

Christmas 2014



Ross & Karin Olson

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Dear Family and Friends,

It has been a pivotal year for us, and indeed for our entire family! After 32 years in the same house, we moved to Gramercy Lake Shore, a senior co-op in Richfield. When the apartment became available, we got the house ready, listed and quickly sold. We physically moved October 22. Still close to church, near freeways and convenient shopping, Gramercy is also like a small town with 159 units and lots of interesting people in them.



There are frequent top notch concerts, regular pot luck or catered meals and other weekly social gatherings. A VFW is attached and will even deliver food to the Gramercy "homes." We have not used the exercise room, store, ping pong or pool tables nor the beauty shop, but we attend as many events as we can. And the spacious "Gramercy Room" is great for family parties! We've already used it three times. Wood Lake Nature Center is right across the street with lots of wildlife. Karin saw an eagle circling the top of the next building our second morning here. Very inspiring!! We do have to sell the one bedroom apartment that we bought a year ago to become members and for storing things while staging the house. It's a lovely unit.

We look out at the snow we don't have to shovel and take the elevator down to our warm car in the heated garage when we want to go out. (If we leave the premises, of course, we still have to interact with what is ironically called "the temperate zone" here in Minnesota.) Our laundry is right in the apartment, which also has plenty of closets and a large storeroom is just across the hall. The long den is both library and office for both Ross and Karin, who also uses it as her craft room. Her sewing machine is in the corner of the spacious guest bedroom. The master suite has space for a book case, reading nook and TV area. Downsizing has been a huge but worthwhile project. Now others can enjoy many of our "things."



The grandkids have begun to make new memories while still treasuring those they made in the old house.

There are many closets for "hide and seek". In the parking garage there is a "Free Table" where residents can leave unwanted items and anyone can take. If other peoples' grandkids appropriate as much as ours do, there must be the turnover of a moderately sized thrift store.

The Lord has provided these easier living conditions, which we pray (once we get through the strenuous process of getting settled) will allow us to put more energy into the ministries He has allowed us to have. We still host Chinese students when they first come and keep up contact with a number of them. Karin is a group leader in Bible Study Fellowship and a Mentor Mom in Mothers of Preschoolers as well as teaching Kindergarten Sunday School and interviewing clients one afternoon a week at the Community Emergency Services foodshelf. Ross teaches Junior Church (4th—6th graders) including twice a year hikes along the nearby rivers. He chairs the Outreach Commission (missions and community service) and facilitates Men's Fellowship. He also chairs the board of Outpost Ministries and serves on the board of Twin Cities Creation Science Association and manages their web site. We do lots of activities with the grandchildren when we can and have 4 or 5 of them for a "Grandpa Day" every Wednesday and the youngest sleeps over once a week for BSF. Ross volunteered for the Health and Wellness Committee, Karin the Sunshine Committee at Gramercy.

Rather than bore and/or gross you out with an "organ recital" as old age makes itself felt, here is a snapshot: At 72, Ross walks like his Dad did at 90, but still goes on those hikes — along with enough other — younger and stronger adults and youth — to carry him out if the need should arise. Karin goes through a lot of maintenance to keep herself going after 46 years of type 1 diabetes, but go she does with all the activities mentioned and a real gift for making friends and hosting — something we intend to resume soon. And when the long delayed sofa arrives, people will not have to sit on folding chairs! She had surgery to decrease gastro-esophageal reflux ("heartburn" for all you non-medical types) done at the same time as changing the battery in her gastric pacemaker (a device that tells her stomach when to contract) and although it did stop the reflux, some of the symptoms continue, apparently because of esophageal motility problems (if you want to know, you can look it up!) Karin enjoys saying that she takes off her leg at the end of the day to relax!!

We will now highlight the grandchildren. Christopher, 18, graduated from home school and is starting a photography business. He is a recent world record holder in Rubik's cube competition. Patrick, 15, is driving and loves video games — and can tell the difference. He helps with the youth group and children's church. Aizec, 13, still does yoyo shows and bullwhip demonstrations and hopes to play baseball. Annika, 8, shows dramatic and artistic ability. Laura, 11, does writing, speaking and drama. Helen, 9, has been in a couple of plays, quite convincing as a monkey in "Jungle Book". Esther, 6, went with us to Chicago after graduating from BSF children's program and she took it all in with gusto. Clara, 4, acts, playing "the cute card," according to her sisters. Avery, 16, is working diligently in her first year of high school and wants her friends to know God. Xavier, 12, is a wiz in math and following in the foot steps of his dad learning to play the saxophone. No one in the family has won a Nobel Prize yet, but each has been given a package of abilities and challenges with opportunity to use them for the Lord Jesus Christ who created them and longs some day to welcome each of them with a "Well done, good and faithful servant." As parents and grandparents, we want to be examples and encouragers, walking with them and transparently sharing the ways that the Lord has brought us through the storms and the calms, the mountains and the valleys of our own lives — awesome responsibility.

At Christmas we remember and celebrate the unexpected way the all powerful God accomplished this, by becoming one of us, a human being, experiencing everything that we did, but living the perfect life. For this he was reviled, rejected, beaten and crucified, enduring it so that He could take our punishment and allow us to live in fellowship with Him, even — incredibly — become instruments in His hands for the good of others.

Think of the Christ of Christmas this year.

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