

2023 Meeker Family Christmas Newsletter 2023

Merry Christmas, family and friends!

Yet another year has passed and so many things have happened. It has been a year of bittersweet change, which is both treasured and difficult. It has also been a year of loss in many ways, as many we know and love have moved on to their eternal home. I hope you enjoy our newsletter as I share our year.

Before beginning our annual "recap," I wanted to share how much I have relied on God this year. Without Him as my strength, provider, and Savior, I don't know if I could have made it through. If you do not know God in a personal way - as a Friend, a Father, a Protector, a Savior - please talk to someone who does. Explore and learn. Know that God loves you and wants a personal relationship with you. I really don't understand how people without that relationship can make it through life, and I know I could not have made it through this year without Him. I thank God for always being there for us, and I hope and pray you also know Him in a personal way. Things happen so quickly, and we don't always have the time we expect or the outcomes we anticipate. Look to Him; serve Him. He will never let you down.



At the time of our last letter, I wasn't able to share the beautiful bridal portrait session pictures taken in November (no peeks until the wedding!), so I hope you'll indulge me here! In addition to the one we chose to have enlarged and framed, there were so many that took our breath away. Some were beautiful; some were fun! Piper leaving her "something blue slipper" at the foot of the stairwell was a personal favorite and a Disney nod! I also loved that Amber got to be a part of it, as she was home for Thanksgiving, helping give the veil the look of flowing in the wind as she ran out of the photo. Piper was so excited to become "Mrs. Giuliani".





The Sunday before AU graduation, Crosspoint recognized the December graduating seniors who were church members. Piper was one of those who went forward. Graduation was fast approaching, as was the wedding. Crosspoint's college minister, Jason Elvington, actually transferred from Riverland Hills just after Amber's high school graduation; so, for a short time, both girls had the same college



minister! Jason got to send Piper off to college graduation as he welcomed Amber to worship as a college student. While John was at a retreat for work, Kate was in the area to visit her daughter's family in Simpsonville and came to see Piper's church ceremony. So blessed that Piper's future mother-in-law cares so much about her. Just as we were welcoming a new son, they were welcoming a new daughter.

COMMENCEMENT HONORS AND AWARDS

† The Denmark Society Award is given to members of the graduating class who have exhibited leadership, scholarship, and Christian character and who exemplify the values of Anderson University. The Denmark Society is named for former President of Anderson University, Dr. Annie Dove Denmark. Students selected for membership in this society are wearing honor cords.



In December, Piper finished her last classes at Anderson University with Deans List honors and was one of the first four Environmental Science majors to graduate from the University (and the first female to walk across the stage!). She graduated with a BS in Environmental Science and minors in Business and Honors and she wore her honors cords as she crossed the stage to shake Dr. Whitiker's hand. The morning of graduation, Piper learned she was also a Denmark Scholar - what an honor. This award is given to graduating seniors who have exhibited leadership, scholarship, and Christian character and who exemplify the values of Anderson University. She was given additional honors cords to indicate this accomplishment. Denmark scholars are not

told they have received this award until they arrive the morning of graduation - she was so surprised!



Her major, Environmental Science was new to AU; she actually changed to it when it appeared in the catalog. Piper, graduating as a Denmark Scholar with Honors. She was really excited to be the first female graduate of the



program! She and two Environmental Science friends had ties they didn't even realize - two of the Dennis triplets and Piper shared not only their degree, but also historical ties of family friendship - their grandmother was my god mother, and their father and I went to high school



together. One of their fiancé's grandfathers worked with Piper's Granddaddy and Great-Granddaddy - such a small world! All three girls were engaged and looked to get married in the coming months.





After graduation, we enjoyed some time taking photos and catching up with friends and family, along with many congratulations. We celebrated graduation with a lovely meal at Earl Street with family and friends and had a nice afternoon together after a wonderful commencement speech.

My baby has graduated college - where has the time gone? I blinked and 22 years passed by, filled with so many adventures and memories - from the everyday routine to surprise trips to Disney; the "great American road trip" drive from SC to CA and back, so many horse shows and dance competitions, a black belt in MMA and caring for kids both at Riverbanks Zoo and church, caring for a barn full of horses, training with dolphins and finding the love of her life as well as being called into ministry - her life's passion of working to bring people to the Lord, Jesus. Spreading her wings to fly on her own. This happened so quickly.





Being on a direct line between Charleston and Atlanta had its advantages - Jen got to more easily visit as she was on her way home for the holidays! We enjoyed catching up together and she liked seeing the new house. We also discovered that Anderson and her mom's home were only about an hour from one another - so we hoped to have more frequent visits again as time moves forward, especially over the summer.



Piper was accepted to begin attending Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in January. Her dream/goal is to work in the church with youth and families. So proud of her. She will do this through the Generation Link program, where she will work with a church in the program while taking the courses. She is currently to begin serving Crosspoint Church in Clemson, SC, working with Student and College ministry.



Southeastern
Baptist Theological Seminary



Due to exams, Amber did not arrive home in time for Piper's graduation; she flew in the next day to enjoy a fun and busy holiday season! Amber finished her first college semester on the Dean's list, and we were so very happy to have her home. She was to stay an additional week due to the wedding and I cherished every minute of it. Back in SC, she caught up with friends, Smiley, her Barn Family, her actual family, and all her "Maid of Honor" duties, throwing both a shower with Kim and a Bachelorette party for her sister. Piper had chosen to give her wedding guests coffee mugs and Amber helped tie lots and lots of bows on these services for the guests with two other bridesmaids, Amy and Kira! She was excited to meet John's family and she had written her maid of honor speech and gathered things to decorate the car for John and Piper as they left their wedding. Already, she missed her OSU friends and, while the holidays this year were even more



of a whirlwind than they normally are, was also excited to return to the place she calls "home" for now - Stillwater, OK. She's so happy there. Sometimes, she's so organized that I forget she's only 18.





So together, Kim and Amber threw a beautiful and fun family shower for Piper at Kim and Aunt Nell's home in Sumter. So many people were so very kind to she and John, and they received a lot of things to help them set up their new home. It was a good time to be able to visit with family and catch up and things were just so beautiful.

Kim had found some lighted trees for the décor and Piper and John got to keep them for their future Christmas decorating. They're really getting set up for their lives together. Such an exciting time!



Christmas was celebrated in our new home - and Christmas Eve was a little different! It was so cold in Anderson, so I had cranked up the heat (thank goodness). I was getting ready to begin cooking for the next day when we finished our breakfast, but due to a storm, about 8:30am, the power went out. Thankfully, we have a well-insulated home, as it held on to a warmish temperature most of the day. As we would feel a chill, we grabbed the nearest little puppy dog and Snowball, Oreo, and Fynn helped keep us warm and enjoyed all the extra cuddles! As evening drew near, it was starting to get colder inside, but then, about 6:30pm, the power returned and with it the heat. We didn't get to do the cooking prep planned but had a wonderful Christmas in Anderson and then in Sumter the next day.



New Year's Eve weekend, Amber had decided, would be the best time for the most bridesmaids to attend Piper's bachelorette party - they rented a cute little home on an upstate lake and had a lot of fun. She had all the decorations and food planned out as well as fun weekend activities. Her organizational skills were put to the test, and she came out victorious!



Piper and all the bridesmaids had a wonderful time and enjoyed being together. Time was drawing near!



