dry weather. It required lots of time nurturing these plants since the sun was hot and water was scarce. I found tremendous pleasure in cutting these fresh colorful flowers and arranging them for neighbors, friends, hospital patients, the church in Spring Grove, and women in the workplace where I visit as a chaplain. I also enjoyed making arrangements and having many photos placed on the Daily Encouragement website.



Ester began her senior year in the fall. I'm shaking my head, in disbelief, as I write this, but it's true - she's a senior! She attends not only the local high school but also a Vo-Tech where her skill level is matched with potential job and volunteer opportunities. She has been well-received by the elderly at a nursing home as well as the children at a Christian daycare setting. Lately she's been doing housekeeping in a local motel and getting paid for her services, so she's come home very excited about her most recent assignment. She will be continuing her education at Vo-Tech for the next couple of years, most likely. Due to her special needs she has the

opportunity to attend school until she's 21. She'll be in the School to Work program where she will be monitored and coached in the workplace until she is able to do the work required. We're very thankful for this provision in her educational plan.

Ester underwent heart surgery in Boston on August 29 for a new Enrhythm Pacemaker. The first pacemaker just wasn't pulling its weight (so to speak) and it was recommended that she have an upgrade model programmable to meet her present needs. This involved reopening the incision site at her breast bone for the sixth time in her young seventeen years. The surgery was successful with relatively few complications and has already proven to have been a wise choice. Unfortunately Ester has experienced Atrial Flutter several times since the surgery. Following the first attack pacemaker technicians therapeutically programmed the pacer to respond to this very serious irregular heart beat when it rears its ugly presence. Recently Ester had several days of persistent A/F episodes and within minutes the pacemaker brought the rhythm back into proper sync each time. It goes without saying, but I'm so enthused I'll say (or write) it anyway; this new pacemaker has already proven to be a blessing.



We continue to enjoy our pets; our five year old cat Dottie and 2 year old dog Roxie. They get along real well which pleases us and often rest together on the same pillow. Dottie likes staying at home while Roxie loves to go and now visits nursing homes as a "pet therapist". She's a real hit with the residents!



We had a very memorable experience in November when we attended an Amish wedding. Held in the parents of the bride's barn we were two of only seven "English" people (non-Amish) among the 400 plus Amish guests at this lovely wedding ceremony. It was a joyous and solemn occasion where we learned a great deal about their wedding traditions and where we experienced their warm receptivity toward us. Stephen has been driving for Jesse, our Amish neighbor, this past year and we've spent a lot of time with

their family so we've come to appreciate them mostly for their friendship but have also come to admire many of their traditions.

All of America and others throughout the world became aware of the tragedy that took place at Nickel Mines Amish School in October. It was a genuine blessing to see God's mercy and forgiveness spread throughout the county when the Amish community reached out in love and forgiveness as they found God to be all-sufficient in bringing comfort and healing to their own sorrowful hearts. They were deeply touched by caring people all over the world who embraced their painful losses as the English responded to this tragedy with countless letters of sympathy, prayers, and donations.



We've enjoyed many wonderful gatherings with friends from past congregations this year, neighbors at our neighborhood picnic and barn hymn sing (pictured at left), as well as several family gatherings.

We thoroughly enjoyed riding the hay wagon with 20 neighbors as we went Christmas caroling last night,

especially singling out the single, elderly, and frail. (Photo at right.)



We are essentially now involved in several types of ministry.

We consider www.dailyencouragement.net our main ongoing ministry at this point in life. This ministry has reached its 10th year this past October and has become more and more involved. Essentially each weekday morning we write a devotional message and share it over the internet through email, website and podcasting. Generally this takes us all morning beginning about 6:30 AM and we're usually finished

about noontime. What tremendous fulfillment this brings to Stephen and me as we daily share God's Word with those who desire to read or hear it.

This year Stephen was officially recognized as an internet chaplain and now has a mission account. We have visited several churches to share our mission vision including both churches we formerly pastored, in upstate PA and New England. Interestingly, the first church we visited after our approval was Stephen's brother's congregation in Easton PA. They also became the first church to make a monthly "faith promise" to our ministry. Fitting since Pat had an influence in Stephen's decision to serve Christ!

We have also been enjoying our temporary interim pastoral role over the past year (actually since August of 2005). Our assignment in Spring Grove, PA ended in July after the church voted in their new pastor. We certainly enjoyed our ten months with this delightful congregation. In August Stephen accepted the interim pastorate serving a congregation in New Cumberland, which is close to Harrisburg. He preaches and leads the service while I play piano and lead the worship. The congregation is sincere in their Christian walk, friendly, and receptive to our ministry, so this has been another wonderful blessing for our family for the last four months. There is also a nice youth group very welcoming to Ester. However due to the nature of interim pastoral work these assignments are short-term and unpredictable.

We now have chaplain opportunities in several small local companies and hope to see this aspect of our ministry develop further next year. We both enjoy and find fulfillment in this type of service as we have opportunities to impact people for Christ in the daily grind of making a living.



In order to supplement our income from the various ministry sources Stephen also periodically assists our Amish neighbor, who is an artisan stonemason. Mostly he drives for him but has also been doing some hard manual labor as well and is pleased that his aging 52 year old body can still take it (with some restrictions due to past health issues!)

As I was contemplating what I would write in our Christmas newsletter the following hymn, "*For the Beauty of the Earth*" came to mind. The third verse (written below) especially speaks to my heart as I consider the tremendous worth of our family and friends over the years. Perhaps you'd like to hum or sing the very familiar tune and consider your own personal blessings and lift grateful praise to our compassionate Father at this Christmas season:

*For the joy of human love, Brother, sister, parent, child, Friends on earth and friends above;
For all gentle thoughts and mild: Lord of all, to thee we raise, this our hymn of grateful praise.*

Joyous Christmas and New Years blessings to each of you,

Stephen, Brooksyne and Ester Weber
Roxie (roof, roof), and Dottie (meow, meow)

Previous Weber family Christmas letters: [2005](#), [2004](#), [2003](#), [2002](#), [2001](#), [2000](#), [1999](#)

495 Kraybill Church Road, Mount Joy, PA 17552 717-492-9743 scweber@dailyencouragement.net