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## Marvelling in God's Goodness

*Taste and see that the Lord is good.*

*Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him! Psalm 34:8 NLT*

Is it too late to say Happy New Year? We're not great fans of winter weather and must admit that the unusually green January was greeted with much more enthusiasm than the 3-day blizzard that changed all our Christmas plans!

Nonetheless, we were blessed to still be able to reschedule everything and had friends from Iran, Sudan and India join us on Boxing Day for "leftovers", another Canadian tradition! It's hard to believe how quickly time goes, and now tomorrow is Groundhog Day which is always fun to explain. It won't be long until the furry critters are seen again on campus.

Looking back on 2022, we are so thankful for all the people we met, the involvement God allowed us to have, and especially to see fruit from relationships begun as long as 18 years ago and as recently as 3 months -- we had the joy of witnessing the baptisms of 5 and missed 4 others! These included:

- 2 students
- 3 graduates
- 3 spouses
- a parent
- from 4 different countries

God is faithful and we celebrate His transforming work!

Our year ended on an unexpectedly sad note though. One of Stuart's best friends for the past 42 years went for his usual bike ride on a mild December 30<sup>th</sup> and suffered a major heart attack. Nobody would have guessed that he was going to cross the finish line and go home to Jesus that day, at the age of 60. We had great weather to drive to Lancaster, PA to celebrate Marty's life with his family and friends. It was a special honour for Stuart to share some memories at the funeral and speak about the amazing redemptive power of Christ. Stuart is looking forward to wearing a shirt that a friend of Marty's had made to celebrate his life. The verse is 1 Thes 4:9-14.



The FOCUS dinners are a monthly highlight. We thank God for dozens of faithful volunteers who not only help make it happen but are the "secret sauce" to the success of these dinners. They bring LOTS of food and eat with the students, building relationships that impact lives.

Mary absolutely loves going to Fanshawe College. This past Friday she led conversation circles, then had coffee and a long chat with a Sudanese Muslim woman. They met in online groups more than a year ago and talked numerous times on WhatsApp, often ending in a prayer in the name of Jesus the Messiah. It was helpful that when S arrived in early December, she already had a friend. She said she was going to walk to St. Marys and was very happy to join us for a Christmas dinner (appreciating that Stuart picked her and the others up instead)! S has no classes on Friday mornings so this will hopefully become a regular meeting. Pray that God will make S curious to know more about Jesus and that her husband and 2-year-old daughter get their visas soon.

As they waited in the Tim Horton's line, a young man with a white cane came from another hallway. Mary was intrigued that he knew right where to stop and learned that he was always sight impaired but had been totally blind for 3 years. A is from Kurdistan and has great English and very impressive navigation skills! Hopefully they'll connect again.

The lady who served the coffee is an Eritrean Muslim with whom Mary has often talked. About 4 years ago, we investigated how R could form a group of 5 to sponsor her nephew who has been in a refugee camp for many years. She was excited to report that he's coming to London soon! About 10 minutes after leaving the college, Y, a Korean lady who is working on campus and has introduced us to many students, returned Mary's call and arranged to meet in a parking lot to introduce J, a student from the Philippines. The rare opportunity to speak in Tagalog is something Mary can never pass up!

Stuart has had several significant and very stressful challenges at work since we last wrote. One Saturday in early November he went to the office to trouble shoot and found that the router was dead, the plug was melted and glowing red hot! A few weeks later there was another Saturday run to the office.

And most recently, two weeks ago he started getting calls and messages early in the morning and had a day that he hopes never to repeat!!

About 200 users from 19 telecoms couldn't get on the system, but fortunately his network and system administrator who was home and sick with Covid could still join a Zoom call that went on for many hours. Every once in awhile Stuart takes a vacation day and joins Mary in the conversation circles...that's certainly less stressful! If you live in the area and are interested, let us know because there always seems to be opportunity for more volunteers, in person and online.

All of the London team has been busy connecting with students individually and in groups. Erica works with Tim from P2C in Leader Impact Next. Right now, they are meeting with a group of students and discussing "Atomic Habits". Erica meets regularly with several women including H, a Muslim with lots of spiritual interest and R, a Sikh woman, and her mom. We had prayed lots about a medical emergency that happened before they had OHIP, and in the end everything was backdated so they didn't have to pay. Praise God! R came to FOCUS for the first time in January. Mary made a comment about how thrilled we were to hear about what R readily called a miracle, and that Jesus really loves them. R said something to the effect that Jesus loves them since they met us (the team)! God is at work!!



Jolene meets with lots of young women and worked on promoting and connecting students and Canadian Christians for a Christmas dinner through the Friends for Dinner program. It was started a few years ago in Ottawa and is now held in many cities across Canada and beyond. Soon we'll be gearing up for an Easter outreach. Imagine how much fun it would be to have the world around your table, and the impact you could have through these friendships. If you are interested, please visit <https://friendsfordinner.ca>. We had a surprise bridal shower for Jolene a few weeks ago. We're going to miss her when she moves to Listowel after her wedding in March.

Blessings,

**Stuart & Mary**

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