We had the rehearsal the evening before the wedding, followed by a wonderful dinner provided by Kate and Denis for the wedding party. Piper was excited to wear a new pretty white dress with her pink shoes, a new favorite! We were meeting more of John's family, and everyone was so happy to be together and start celebrating the young couple. Piper took Lee by the arm, and he practiced leading her down the aisle toward John. Then, we headed

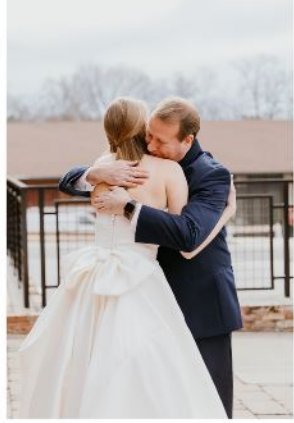


over for a delicious meal. Sullivan's catered at the Bleckley's Benson Room, and we enjoyed a great slide show of memories (thanks to Chris!) and toasts to the bride and groom from Denis and Lee, Amber and Chris, Piper's granddaddy, and any others who wanted to stand and say some words. What a great evening! We were thankful that the flower girls and ring bearers got to know each other a little better that evening, which helped the next day go smoothly. They were such great ladies and gentlemen! The bridesmaids and groomsmen also planned their entrances to the reception, and we all enjoyed getting to know one another as two families were about to become one.





The big day. So many emotions! So many feelings! So much planning and anticipation and making sure everything is "just so" beforehand led to a beautiful day filled with memories. Amber and Piper stayed the night in one room of the venue and John and Chris stayed in another. They were joined early that morning by their bridesmaids and groomsmen, flower girls and ring bearers, and friends who were handing out favors and directing guests. Amber and I helped Piper get ready and Lee's first look was full of emotion. Piper and John had decided not to see each other before the ceremony. So, we took photos of the ladies and the gentlemen separately so the couple could see one another first at the ceremony, as is tradition.







As guests arrived, John greeted many of them personally to thank them for coming; then, he and the groomsmen were called away to set the beginning of the ceremony. Guests completed seating and we were ready - the wedding was here!



Family tradition - when my parents were married, Kim and Pam were flower girls and when they reached the end of the aisle, didn't know what to do with their remaining petals - so they dumped them! At Lee and my wedding, Pam's daughter Emily was "instructed" by Kim to do this - so I couldn't resist having our two sweet flower girls continue the tradition with Piper and John - they created a beautiful pool of petals so that Miss Piper would always stand on petals while she got married!



As Lee walked Piper down the aisle, we were so happy for them - we weren't giving our little girl away, we were welcoming our new son, and Kate and Denis welcomed their new daughter. Our families were joining!

Pastor Ken gave a beautiful sermon for the wedding and Piper and John were choked up as they vowed to wed "until death do they part." It was a beautiful, Christian ceremony, filled with the true meaning of marriage, vows of commitment to God and each other. These two wanted the ceremony to glorify God!





After the kiss, the two started to head down the aisle, but were called back by Pastor Ken, who said "no - we need to introduce you! You can't leave yet!" while everyone giggled a little. He also reminded them they should come to the reception! (ha, ha!) Then, the two were announced - Mr. and Mrs. John Giuliani!



Mr. and Mrs. John Giuliani!

The wedding was so beautiful; then we went on to photos while guests started the reception. Such a whirlwind! We were able to join them after bridal party and family photos were taken. It was a day of constant movement.





On to the reception! Such a whirlwind! Guests signed the wedding Bible and made video messages. When we arrived, the first dance, first bite of cake, talking to guests, moving from place to place - it seemed like only a few minutes passed but it was actually a few hours, and the young couple were heading down the alley way toward their car, their honeymoon, and their life together.



We enjoyed catching up with several of you who came during the reception; we only wish we'd had more time - we should all get together more often! In person, by phone - so many memories to share! Thank you for coming. If you could not, you were certainly missed.



And even though I've shared so many, here are a few more photos that I just loved!



Mr. and Mrs. John Giuliani!





I realized that, to organize clean up and get Amber to the airport to return to OK for school, that I really should have asked for a late check out or an additional night, so I went downstairs to do so. Before talking to the desk, I went to check to see if any of the vendors still needed anything - as I walked into the Carriage House, all the decorations were down; all the flower arrangements gathered to a single table. The guest book and Bible guests signed placed beside left over crayons and papers Piper had made for the children who came. The coffee mugs (gifts for guests) that were remaining were in boxes under the table; the linens were gathered together in bags for us to remove. Everyone did a wonderful job, cleaned up, gathered everything for us together, and had left. And it was so empty. And, for the first time, I started to cry. For the previous four and a half months, we'd been planning and working toward this day - and in just a few short hours, it was now a memory. Lee found me there and, emotions back under control, I went to the front desk to ask for a late check out -

but... they were sad that they could not give one - they had more people checking in the next day! Then, I realized how much I had to get done AND get Amber to the airport an hour away before 10am.

Family and friends to the rescue - I knocked on some of the hotel doors and Daddy, Kim, and Jen (we joked her duties as my maid of honor were still good 25 years down the line...) to the rescue. We gathered everything into five vehicles and brought them to our house, 20 minutes away. Sherry, who had stayed with the boys, got them into the backyard and we brought all the décor into the house. Then we headed back to the hotel to rest.



The next morning, we were able to enjoy a delicious breakfast at the hotel before driving Amber to the Greenville airport. Lee and I went from so very busy to having more time on our hands and from both girls in the house to empty nesters once again. Piper and John were off to their honeymoon, planning to return to their apartment in Clemson - to start their lives as one. God bless them both!

We are so thankful and blessed by all who came to celebrate this wonderful time with us. We also missed those who could not come, due to distance or health. Piper and John are certainly loved by their family, their church, and their friends. Some of their church family from Treasuring Christ's Church, where they had served the previous summer, got together to get a large vehicle and drive down from Ann Arbor. It was so good to have everyone, even for such a brief time. Those who came - thank you for helping us celebrate our special day. Those who could not, we missed you.



It takes a lot of help to have a wedding and I wanted to say "thank you" to all the vendors who helped make this event a reality. Our location, the Bleckley Station and Carriage House, was just perfect - set in the heart of downtown Anderson, and Shelby Clardy made it all so easy. Heather Lockaby (our wedding planner) with Timeless Events helped make sure it all ran smoothly. Annalie from Poinsett Bride not only helped Piper find the perfect dress, but she helped my mother, Lee's mom, and myself also find our wedding attire - so sweet and helpful and she just knew all the right things to say! We were blessed to have Pastor Ken as our officiate - the leader of Piper and John's small group at church as well as one of our pastors at Crosspoint. Basket of Blessings, where Cass created such beautiful flowers for our special day - the decoration of the Cross, doors at the Carriage house, and the little touches on every table and in every corner did not go unnoticed! We were so blessed that Aberdeen Caterery, who catered Lee and my wedding, were available and able to come to Anderson from Camden for our event - thanks Beth and Scott! The wedding music, supplied by the Anderson String Quartet was lovely and perfect and the microphones, speakers, and DJ/music at the reception from "Just Call Ben" were done wonderfully. Bonnie of Bonnie Brunt Cakes provided a beautiful and delicious cake with layers of Sweet Potato, Lemon Raspberry, and Strawberry for our guests (as well as some little bite sized cakes to have until the cake was cut) - she even traveled to Anderson so we could do an official cake tasting in the fall when she was visiting family in the area - so much fun and so kind of her. Rachel Ledbetter Photography and Will Wright Film Productions helped us preserve photos and video of this special day and also did an amazing job. Thank you all for everything you did. We couldn't have asked for more. Also thanks to Event Rentals for the tent, extra chairs, and cross - set up and clean up! As well as Mary's Alterations, Birdy Grey for beautiful and affordable bridesmaids dresses! Finally, also thanks to Discount Mugs for the beautiful wedding series as well as Amazon.com for table cloths, wedding wands, crayons - all the little things!, UPS for the great printing facilities (programs, signs, etc.) And, of course, Sherry from Pawsitive Pets, making sure the boys were taken care of and I didn't have to worry.



