

God's mercies are new every morning. Great is His faithfulness!

Dear friends,

Each year starts with Rachel's birthday celebration in December, Anna's in January, both of which were very low key events due to COVID restrictions... ie no birthday parties with friends ☹️. In between Steve's birthday in February and Sarah's in April, Caleb was able to celebrate his 13th birthday with an outdoor party with friends at a local park. Yes, we now have a teenager!

On April 7, Steve had an ECG in Three Hills and was admitted so doctors could deal with edema (swelling). While the fluid came off, it also kept coming back and a week later received a call from the cardiologist, informing us of the need get to Peter Lougheed hospital as his heart rhythm was irregular on the ECG a week before, but no one "noticed." So after one week in the Three Hills hospital, he had a cardioversion (previous one in September 2020) and was in Calgary for 11 more days. Needless to say, this was both frustrating and concerning in various ways, yet through it all, we witnessed the power of prayer and were overwhelmed by the incredible friends around the world who expressed concern.



We celebrated our 14th anniversary early in May followed by three weeks of "home school" as COVID cases in Alberta spiked. In June, we celebrated along with other parents and classmates at Josiane's graduation from Three Hills School. The students sat physically distanced on the track with each family watching the outdoor ceremony from their vehicle parked around the track. Josiane, who lived with us from September 2019 through the previous two school years (including the summer of 2020), moved to Ontario to attend university while our children were ready for the summer break.

Rachel & Anna went for a week-long camping trip with Mom & Dad Ibbotson in July. At the end of the month, we enjoyed a short family vacation, visiting Frank Slide and then continuing on to Cranbrook to visit friends, before coming home on the holiday Monday. In late August, we enjoyed a three-day family adventure with Sarah's parents and siblings and children – all 18 of us – at the Rehoboth Christian Ministries camp on Gull Lake.



Riley, a new international student from Taiwan, arrived to live at home this year while attending grade 12 at Three Hills School. Caleb (gr8), Rachel (gr7) and Anna (gr5) also returned to school at Prairie Christian Academy. We are grateful in-person classes have been able to continue at both schools so far through the school year.

Just as we were getting into the back to school routine, Steve required another admission to Calgary – this time Foothills Hospital – for another cardioversion. This stay lasted 10 days as a larger team of doctors worked together with a plan hoping the need for further cardioversions would end. The day after Steve's return from Calgary, Rachel's COVID test came back positive. Caleb and Anna were tested next and Caleb also tested positive. So as everyone spread out throughout our home, each in separate rooms and minimal interaction, Sarah served meals room to room... and took care of other household tasks. Although all three children had clear COVID symptoms, each had a very mild case, and so were back in school after the mandatory requirement was filled. A new measure of craziness for the Ibbotson household!

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Again, just as we started to get back into a routine, Steve's heart again went into atrial flutter (not atrial fibrillation), and another quick admission for a fourth cardioversion in 15 months happened and he came home the next day. There was preliminary evidence his congenital heart issues were finally beginning to take a toll on the rest of his body, specifically the kidneys, so he began working remotely, and not leaving our house as we prepared for the cold of winter and "bugs." Prairie College agreed to allow him to teach the "Sexuality, Singleness and Marriage" course as planned beginning November 1st – via Zoom! Steve has consistently said over the past two years, "I just want to be able to see my children grow up. I enjoy going out to work, connecting with people for the proverbial coffee, but if I have to stay at home, that's fine, just so I can be there for my family."

After a few good weeks, blood work revealed more issues with Steve's kidney and fluid retention. From November 24 – December 9, he once again was admitted to Peter Lougheed hospital in Calgary – teaching the course remotely from there – as a team of cardiologists worked on a new balance. By God's grace and with His healing hand, the doctors were able to "restore" the balance and send Steve home stable... for the time being.



Riley studies faithfully in grade 12 at Three Hills School and she is a joy to have as part of our family this year. Along with playing tuba in the band, Caleb is playing on the Jr High A basketball team. Rachel enjoys her three dance classes as well as playing saxophone in the band. Both Caleb & Rachel enjoy the Prairie Tab Youth Group. Anna continues to learn piano and regularly goes swimming with friends.

Due to COVID, the Hunt family did not go on a family trip to visit Sarah's sister, Lois, (and family) serving in the Philippines last year. So this year, the family planned a holiday to 6 Mile Creek Ranch (near Salmon Arm, BC) from December 16-23. In light of Steve's recent health challenges and just beginning to be stable, we decided Sarah and the children should all go and enjoy their "vacation" and Steve would stay with his parents, during their week away.

As we look back on 2021, it has been a difficult year for the whole family! Through it all, we have seen the Hand of God working in so many situations and experienced His mercies new every morning. We are grateful for His Faithfulness to us individually and as a family, and continue to seek and trust Christ daily as we begin the New Year.

We trust you will also experience God's mercies new every morning and His faithfulness throughout 2022!

**Steven & Sarah
Caleb, Rachel, Anna & Riley**

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

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