



Dear friends and family,

Blessings to you as this year 2021 ends and we begin 2022. We hope this past year was one where you saw the Lord do great and mighty things. We did! We saw Him provide in amazing ways: safety in travel, family gatherings, healing from sickness, protection for family members, new ministry partners, prayers answered, fulfilling ministry even when it was challenging, bold Awana leaders passionate about reaching kids for Christ, encouragement from those who love us and know us best. Where would we be without prayer partners who are also friends, family members, and church family?

Did much change for you in the past year? Someone once said 90% of people do not like change and the other 10% hate it. It was a hard year for many. Some friends and family members went to heaven, young and old alike. We miss them, and yet we wouldn't wish them back to this weary world. Weary, now there's a word. It means: "exhausted in strength, endurance, vigor, or freshness: having one's patience, tolerance, or pleasure exhausted". Did you have days when you were exhausted in strength, patience, or tolerance? Was it hard to "rejoice in the Lord always" after another year of "protocols"? Was there a "thrill of hope"? Did "the weary world rejoice" this Christmas? YES! ABSOLUTELY! Jesus gave us the reason to rejoice and to not sorrow as those who have no hope! (I Thessalonians 4:13) He is coming: stand firm on His truth, be bold in proclaiming His Gospel, love others like never before. They need it!

We had days when we were downright weary, exhausted, sorrowing. But we had more days when we were rejoicing, praising, and thankful for all God was doing. Our children and grandchildren are all well and we are so grateful. We had opportunities to see all of them twice this year, once in May for our long awaited 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration (by then it was our 41<sup>st</sup>). We were all in one place at the same time, some very briefly, but together none-the-less. Then again as we visited our Wisconsin and Illinois family members in early December and had some of them here with the Colorado kids and grandkids for Christmas. We always enjoy getting together with family! It is a sweet thing to see how God is using each of them for His purpose. We look forward to all God will do in 2022!

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We have been able to do some church and club visits and that has been wonderful. It has been so good to see people face-to-face this year, delightful. Several new Awana clubs started up and some clubs returned to meeting in person. God is doing a great thing in allowing kids to still participate in Awana. It takes creative and compassionate leaders to do ministry in difficult circumstances, and sometimes it just takes gumption and grit! We have seen it all! Thank you Awana leaders, pastors, and children's ministry directors for sticking with it when it seemed hopeless. Thank you for letting God show you the direction to go to still reach families for Christ despite opposition from the enemy. Thank you for praying for us and the Awana ministry here in Colorado and around the world and for supporting us in so many ways. We can't wait to see how God will use us and His Church in the year ahead. The anticipation is tremendous because we serve the God of the impossible.

Romans 8: 33-34 "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

May God richly bless you all with incredible ministry opportunities, little and big things that will further His kingdom, and a fearless determination to serve Him well!

Much love in Christ,

Joe and Jill Cook