After their honeymoon, Piper and John returned to serve Crosspoint Church of Clemson through the Generation Link program. John continued his seminary courses through Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Piper began hers. They moved into a two-bedroom apartment in Central, SC, and planned to serve Treasuring Christ's Church in Ann Arbor, MI over the summer, as they had the summer before. They were so happy to begin their lives together as husband and wife.



After being a bit frustrated for six months, where there were just not a lot of showings, after the wedding, we decided to change realtors. While we thought a lot of our previous realtor, things were just not getting done. After using the Dave Ramsey website, we found three realtors to interview and chose a new realty team to work with. They had a great marketing plan, and we hoped that they would be able to get things done. We asked for suggested updates to sell the home - what would be what buyers would want and increase the home's value. We then went forward with many of these updates and about a month later, at the end of February, put our home back on the market. Even with the updated bathrooms, new (and different color) paint, and new carpet, I still saw our memories and home. Emotionally, I needed the home to sell - it was so hard going back into it for regular checks, cleaning, etc. I hated to leave it so much. But, after about 3 weeks of work, it looked great, and I feel we honored the home - it should be perfect for a new family.



Then, we received a shock - a dear friend had a bad fall and unfortunately never recovered. Jean Gallman was such a talented seamstress and made the girls IEA show outfits through the years. Dropping by her trailer for a talk was such a treat. The Camden



show grounds will not be the same without a visit to Jean, listening to her stories, and petting Jackson and Tigger. She will certainly be missed.

The first two Saturdays of March brought open houses at our Irmo home; and combined, the two open houses brought just under the same number of people into the home as the entire 6 months before. While still waiting for a contract to be presented, we were certainly pleased with the amount of exposure of the home.



Lee and I had also been attending Crosspoint as we searched for a new church home in the upstate. We loved the messages, and the people were so friendly. We had started attending a small group after church as well. So, we took the "Discovering Crosspoint" class and moved our letter to become official members of the church. We now serve in media, helping on some Sunday's with the slides and video and we love our small group. If you are looking for a church in upstate SC, you should come and visit!

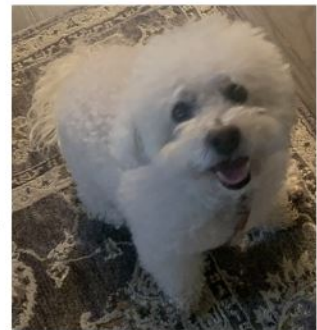


Two of our boys celebrated their birthdays in March. Little Snowball turned 13 - so hard to believe that he's already that old. Smiley turned 7 and both of them are so precious to us.





Lee and I certainly had enough to keep us busy. After clearing some boxes in Anderson, we emptied our storage unit with help from Mama and Daddy and brought the remainder of our things from Irmo to the upstate. We got to visit with our friends, the Wells, and celebrate a belt graduation with their boys, Piper's ring bearers! We were also working on a couple of things around our Anderson home - Lee helped me install some closet organizers and I painted the closet a brighter color - making it more "us." We'd settle down in the evenings to sweet snuggles



with our boys; but I did miss our girls. We did enjoy a nice dinner with Piper when John was out of town - it was fun to visit with her and she was a gracious hostess.



Missing Amber, Lee and I snuck away to Stillwater, OK to visit with Amber and some of her friends. She really wanted us to get to know Brayton better, so we had a great time getting to know him better. After a really long detour to get to Stillwater, as we came back into the cell tower area, we received a call from our realtor's - with a perfect contract on our home! They had actually already brought us one that we didn't accept (too low and they just wouldn't work with us) but this one was full price and the people seemed really excited about the home. We also had two other families who were also strongly interested and debated whether we should wait for a second contract but decided to accept this one. We were also excited, though I felt a little sad to let it go; something just didn't feel right; but we shook that off and started to get excited to go back to being "single" home owners



again. We celebrated with Amber and her friends and also celebrated Easter and her birthday, which were coming up fast. We knew Amber could not come home for either (OSU doesn't give any time around Easter weekend and a flight would essentially be a day trip) and I was happy to get to have an early celebration with her. Brayton pulled me aside and asked if there was anything we normally did to celebrate that he could do for her - so he planned to add balloons and a chocolate chip cookie cake to his plans for her birthday. So thoughtful!





This past Easter was the first that we were unable to spend with Amber. OSU does not have any days off around this holiday and with her busy schedule, Amber couldn't fly home and back for just a day. We missed her so much but had a nice time with family while Amber spent the day with a friend's family. We enjoyed the usual Easter treats, but it wasn't the same without her. We'd left her an Easter egg with some goodies inside when we went, and made sure she had her Easter chocolate, though!



We were certainly missing Amber on her birthday but she was having a great time in Oklahoma. We sent some flowers in an orange vase for her birthday. So hard to believe my little Disney princess is now nineteen! My heart was heavy, not seeing her.

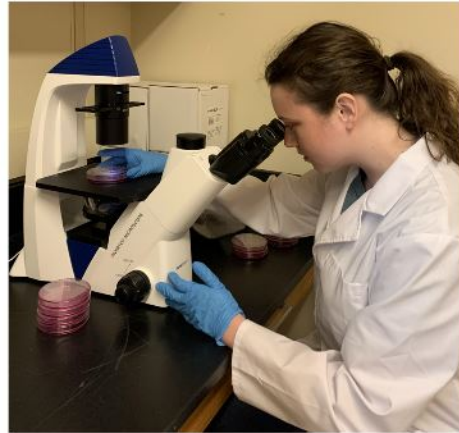




Not quite four months after John and Piper married, John's twin brother Chris married his love, Jordan. We got to enjoy the wedding with them - two more young people starting their lives together, following Christ! What a blessing!

As the academic year closed, Amber was able to

present some of her research at a symposium as a poster. She's worked so hard - so proud of her! "Understanding the Functional Role of Microphages in Cystic Fibrosis during Mycobacterium Abscessus Infection" - what a title!



Amber's pre-vet club, where she's become a large part, elected her to be an officer for next year. She also received awards and graduation cords for her graduation for all her work this year. She's been to so many meetings, events, helped with Operation Cat-Nip (to spay/neuter/treat feral cats) and volunteered at Turning Point, a therapy barn, on top of keeping up with her heavy academic schedule. Always busy, Miss Amber!



About a month after Piper and John's wedding, Lee's Uncle Ronald had some severe health issues. They turned out to be devastating and in April, we lost him. He had such a good time at the wedding, and we were blessed to have that time with him, as we did not get to visit often through the years. He was a good man, who loved his family and friends, and was always smiling and laughing. His passing certainly leaves a hole in our family, and we will miss him so much.



And then, just under the two-week "due diligence" timeline SC allows, our buyers decided, for no reason (at least none given to us) that they "changed their minds." Apparently, due to changes in SC real estate law, they can do this with no penalty, and they get every penny of their earnest money back. It's SO UNFAIR to the sellers, who have removed their home from the market, turned away other potential buyers and stopped all marketing. All the momentum previously generated was gone and now, so was our sale. We attempted to contact the previously interested families, but they had already moved forward with different homes. We were so down and upset to begin the process again, for a third time. But we kept praying - all in His timing, as He knows much better than we what the overall plan is. We knew God would pull us through. But we were so very down about the whole thing.

