

Merry Christmas, 2016!



Radio City Music Hall!

We hope you are all able to spend time with loved ones at this time of year! We are, as always, grateful for the love of family and friends always, something we never think to say until Christmas.

Our travels continue. With 8 trips in 2015, we hoped to stay home more in 2016. And so we did, making only 7 trips this year, and only 3 of those by plane!

My work in DisAbility Ministries took us to Portland, Oregon in May. We drove, and on the way we met with other people interested in DisAbility Ministries in Alameda (next to Oakland). We then stayed with our friend, Diane Mettam, in Eureka and Larry and Pat Bath in Grant's Pass, Oregon. From there we spent 10 days in Portland for General Conference, monitoring legislation, networking and staffing an information booth. It was an exciting time! I appreciated Dale's help and the collegiality of Lynn Swedberg, Tom Hudspeth, Scott Burley, and Leo Yates. We tracked 12 pieces of legislation, 9 of which I wrote. Six passed. One failed by only a single vote! As you can imagine, this was a time of mixed emotions. We came home exhausted but grateful for all that was accomplished!



In July my work took us to Roseville, Minnesota for the DisAbility Ministries Committee's annual meeting. It is always wonderful to spend time with this hard-working group who are my second family. This year our community event was DisAbility Awareness Sunday. Many people from neighboring churches joined us at Centennial United Methodist Church in Roseville for worship, lunch, a panel discussion and workshops in conducting accessibility audits and how to include people with disabilities in a music program. During worship, the senior pastor and I brought the message in the form of a question-and-answer session. It was a lot of fun and well-received!

In August we took a few days and met my (Sharon's) extended family for camping in King's Canyon. It is always very humbling and centering to walk among the giant Sequoias and renewing to spend time with family, laughing and enjoying each other. Hiking in the Sierra Nevada mountains is a long family tradition and there is nothing better! After our trip there last year, a huge fire had burned through and we were relieved that the damage was not worse. We were also amazed to see new green shoots coming up from the roots of plants that were entirely blackened!

In September, I became a real, true jetsetter! I flew to Alameda for the day to attend a conference on Invisible Disabilities, organized by my friend, Austin Tam, who was part of the group I met with in May. It was an excellent conference, with valuable information and sharing between participants!

Also in September, Dale sang at Bob Morley's famous Barn Hootenanny and in December he sang "Christmas Hallelujah" during our church choir concert, to thunderous applause!



Our annual mission trip this year took us to Taylor, Texas, outside of Austin in October. We helped a couple rebuild their house. A tornado had taken off the roof, and rain and flood finished the destruction. Only the foundation and part of the subfloor was in place when we arrived. After five days our team of 24 left with all interior and exterior walls framed and sheathing on the perimeter and on the top of the lower wing. A loft over the living room was also framed. The highest point of the front wall is 16 feet, and it was a profound moment when that wall was raised into place! We are grateful to God to be able to work and to go with this team each year!



In November we travelled to New York City with our church choir. We joined with choirs from around the country to sing "Lux Aeterna" ("Light Eternal") in Carnegie Hall! This was an unforgettable trip from start to finish! In addition to rehearsing and performing, Dale and I saw the Rockettes at Radio City Music Hall (so much fun!), went to the Natural History Museum (DINOSAURS!!!), walked in Central Park to see the fall colors (glorious!), took a boat tour at night (magical!), went to church at St. John the Divine (4th largest cathedral in the world), and went to Macy's to see the Christmas windows and to shop! The performance itself was a wonderful experience, but it was the trip as a whole that I will always remember!



We still live with Elsie, our blue heeler/husky mix. She is around 6 1/2 now, still gets me up and walking every day, and still a great guard dog! She has saved me from getting hit by cars at least three times and defended us both against a dog attack fearlessly this past August. More obedient than any other dog I have ever had (she actually stays when I tell her to!), she keeps us entertained by, among other things, pulling Dale's pillow off the bed and carrying it into other rooms.



Matt and Cassie still live in Burbank, are still in love with each other and sometimes they even come to visit! They are doing well.



Love to you all and Happy 2017!

Dale and Sharon

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