

Joe Ritchey Family 1997 Christmas Letter

Dear Loved Ones,

(Isaiah 9:6 NKJV) For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

There are so many ways this year that the Lord has shown me how He is all of the above names.

This has, in many ways, been a very difficult year for me. In January, my Grandma Crane went home to be with the Lord. We had a time of fellowship as many of the family gathered for the funeral. I realize what a legacy she left behind for us, her grandchildren, of love, serving her Lord and others, joy, and laughter,. I only hope we can pass this important baton on to our children.

In March, I decided I needed to go to Ohio to be with my dad. The chemotherapy treatments that he had been taking for the last six years were no longer working. In April, he also went home to be with Jesus. It is wonderful to be able to call on the Lord through these difficult times for comfort and peace.

The boys have put a lot of time into Boy Scouts this year. Joe and Jamie traveled to Philmont, the Boy Scout camp in New Mexico, for 10 fun filled days of backpacking and camping. They came home stronger and

more appreciative of the food I fix. In August all the boys (except Joe) attended scout camp on Catalina Island, which is about 15 miles off the coast of Los Angeles. They had a great time. John finished many requirements, which has enabled him to advance to 2nd Class. Tim is close to becoming Life rank and James is awaiting approval for his Eagle project.

In October, I went back to Ohio to celebrate my mom's birthday. I also wanted to spend time with our new niece and nephew, Joshua Luke and Courtney Jane. Joe's brother, Mark, and his wife, Gail, had twins on July 10th. I had a nice visit with everyone although the time went by fast.

We have decided to spend Christmas at home this year. We are enjoying all the traditional things we like to do at Christmas time. It is good to take time out and read what the true reason that we celebrate Christmas is (Luke 2:1-20). We want to wish you a Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year. God Bless,

Darlene

As Darlene has written, we have had a memorable year. Following the Philmont Trip I spent the best part of the summer working out of Geraghty & Miller's Milwaukee office. One advantage was being able to go to Cleveland for a weekend and stop through Toledo on the way back. I was also able to spend a Sunday with Pastor & Diane Fuller, our former pastor from Toledo, who is now an associate pastor in southeastern Wisconsin.

We have spent the year in a sort-of-new ministry leading worship with children ages 2 years old up to 6th grade. We lead three different age groups for 15 minutes each Sunday night during the evening service. We sing a variety of fun, silly, and sometimes serious songs. We have also put on several puppet skits throughout the year.

I am getting ready to complete my 2nd time reading through the Bible in one year. My goal is to read it through 3 more times. If you have never read it all the way through, I would encourage you to do so. It will affect your view of the past, present, and future.

In September, Darlene and I celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary. Jamie (now James) turns 16 this month. He is looking forward to learning to drive.

I have continued to run (jog) several miles several times a week. I have noticed my weight creeping up, my hairline creeping back, and my hands stretching out while trying to read. I have finally given up trying to cut the gray hairs out of my mustache.

Lately I have been working on a web page for our family. I have been collecting photos and other links. Send us an e-mail and I will reply when the page is up and running. Our new e-mail address is jritchey@earthlink.net.

Have a terrific 1998!

Joe.