We also lost another friend, not long after Uncle Ronald. Bob Lewis, a friend we made through our annual family visits to Garden City, had been in declining health for a while. He and Cathy were always so kind and we loved our chats on the beach and at the condo. He is certainly in a better place now, but we will miss him.



This year, we spent Mother's Day in travel, as we needed to get to OK to get Amber, but Lee and I enjoyed the trip together. Before we left, though, Piper came over for a visit and to pick some of the beautiful wild flowers we had growing in the entry area to our neighborhood. God decorates the fields so beautifully if we just take the time to stop and notice. Piper has always loved picking flowers and we enjoyed walking through the neighborhood and then gathering them together into a little bouquet. We also went to visit our Smiley at Ellington's and enjoyed seeing him.



However, I'd talked to Lee about wanting to do a bit more with him - I really missed having time at the barn but also recognized I needed some help to be able to properly care for Smiley and be safe myself. We decided to make a plan. After speaking with my long time friend, Debra Wright, we planned to move Smiley to her barn in Abbeville and she would give me lessons from the ground up. It gave me something to look forward to, as my girls were both to be out of state all summer.



Lee and I left for OK not long after AU's graduation the next weekend to see Amber and bring her home. We stopped at our favorite rest stop in Little Rock - the Old Mill, and



we were surprised to hear someone call my name - cousin Sara! She was also traveling to see some of her grandchildren and attend a wedding and she and her daughter-in-law had stopped there to take in the little park. It was a joy to see her! You find family in the strangest places sometimes. :)



Amber was only to be home for a couple of weeks before she was to return to work with her Chemistry professor doing research through the summer. Those two weeks were planned to be precious time spent together, but I couldn't help feeling down as we traveled, knowing how quickly those two weeks would pass. Then, we were dealt another blow... our home had never picked back up in rhythm to what it had been before the contract came and we'd asked our realtor's what we could do to get things moving forward again. Instead of helping us, they sent an email to us when we were halfway to OK saying that they felt we would be better served with a different realtor and sent a release from the contract. We were shocked! We really liked them and felt they'd done a good job; however, after trying to continue to work with them to no avail, we got the name of a friend of theirs, Maria Calcutt of Coldwell Banker Realty, and gave her a call. She, too, was surprised but agreed to look at our home, get a photographer in quickly, and get it back on the market asap. So, once again, we were starting over.

I have to say, I was sinking deeper and deeper into a season of sadness - it was really just too much. Not only did visits to the home bring memories and mixed feelings of leaving but it was also financially draining to maintain two homes and physically draining to remain on the road, back and forth each week, to check on things. We were so blessed that my parents were there to help make sure things remained in order and our good neighbor Brian, who would let us know if anything looked strange. But it was really depressing to have to begin again, for a fourth time, after 9 months on the market. Also, while so proud of Piper and John for pursuing missions and Amber for going into summer research, my summer was beginning to look so very lonely.

We arrived in Stillwater to help Amber move out of her dorm and back home for a short two weeks. She said goodbye to her friends and her freshman dorm room, so full of fun memories. We took some pictures around campus and headed back to SC.



But, during the short time we had with Amber at home, we had to re-list our home again. There were also unexpected work requirements for me at AU and Amber had to have dental surgery to correct a gum problem, which made her first week pretty miserable, as she couldn't really eat anything or drink through a straw. Lots of yogurt, applesauce, soup, mac-n-cheese, and ice cream. So, not what I was hoping for. There were two bright spots though...

Amber really wanted a puppy. She planned to live in a house we were renting for the summer that was owned by one of her friend's parents from OSU. She had permission to have a dog there and she really wanted to have one. In the fall, she was to move into a different home he owned with her friend and the two of them had fun plans for the next year. Amber and I went to Anderson County PAWS and happened to visit on "free puppy" day - the shelter had so many turned in that they were having to find homes quickly for them. A group of boxer mixes, a group of hound mixes - all so cute and wiggly. One group turned in were half German shepherd and half we don't know. Of the original 7 puppies, only one little female was left; she was crouched sadly at the back of her little crate. Our hearts went out to this little one and we tried to get her to play with us, which she did, cautiously, and then with more excitement. We cuddled her and called to find out if Amber had any restrictions on size of dog or breed - she did not, as long as she took full responsibility for it - so "Bear" came home to join our family.





It was so wonderful to have a puppy in the house again. Oreo was thrilled - he's so good with puppies! Snowball warmed up and started playing inside and out with her. But Fynn. Poor little Fynn. He was really unhappy not to be the "puppy" anymore. A bit sour toward our new arrival, he would play with her outside, but inside he considered his domain and was being very slow to warm up.

Over those two weeks, Bear just came out of her shell. Learning rules came easily to her - so did jumping a 3 foot barrier from a sit! (Good thing she wants to please us!) Her first bath was an experience in wetness for all. She loved playing with the boys and learning new tricks. She was quickly getting potty trained and learning how to be a good puppy. What a little sweet heart!

Our first "Granddog."



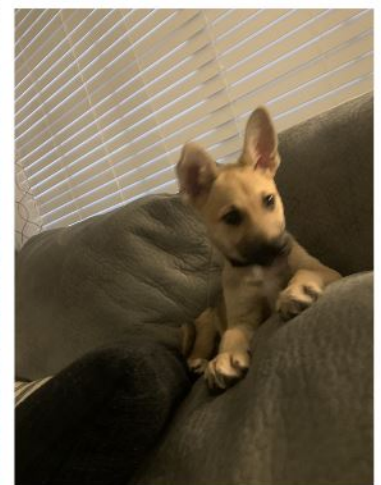
That first week of Amber's visit, Piper and John had a reunion of sorts planned in Kentucky. They had a great time visiting family and going to a local wildlife rescue where they got to play with some opossums! What fun! They LOVED meeting Bear when they got home!



The second week of Amber's time at home, Brayton came to join us. Amber was so excited to take him to meet all her family and friends, so this poor boy from Texas traveled all over SC the week he was here - and he seemed to really enjoy it. The two of them were so happy together and got to spend time with some of Amber's high school friends, met all her grandparents, spent time with Piper and John, and even got to visit at church before heading back to TX shortly before Amber and I struck out for Stillwater to move she and Bear into the house.



When we arrived back in OK, with Bear and new dog crate in tow, it was easy to move into the furnished little house. Amber had spent a good deal of time there in the Spring with her friends and was hoping many could come visit her during the summer. She was excited for the research work as well, and well on her way to training Bear to be a good puppy. It was hard to leave her, but she was so excited about her next adventure.





The same day Amber and I left for OK, Piper and John left for Ann Arbor, MI to serve Treasuring Christ's Church through the SummerLink program. This was Piper's second and John's third summer for serving this church and community - and Lee and I had been blessed to get to meet some of the members when they came south to attend the wedding. Such a sweet church! But, without both girls, it was shaping up to be a lonely summer for me.



Ann Arbor

Summer LINK



The ladies in our small group had a get-together and we enjoyed a great morning of sharing and then Brenda took us out on her boat to enjoy the lake - her little dog really wanted to go along (he apparently loves boat rides) and he was so cute to watch! It was a beautiful day and a great time of sharing.



