



First Sunday in Advent, 2016

Dear Friends,

We are writing this letter during a dangerous period, at least according to Brian. When he was a kid Brian heard, probably on NPR, that marriages were more successful when both halves of the couple were the same age. The first Sunday in Advent falls between Rich's and Suzi's birthdays, which are three weeks apart. Rich is now 70 and Suzi 69. Brian kept asking us if we were "OK." He was afraid that we would get a "revenge" before Suzi caught up in age with Rich. By the time you get this letter the danger period will be behind us, both now in our 70s and (sort of) settling into elder-hood.

We got the chance to work together again this year on a project helping Syrian radio stations run by refugees. These stations still have transmitters in Syria, but for security reasons the studios are in Turkey. Some of the reporters still work in Syria. They provide need-to-know information, like safe evacuation routes when there is bombing. It is satisfying working with people who provide vital information, and we love working together.

We also traveled to Cuba together this year. With the brief thaw we felt it was a good time. As Rich put it, "If Trump is elected this short window may close for the rest of our lives." He may have been right. We traveled on a cruise ship but only visited western Cuba because the east was being battered by Hurricane Matthew. No one in Cuba was reported killed because in Cuba a "mandatory evacuation" is really mandatory. We enjoyed the trip, there was great music to listen to and what's not to like about cruising the Malecon at sunset in a beautiful 1955 two tone Chevy Bel Air convertible listening to salsa on a radio with an antenna flying an American flag. The stop at the hotel Nacional bar with its pics of Sinatra, Nat Cole, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and Fidel was also cool.

We are slowing down our work this year. Rich had one trip to the Republic of Georgia and has a trip to Jordan and Suzi one to Seattle with her sister scheduled between now and Christmas when we expect to host Brian, Liz, Liam, Fiona, Kevin and Shannon for a big family celebration. We are anxious to see Liam now that he has started kindergarten in a Mandarin Chinese immersion school. Will we be able to communicate?

The whole family got together in early July in Winnipeg at the folk festival, staying in one house, an Air B&B that Shannon found. We enjoyed the music and each other's company. The adults also got together at our niece's wedding in California in May. It was a great, adults only, extended family reunion. Jet and Jedda were married in an old CCC camp among the redwoods.

We remain active and in good health. Rich takes daily walks, taking photos and posting 5 each day on Facebook. Suzi has taken up quilting and has made special quilts for family members and friends.

It has been a good year for us, and we hope for you. We wish you joy in whatever holidays you celebrate at this turning of the seasons, Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah, Happy New Year, Blessed Solstice.

Love, Suzi (suzi@mcclear.net) and Rich (rich@mcclear.net) McClear (blog photos at Rich.McClear.net)



We have watched in horror, from Sitka and Amman, the disaster in Aleppo. In this season of "peace" our hearts and prayers go out to people everywhere caught up in war.