

At the beginning of 2020, if someone tried to tell us that a pandemic will change everything—close schools, churches; limit family gatherings; infect tens of millions—we would have pegged it as dystopian imagination. But even in all this, nothing can separate us from God’s love. As Tasha Layton [sings](#) (echoing Psalm 46),

*Though the mountains may be moved into the sea
Though the ground beneath might crumble and give way
I can hear my Father singing over me, “It’s gonna be ok.”*

The strongest sign of the intensity of that love of God is the baby whose birth we celebrate this season. Our rescue rests on us [opening ourselves](#) to what he shows us, letting him lead us.



October

Our family faced more than COVID this year. Both Meg (in May) and Scott (in Nov) lost their fathers—Meg’s when a truck couldn’t stop behind him on I-81; Scott’s when a body weakened by MS couldn’t stop an internal gangrene. The eulogies they and siblings gave their fathers were moving! Daniel and April found amazing life partners!



September

During this pandemic we as a family have only been together a couple times, each time outside. But living close together, we’ve been able to form smaller bubbles and still have the blessing of much regular [contact](#). Karen

babysits April’s two sons—Miles (age 5) and Oscar (age 2)—a couple days a week; Miles brings his school-issued iPad and does his [virtual kindergarten](#) at Nana’s house. And Rachel and Darrel & Briana & family are typically here Sunday afternoons, so we see lots of Lewis (age 5), Ian (age 3), and Corinne (age 1) too.



October

Our church is hanging in there during COVID. Initially we met only by Zoom. Then during summer we met outside under the Trissels oaks, using several cell phones to send it to those still preferring Zoom. These last months, as the cold drove us inside, we wanted to sing but didn’t feel safe to do so inside. The Lord gave us a solution: we begin with 15 mins of singing between the parking lot and the church building. Rachel serves as librarian and on the worship committee—she pulled together a more elaborate than normal Advent candle-lighting script in place of the usual Christmas program. Darrel heads the finance committee, and ran the outside Zoom. Briana heads the worship committee; often plays her viola for worship; organized a women’s retreat; helps Karen run the monthly sewing circle; served on our church COVID team.

All of our kids’ jobs have stayed about the same: April – JMU library; Scott – JMU nursing prof; Rachel – expert knitter (even publishing patterns) and Highland Retreat book-keeper/webmaster/editor, etc.; Daniel – manages two areas of the local Mennonite credit union; Meg – CFO for MennoMedia; Darrel – heads up procurement at the nation’s largest fresh herbs distributor; Briana – mothers 3 kids and is the most active lay person at Trissels (see above!).

There have been definite benefits to COVID: the two of us love and enjoy each other perhaps more this year than ever due to more evenings together. Watching Hallmark movies or reading unabridged MacDonald novels while Karen cross-stitches or crochets are favorite activities!

Much love,
Karen & Harold



December