So, what's an empty nesting mom to do? Something she's always wanted to do, I suppose. While I took lessons during my graduate school years, I had not actually ridden a horse (outside of trail riding) since before Piper was born. Since we didn't have the heart to sell Smiley, I "purchased" him from Amber for the cost of OSU tuition (ha, ha!) and he became officially mine! In all my years, (you may think me silly) this was a dream come true! It was the first time that I officially owned a horse of my own! Coosa, Duke, Fancy, Spook, and Smiley had always been the girls' horses and responsibility. I was so excited to get the AQHA paperwork and we relocated Smiley to Debra Wright's barn. There, she is kind enough to give me lessons while taking great care of Smiley for us. I have to say that I'm just loving it - taking things slow as I'm rather out of shape but learning

about everything from the ground up in how to care for him properly and be safe, while catching up with a dear friend. I can't thank Debra enough for making room for our sweet gelding and for making time to teach me the ins and outs of riding. Sweet Smiley has been good as gold for me -



such a

patient teacher! I love the time I get to spend with him - it's given me back my barn time! It's so much fun!



I also began talking to a friend at church, also named Deborah - she helped me really dig into God's word and find verses that helped me through some of the sadness I was feeling. The Bible is such a living document - no matter what you are going through, you can find advice, solace, and hope there, if you begin reading with an open mind and heart, asking God to grant you the wisdom and understanding you need as well as guidance. Even if you have no idea where to start. I kept notes in my little book and there was one Saturday evening / Sunday morning I especially remember - I couldn't sleep, and I just got up and prayed "God, I have so much on my mind and in my heart - I don't know what to do - I don't know what to read - I don't know how to pray. Please help me." We are told that when we don't have the words, the Holy Spirit intervenes for us. That Sunday morning, I didn't want to even go to church, but I did. Each Sunday, the church had been featuring a video of the SummerLink residents that were serving other churches. That was Piper and John's Sunday and I got to see them on the screen, telling everyone what they were doing in Ann Arbor! Then, the sermon was exactly what I needed to hear. Ask God and He will answer.



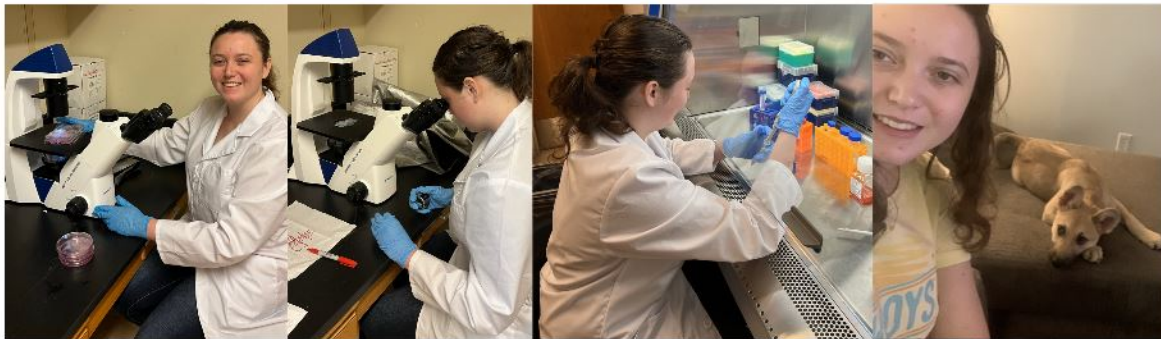
To celebrate Father's Day, Mama and Daddy joined us for a couple of days and we got to enjoy Anderson's annual Main Street Car Show. So many cool vehicles to see and owners eager to tell stories about them. They'd done such a great job of taking care of them. We had a nice lunch together downtown before they headed back to Irmo.



However, we suffered another loss to our family. My oldest cousin, Steve, had been diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma, which also took my Uncle George years ago. Steve was a wonderful man who loved his church and his family and served the



community well. He was a father and grandfather and, while we knew his diagnosis, he'd been doing so well. However, things took a turn, and he went to join the Lord, his Dad, and our Grandparents. He is no longer in pain or dealing with this dreadful disease, and we look forward to seeing him again one day. Here, however, he will certainly be missed.



Ever the volunteer, Amber started looking for something to do in OK outside of her research and found the Grey Snow Eagle House. This wonderful place rescues and rehabilitates sick and wounded Bald and Golden Eagles. Located about 25 minutes from her home in Stillwater, Amber started volunteering each week and loved the work! She helped with the education animals as well, getting to see hawks, falcons, quail, and even a cockatoo. Such a wonderful resource! Her research was also going well; she was happy! Much as I miss her, she's found a good place.



June also brought visits with friends - such a blessing! We had a really fun afternoon and evening with our friends, the Well's, Jen and Brian. Their boys were off with family, and they took the time to come up to Anderson for a visit. We enjoyed catching up over wonderful conversation, played a fun "escape room" game, and enjoyed a wonderful meal at Sullivans. Such a treat!

We enjoyed a fun visit with Jen, and she and I had some fun together during the day - relaxing and getting our nails done, a nice lunch, and catching up in person rather than the phone. She reminded me that, during

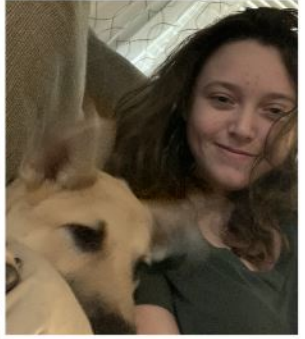


the summer, she's only an hour from us and we started to make arrangements to visit her and her mom in her mother's new home.



Throughout the summer, I found myself looking at the girls little "dots" on my phone's app for comfort - they were just too far away. I also enjoyed the texts and photos they sent and posted online. But it was not really a substitute for having them here. Amber was enjoying her work so much and some friends were able to visit during the summer. I was glad she had such good friends! She budgeted part of

her weekly grocery budget to get Bear three new toys/week and was learning to cook. She also continued to enjoy her work with the Eagles.



Piper and John were leading their team well in MI, both through working with the church, helping with VBS, community service projects, evangelism, as well as taking some fun times to enjoy MI. Both their loves shown through in the chosen activities - a visit to the zoo, a baseball game, and the great outdoors at Lake Michigan.





ypscitypolice Big shout-out to Treasuring Christ Church @tccanarbor for your volunteer efforts at our station &...



It did my heart good to enjoy the photos sent and the stories shared. So glad my girls are surrounded by people who care for them and they are happily following God's plan for them. I missed them so much.



*Come see
Our beautiful
New roof!
Open House
Saturday 12-2*

Meanwhile, Maria, our realtor, pointed out that a storm had come through earlier this year and caused damage to many homes in the area; we called a roofer to check things out and, sure enough, we needed a new roof on the home we were trying to sell. So, after working things out with the insurance company (and an unwilling adjuster), we replaced the roof at 104. Thankfully, his boss was easier to deal with than he. Joe Wallace of Vista Roofing did an awesome job and it looked great. However, I was a bit wistful that we were making all these changes to a home we were about to let go of. I prayed that God would bring us a buyer that would appreciate it as much as we did.



Then, I woke up one morning and turned to Lee and said, "We're going to sell our house today." "Well, you're in a good mood," he replied! I was so sure that God had told me this that I set out for Irmo to place some pretty flowers on the porch for the new owners (we had a showing that afternoon). I found some beautiful zinnias which reminded me of my grandmother and placed them on the front porch. And, sure enough, we received a great offer. All in God's timing. The couple was a great family and we found out that their parents and my parents used to be in church together. They had two adorable little boys who were close to the ages of Piper and Amber when we moved

in. They loved the hidden playroom (our beloved "purple place"), outside play area, and the neighborhood itself. It seemed like the perfect family, and everything fell into place for a closing in August.

Unfortunately, we had another family loss. As we entered July, our cousin, Cherry Winegard went to be with the Lord. Cherry was a vivacious, caring person who taught first grade at Hammond School for 29 years, retiring just before Piper and Amber started at the school. She loved her family, working in her yard, and will be so very missed.





