



“How we praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure.”

– Ephesians 1:3, 5

Christmas 2010

Just the word itself—*CHRISTMAS*—evokes memories, feelings, thoughts, and more. One of the ways in which we are made to realize how blessed our lives have been is the overwhelming sense of just how wonderful our Christmases have been . . . and continue to be. We are so grateful for those who have gone before us and those who are coming after us who all play a part in the significance of this season to us.

2010 has been another great year! Ministry-related travels have taken us to San Diego in February (DS Roundtable) and Charleston in April (GS/DS Institute). The San Diego trip (see picture at right) included a worship service at Skyline and a trip to the world-famous San Diego Zoo. A highlight of the trip—of the year, really—was a visit with long-time friend Dr. Orval Butcher. (picture at right) What a precious and special time that was! Dr. Butcher is now in heaven, and although he is missed by us and so many, many others, he is experiencing the Christ of Christmas in ways we can only imagine.



Wrapping up this trip proved to be more involved than we had expected. We flew into Atlanta in the middle of a snowstorm (what are the odds?), only to find our flight to GSP had been cancelled. Finding no one-way car rentals, the decision was made to rent a car, drive home (in the spreading snowstorm . . . beautiful!), find a willing friend to drive to Atlanta early the next morning, as Buddy drove the rental car, and then make the return trip home together. (Thanks, Scott B.) Other DS-related trips during the year took Buddy to Asbury Seminary and The International Center in Indy.

District and denominational events in our own “front yard” here at Table Rock provide such fantastic opportunities for great fellowship and inspiration. In January, Dr. H. B. London (Focus on the Family) was the guest speaker for the district’s annual Pastors’ Gathering event; and FLAME (a denominational ministerial training event) brought ministerial students and a slate of professors from across the country here for a week. The summer months place us right in the middle of several weeks of district activity: Kids Kamp, two Youth Camps, District Conference, and our week-long Family Camp. We love it all!

You will not be surprised that we also found/created opportunities for some fantastic family times as well. March Madness brought almost everyone to Table Rock for the opening weekend of more “dribbles and dunks” than you can count. Amazingly, we had a tremendously good time, even without our Tar Heels anywhere to found in the NCAA brackets! This was followed by our annual family “vacation” (at least it’s still a vacation for the grandkids) at Hilton Head in May. (picture at right)



We've been going there since 1997 and all 19 (soon to be 20!) of us consider it an annual highlight!

In August, we flew to Denver to spend a few days with our non-East Coast crew. What a great time we had as we spent our days traveling in and around Denver, including an overnight trip to Rocky Mountain National Park during which we did some hiking. One of the hikes re-created a visit to this same site during a reunion of Joan's mom's family in 1987. (picture at right)



Do you have a "bucket list"? Buddy does, and one of the items on the list is to witness a shuttle launch *in person*. With the announcement earlier this year that the shuttle program is being shut down, plans and reservations were made to go down for the next-to-the-last launch, scheduled for September. As often happens, launches are postponed. This one was (it hasn't gotten off the ground yet!). But our trip happened anyway . . . an adults-only trip to DisneyWorld with our friends, Don and Carol Milstead. What a great time we had! Travel tip: This is the absolute best time to go to DW! There were NO crowds at all. While in Florida, we enjoyed a great evening and dinner with Joan's sister and brother-in-law, Anne and Dave Medders, who relocated last year to Orlando from New Brunswick, Canada.



December has already brought us one celebration. Buddy's mom and dad observed their 68th wedding anniversary on December 12. (picture at left) We enjoyed a Sunday dinner together and reflected on the goodness of God in giving to them so many years of ministry and good health. That evening we attended a program involving three of their great-grandkids (although the youngest balked at taking the stage, choosing instead to slither behind the international flags and cry!).

Now we come back to *CHRISTMAS*. This is our year to have all of the family with us, and we are more than excited. Beginning on the 21st, the kids and grandkids will arrive, with some of them staying for a full week! It's "over the river and through the woods" time for them as they travel in from Liberty and Newberry in South Carolina, from North Carolina, and Colorado.

In the midst of our celebration with them, we will also be thinking of you . . . extended family members scattered far and wide, the wonderful pastors and their families with whom we get to serve in ministry, the district and denominational leaders whom we consider it a high privilege to call "colleagues," and the many, many others who have been such integral parts of our lives and have been used by God to bless us and nurture us throughout our lives.

May the Grace of our God cause you and those you love to experience the fullness of joy, peace, and celebration that is *CHRISTMAS*.

With our gratitude,

Buddy and Joan