

**HI FROM THE HEALS!** We were slackers with Christmas cards this year. This short New Year's note will have to suffice.

Karen keeps busy with volunteer activities at New Hope Church. She also hosts a bi-weekly women's small group here in our home and reads a lot for her two book clubs. She keeps the rest of us from starving or wandering around naked and continues to wade through the bureaucratic quagmire that keeps Daniel's programs intact.

As of a few days ago, Jon has more time on his hands. On December 31<sup>st</sup>, he retired from the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service. He has a long list of home repairs and remodeling to keep him busy, and now Karen doesn't have to shuttle Daniel around by herself. He also hopes to pursue artistic and design endeavors. Who knows? He may even be able to trick someone into buying something.

Thomas is doing well, and in the final year of his Masters degree program in Clarinet Performance at University of South Florida in Tampa. In addition to his studies and performing, he's a TA for Music Theory classes. He survived hurricane Milton unscathed.

Daniel continues to attend the MOST work transition program for special needs adults, although he reminds us unceasingly that he is ready for a change. He also continues to deliver lettuce weekly for Zeponic Farms and to attend his Friends for Life young adults ministry.

On the animal front, we're down to seven goldfish after three we had in our tiny pond out back were eaten by some wild beast (or perhaps one of our cats.) Speaking of cats, until a week ago, we had two (an 8-year-old male and a 2-year-old female), but we've thrown a new kitten into the mix. The kitten is exceptionally self-actualized because he

was born into a farmhouse family with lots of people holding him and big dogs stomping on him all the time. The other cats are adjusting to him. We also continue to host the occasional mouse or chipmunk that the cats bring in.

In February, Karen took her yearly trip to Florida with her longtime friends from Christian Legal Society. Lately, they've been staying in the Treasure Island area, which is fairly close to Tampa. Thomas dropped by for a visit on that trip.

We took a road trip to Cleveland in April to see the total solar eclipse. This was our second total solar eclipse. We also drove to South Carolina for the 2017 eclipse. Since the traffic on that SC trip was brutal, we decided to drive to OH during the night. That worked out great, except for the flat tire in total darkness on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Chang-

ing a tire at 3:00 AM while semis blow past you is somewhat unnerving. We made it in time, and despite some encroaching cloudiness just prior to totality, we got a really nice view of the eclipse.

In June, we took our annual trip to Ocean City, NJ. There was a bit of a hole in the experience as this was our first year there without Thomas. But we soldiered on, drowning our sorrows with pizza and funnel cake.

Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, we visited Thomas in Tampa. Daniel in his transport chair speeds us to the front of TSA lines. We toured Thomas's campus, dined in some of his favorite eateries, spotted some alligators on a nature walk and spent a semi-exhausting day at Busch Gardens (although it wasn't as exhausting as Busch Gardens, Williamsburg, VA, *which has hills*). 2024 was a complicated year for all, but you have our prayers and wishes for a healthy and prosperous 2025.

*To see an electronic version of this letter with links and photos, browse to: <https://theheals.org/index-family-stuff.html>*

# HAPPY NEW YEARS!