We enjoyed visiting with Mama and Daddy at their church's Fourth of July celebration - what a wonderful tribute to this country that God gave us! Traditional, patriotic hymns and even indoor fireworks! All

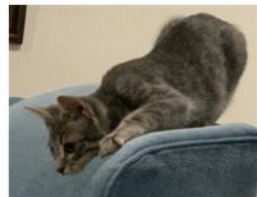
military were invited to stand as their branch was presented. Also filmed for SCETV, this was a beautiful service.



We had been looking for a forever home for our baby, Gibbs - it was time for him to begin his showing career. However, at the end of June/early July, we realized that things were not moving forward. We decided to move him to a different trainer, and he seems very happy. I love his personality - I think it will be hard to let him go. I know I am very picky about where he finds his new home! All my attempts to not get close to him have failed - he's such a sweet boy! Everyone (but Lee) suspects he may be a more permanent family member than originally thought. I know it will need to be a special family for this sweet boy!



After church one Sunday, Lee and I headed down to visit Jen and her mom, Vi. She has a gorgeous home that she just recently completed building, and it was so much fun getting to see it in person. Her yard has many beautiful plants, the inside has storage to be envious of, the décor is so beautiful. We got to meet Jen's new cat and kitten (so cute!) - Finley and Ashton - and catch up with a nice visit. Lee and the girls love cats - I wish I wasn't allergic. They treated Lee and I to a boat ride on the lake there and the scenery was so beautiful! We are so blessed with this world God has given us. After a wonderful visit and a great day, we headed back home for the evening.



With everything so busy, Lee and I were unable to make it as a couple to the family beach trip, but I snuck down for a day, stopping to check on the house on the way and on the return trip. While I certainly loved it, the weekly checks and monthly payments and upkeep were so draining. We looked forward to the sale.





Piper and John returned to SC with so many stories of their time in MI. They really loved it there as well as the people. In fact, they'd been asked to continue serving the church there. They were torn, as they had already committed to Crosspoint for the next year; however, they spoke to the leaders at Crosspoint and together made the decision that it seemed God was leading them to move. So, not long after they returned to SC, they started making plans to move to MI on a permanent basis. It was a bittersweet feeling - so proud that they are following God's leading but certainly sure I would miss them when they left. I also had no idea how they were going to make everything they needed to happen, happen in just a month! God would certainly have to open many doors.

As August approached, Amber was getting really excited for her friends to return to Stillwater. This meant also that the little house she'd lived in for the summer was to be vacated for different tenants - her boyfriend and his roommate - and she and her friend (the landlord's daughter) were to move into a different home he owned there. She moved Bear and herself from one house to the other and her friends moved in at the beginning of August. She'd been planning a beautiful wall mural for her room - and had permission to paint - so she was happy and excited and filled with plans for a great year! It's so hard to be this far from her, but her happiness makes it all okay. Classes were to begin mid-August, so she really wanted to be settled before they started. She moved herself, as, at the time, we were finishing up minor requested repairs for the house sale and couldn't leave for OK. But, always prepared and independent, Amber took care of everything. (Bless her!) She planned to continue volunteering for the Grey Snow Eagle House with the new school year, while going back to Turning Point and helping with Operation Catnip, as she did last year. Also an officer for the pre-vet club and carrying 20 hours (which included organic chemistry and research hours), she was going to be a busy young lady!



We did sneak away for a 5-day vacation (previously planned) - to St. Augustine! We went with my parents and Lee's mom, Snowball, Oreo, and Fynn in tow. I'd found a beautiful little house to rent, and we got to enjoy the beauty of St. Augustine for a few days. Piper and John joined us for a couple of those - they told us that they were able to get out of their lease in Clemson but would have to do so mid-August so that new tenants (Clemson students, presumably) could move in. They needed a place to be until September, when they

could save enough money to move to MI. So, we made plans that they would move in with us for three to four weeks as they prepared for their move.





While we were in St. Augustine, we got to enjoy the little car themed diner, the beautiful beaches, and a "Red Train" tour of the historic district as well as enjoy some of the little shops in the area. The house was very centrally located with three bedrooms, 2.5 baths, full kitchen and living area, and a small, fenced backyard for the boys. The dogs had a ball; Piper saved a little crab from some gulls (cute!). We snuck down to the Grand

Floridian at Disney for a fun birthday breakfast for



Daddy (they gave him TWO cupcakes!) and enjoyed a day of Disney hotel



hopping. It was a really nice trip and we enjoyed being together. The only one missing was

Amber; we had tried to entice to fly back to join us, but she was so excited to have her friends and eager to be settled, she didn't have time to come to FL, and it would have been difficult - but we missed her.



When we returned from St. Augustine, we learned that our dear friend, Joe Speaks, had passed away. Joe and his wife, Phyllis, were special friends of my parents. I've known he and his wife all my life. He was such a kind and caring man and he fought hard to remain with us for as long as he could. He served his church and his community and loved his family dearly. He will be so missed by all who knew him.



The day finally came. All inspections were done. All requested repairs made. Lee and I walked into 104 Steeple Crest that morning for the last time as our home. It was so emotional to me - I actually heard the dogs barking a greeting as we opened the garage (though, of course, they weren't there). As I glanced up the stairwell, I saw young Piper and Amber in their Christmas PJ's, waiting permission to see what Santa had brought. The empty kitchen island looked filled with goodies from many memories of diners and family celebrations. I could see the places we always hung banners and tied balloons. Purple place had an



unfamiliar echo of emptiness when I looked in one last time. We watered the flower and left a welcome basket for the new family and headed for the closing.



God really brought a wonderful family to take over that house and I know they will enjoy their new home as much as we did. We shared stories at the closing about our adventures over the years and they shared photos of their little boys and their dog. It did my heart good to know that a sweet family



was moving in to make new memories in our former home. All in His timing - they hadn't even been looking for a house but happened to see it online, came to peek in the windows, and then all the doors opened - for them and for us. It had been so important to me that someone buy the house that would see it as a blessing - and they seem to. Susan sent me a photo of her boys enjoying the backyard and I hear they love the hidden play room! I wish them all the best. It made Lee and I feel better about leaving it, knowing someone who cared for it as much as we did was moving in.

The same day we closed on our Irmo home, Piper and John closed on their first apartment and transferred the lease out of their name. While they worked to save enough for the move to MI, the two of them moved back into the basement with us. It was so nice to have them there - to share meals, evening conversations, and just to get to see them each day. I knew it was temporary, but I was happy to have them. They were also trying to see as many people (friends and family) in the area as they could in that last month. I know it was difficult for them to pack all their belongings up to be held in storage by the moving company. During this time, they also were looking online for apartments near the church and their friends in Ann Arbor helped by going to check out a couple of places. They found what they hoped was the perfect one and put down an application. If all worked out, they would be moving to MI mid-September. I have to say, I was hopeful that it would be after Piper's birthday. I don't like being apart from my girls on their special day.



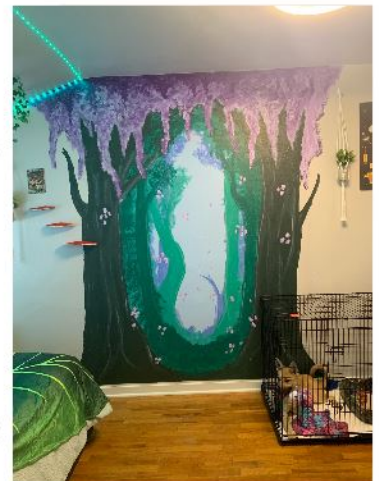


Then came the day every pet owner dreads. I came home from work a little early and saw that Snowball was not himself - lethargic and unresponsive got my attention first, then, when I finally got him to walk, he appeared almost drunk and fell over. I was so alarmed! I rushed him to the vet who, after a brief look, scooped him up for x-rays to confirm the fear - a ruptured spleen. We opted to try to save our little furball and the vet did emergency surgery in an attempt to save him. After a couple of hours, he brought Snowball back to us - sleepy and a little shell shocked, he half wagged his tail and seemed happy to see us and was certainly no longer in pain. We really thought we'd saved him. Apparently, a (previously unknown to us) tumor had pressed on the spleen and caused it to burst. The vet sent a sample for a pathology report, and we left Snowball there for the night for observation; but around 8pm, we received the call that he was crashing. Lee rushed back to try to get him to the

emergency vet (who had different equipment) but before he could get to him, Snowball had become so unstable that he couldn't travel. He left us that night. We were heartbroken. He'd been lively and playing that morning. We find comfort that it happened quickly. We also later learned that the tumor was one of the most vicious types of cancer he could have had - God knows best always. He didn't have to suffer with that horrid disease, but no longer seeing his little face in the window when we come home still stings. I miss our sweet little Snowball. His kisses, his mischievousness, and, overall, his love for everyone. 13 years was not enough.



After about 2.5 weeks of hard work, Amber had completed the mural she'd designed for her home over the summer. Ever detail oriented, she'd created several concept pieces on paper before starting on the wall. It was absolutely breathtaking - pictures don't do it justice. If this college thing doesn't work out, I think she could make a good living painting murals for people who want them ;). I was just blown away. However, I sensed (as mom's do) that something was wrong. I didn't want to press, but she didn't seem quite her happy self. I was hoping I was being paranoid, that classes, which had recently started, weren't too stressful already, and she assured me they weren't. But I just had a feeling...



She was settled and ready for a rigorous academic semester; however, she'd not told us that she and her roommate were having issues - she wouldn't speak to Amber, wouldn't follow house rules, and even threatened to evict Amber and Bear (her dad owned the residence we had rented). Just before Labor Day, she did just that - making Amber feel so uncomfortable that she and Bear left immediately - at midnight one Tuesday night. When we tried to figure things out the next day with the girl's father, he instead emailed us an end of lease agreement where he kept the entire security deposit to repaint Amber's room and left a clause that if we did nothing, within 48 hours, terms accepted. Though we were paid to the end of the month, the locks were

already changed on my 19-year-old, now homeless daughter, and her dog, though her things were still there. Who does that? So hard to understand - Amber said her roommate was a completely different person than last year. She hurt for the loss of a friend.



However, ever prepared, Amber found friends to take her in until Lee and I could get there to help her - again, so thankful for the blessing of friendship. So many fruits of the spirit were displayed with Amber and her friends - love for each other, the patience and self-control Amber showed with her ex-roommate, kindness and goodness of all.

I arrived Labor Day weekend and God opened up a beautiful and perfect apartment and she and Bear were thankfully able to move in the next week - practically unheard of - all God! Amber and Bear stayed with me in the hotel that weekend and we shopped for furniture. I also insisted that I see the old house - not only to make sure we didn't get blamed for any "damage" but to see her mural - so sad to have to leave it behind. It was made difficult to do, but I loved seeing her work and made sure photos had been taken of the rental we left behind.

The next weekend, Lee and I both went back to OK and Brayton's parents drove from TX to help us get her settled and brought her a couch, love-seat, and tv stand - so very kind! If we'd known, we had a lot of things in SC but had to rebuy everything with the circumstances being what they were. In addition to purchasing furniture and some

decor, I bought Amber some canvas' so she could continue her painting in a more mobile fashion. Amber quickly settled in and is happy, safe, and moving forward, though sad about the loss of what she thought was a good friend. She's been through pain in her life - but nothing compares to the pain of lost friendship. It hurt her more than any previous surgery. Poor Bear was a little unsettled at first but then loved her new apartment - complete with dog park! Loved the little hiding place Amber made for her in the corner, and a window to look outside - just like Snowball did. God certainly answered prayers, as there was really no way we could have found a suitable place to live without His open doors.





A side benefit of our visit was a behind the scenes tour of Grey Snow Eagle House with Amber as our guide! It was so cool seeing where Amber's been spending her time and see these majestic birds. What a wonderful place.



Meanwhile, also over Labor Day weekend, Piper and John got to go to John's family for a reunion - he told us later that it was the first time all his brothers, sisters, and their wives, husbands, and children had been able to all be in the same place for such a long time. When I returned from OK and they returned from KY, we really enjoyed all the stories and photos shared of the games they played, the kids running around, and how happy they were. God has blessed Piper with a good man and a good family to be a part of. John is one of seven children, all of whom but his younger sister are now married, as his twin, Chris, married his love Jordan in April of this year. I'm sure Kate and Denis were so excited to have them all together!



Between our weekends in OK, Piper and John had learned that a great apartment in MI had opened up and was ready for them to move in - I had hoped they could wait until after Piper's birthday to leave the state, but that was not to be. They were eager to start their work at TCC and God was putting all into place for them. I just hated that their last weekend in SC was not spent together, and that Lee and I missed their send off from Crosspoint. But we were needed in OK and we did enjoy viewing the prayer for them from the church online.

We returned from OK in barely enough time to see Piper and John off to MI as they were left on that Monday. God called and they responded. They were excited to move to their new home. We were thankful that their friends checked the apartment for them in person and found it to be a good place. They were to sign the lease that week and had to get to MI to set up all the utilities. When they arrived, they really loved it! It is more like a little community than an apartment complex and had a homey feel. The perfect place! But I was really going to miss seeing them each evening; sharing meals; sharing stories. It had been nice having them around.



When they arrived, they really loved it! It is more like a little community than an apartment complex and had a homey feel. The perfect place! But I was really going to miss seeing them each evening; sharing meals; sharing stories. It had been nice having them around.





That weekend, Kate (John's mom) traveled up to MI and helped them with the unpacking. I was so happy to hear that, as Lee and I were just exhausted after the OK trips. She sent me some pictures and a couple of updates through her weekend with them and I was hoping to go soon so that I could see it in person. Piper also sent some photos of the rooms as she got them the way she wanted them. It was so sweet watching her set up her new home with John.

Meanwhile, after settling down into her new place, Amber and Brayton celebrated their one-year dating anniversary, which had actually come during all the chaos earlier in the month. It was so good to see her happy again.



The desire to see their new apartment and to see Piper on her birthday won out over exhaustion! I looked up and was happy to find a direct flight from GSP to DTW and we headed to Detroit early Saturday morning for a late Sunday return. After all, one weekend was enough to "recover" from two back-to-back trips to OK (ha, ha), and Lee and I were eager to see Piper and John's new home. When we arrived at their apartment, the first thing I noticed were the beautiful trees, which, upon a closer look, turned out to be cherry trees! So pretty! Their apartment is just beautiful and there was a little duck family that lives there that were fun to watch.



We took them out to one of Piper's favorite spots and afterwards took a leisurely stroll through Frog Island Park, which is beside the Heron River. Such a pretty place. They live in Ypsilanti, about 10 minutes from the church they serve. John really fixed her up with a charcuterie board breakfast we shared, beautiful flowers, a cookie dough cake, and a fun surprise for her! We played board games and had a great evening together. The next day, we ate at another of their favorite places and then visited a little while before going to church (their church was meeting in the afternoon). We really enjoyed meeting their new church family and seeing a few we had met in January at their wedding. We hated to leave, but we had to return to SC. So, Lee and I headed back to the airport to come home. A busy weekend!



The next week was our anniversary - 26 years together. It seems like only yesterday, Lee and I were making plans, then walking down the aisle, then moving into our first apartment together, then starting a family and moving through the years which have passed oh so quickly. We are so blessed to have each other - God brought us together and we are so thankful.



ORIGINAL RESEARCH article
 Front. Cell. Infect. Microbiol., 26 October 2023
 Sec. Microbial Vaccines
 Volume 15 - 2023 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcimb.2023.1273019>

Engineering a dual vaccine against COVID-19 and tuberculosis

Carlyn Monét Guthrie^{1,2} Xuejuan Tan^{1,2} Amber Cherry Meeker^{1,2} Ashton Elisabeth Self^{1,2} Lin Liu^{2,3} Yong Cheng^{1,2*}

One morning in October, we got an excited text from Amber. All that summer work was paying off and a portion of the research she was working with was being published! You can find her as author in the journal "Frontiers in Cellular and Infection Microbiology" with the article Engineering a Dual Vaccine Against COVID-19 and Tuberculosis."

Check it out here: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fcimb.2023.1273019/full>
 So proud of her! Looking forward to future articles!

We learned in October of the passing of Lee's cousin Colleen; a sweet, loving person who was an active member of her church and had a big heart for animals. Rest in peace, sweet Colleen.

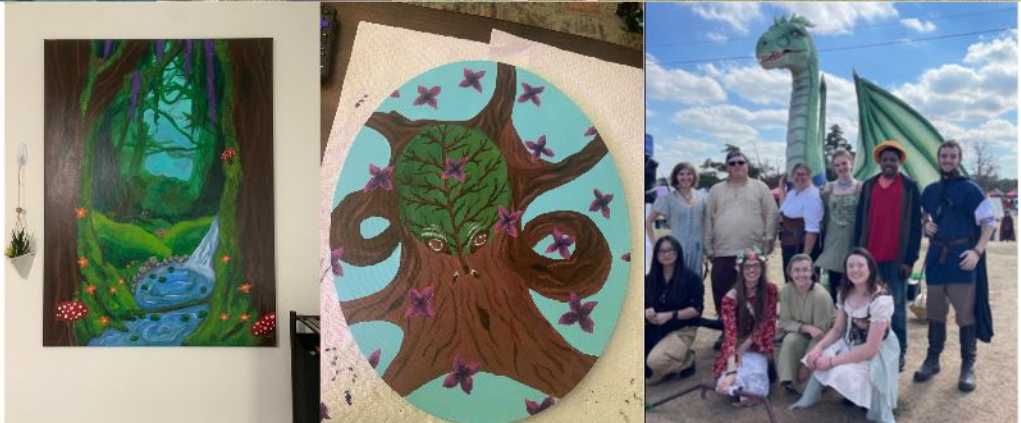


Halloween came with a fun celebration as Lee and I gave out candy to all the cute little boys and girls. The Umbergers even sent us a pic of our old home with their boys and dog ready to go trick-or-treating - God really sent a great family for our Irmo home. As the night closed, the dogs enjoyed some time with Lee and we closed the holiday.

Piper and John also enjoyed some fun adventures in October - apple picking and a train ride through a national park to enjoy the fall foliage. They also attended a conference with their church. It was so nice to get updates from them - I loved the photos!



Amber was also enjoying herself - creating some artwork and hanging out with friends. It does my heart good to see her happy!



Meanwhile, Lee and I also worked on some projects around the house, adding some fall flowers, hanging photos, riding Smiley, and playing with the boys.



We got wonderful news from Piper and John; three young men that John had been sharing the gospel with before leaving SC had decided to follow Christ and join our church by baptism. We were all overjoyed to welcome

these three new brothers to the kingdom of Christ and Piper and John wanted to be here to witness it and share in their joy. They traveled from MI the first weekend of November and we enjoyed having them. John was asked to baptize these young men and hearing their testimonies was such a blessing. So excited for Piper and John, who are working so hard for our Lord and Savior! Mama and Daddy also got to come to see the two of them and join us in worship that Sunday. Such a wonderful weekend.



We had a busy start to November, as the same weekend Piper and John visited, we hosted our small group at our home. Mama and Daddy came to visit as well. However, we also had some scares - Lee rushed to Sumter to be with Mom, who was taken to the hospital with COVID and possible pneumonia (thank the good Lord that was not the case - just COVID, which was bad enough). Just as she was recovering, we planned a trip to see Aunt Jeanette and Aunt Rachel but the night before departure, we headed to Columbia, as Daddy was also taken to the ER with signs of a stroke. After two days,

he was released with no firm diagnosis - either a TIA or possibly severely pinched nerve in his neck, which caused his arm to go completely limp and numb for several minutes, but since we don't have answers, there is an uneasy feeling left behind. However, every test is coming back clear - God is so good!



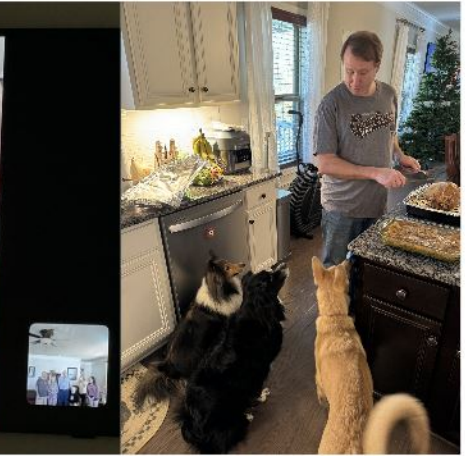
While Amber told us she could drive herself home with Bear, I wanted to see her, so I flew to OKC just before Thanksgiving and she grabbed me at the airport. She's done such a great job decorating her apartment - it looks wonderful! Bear has certainly grown - Fynn and Oreo will be surprised! After her last class the next day we hit the road for SC.

Amber was quite the hostess! Before she left for class, she fixed me a delicious breakfast of grits and sausage. Bear was a sweet heart for a dog that dislikes car rides. We made it home tired, but got energized as the boys greeted Bear and Amber greeted Grandma and her Daddy and enjoyed looking at the updates we'd made.



Amber was excited to be home - her first trip home since May. She got to shadow a vet and help with a routine procedure on Smiley, then went back to ride him later in the week. Bear was a bit of a shock to Oreo and Fynn but they quickly learned she was the same puppy they saw a few months ago. She loved running in the yard and playing with the boys.

This Thanksgiving was our first without Piper, as she and John were unable to make it back to SC this time. We missed them but had a great day with Mom, Mama, Daddy, and Amber. The puppies all enjoyed a bite of turkey and we got to FaceTime Piper and John, speak with Aunt Nell and Kim and with Aunt Jeanette and Aunt Rachel. It was a nice day to be together and visit.



So ends another year of Meeker Adventures. So many highs and lows this year! One other change we had was the closing of the Shutterfly Share Sites, which has hosted our full version online for many, many years. I have all the letters, but it was nice to be able to access the letters and photos from that year online. Fun to look through the memories of the past when I felt like reminiscing, was trying to remember what year some event had occurred or try to find a special photo I knew was in there somewhere. Our letters are now located <https://lpmeeker.net/Christmas/> with username: **Merry** password: **Christmas!** (case sensitive) if anyone has interest.

As we remember the reason for the season, we encourage you to take time to seek God - to know Him - and allow Him into your heart. We wish you all the best and hope you have a blessed Christmas.

Love,

Lee, Paige, Amber, Oreo, Fynn, Bear,



*Smiley,
Gibbs*



*Duke,
and
Fancy*

