

Robert & Regina's Trans'lantic Newsletter

April - June 2015

It has been a nice Springtime here, as we enjoy the changes, the new flowers and blooms on the trees, and our small balcony garden. We have enjoyed the momentary advantage of living at a somewhat high Latitude, 50 degrees or so, so that we have long, warm evenings here during the summer months. In early July, we have had some very hot days; around 95 or so. But that IS summertime!

During the middle of April, the kids were able to be with us from Belgium. Was, naturally, awesome to have them here. The time that they spent with Liam's great-grandmother was beyond special to her. Just like at my mom's house stateside, breakfast around our little table in the kitchen is a nice, drawn-out affair together when they are here. Think that the Father, Son, and Spirit didn't have that joy and goodness and conversations in mind as they happily put these things together for us to enjoy? Nobody can say that that isn't good!

Liam is 4 and 1/2 years old. Each visit he has with us provides unforgettable moments of real childhood kinds of wisdom and special elements. Here is one of those times. Liam slept on the little folding sofa bed in my office. One morning, I had an early appointment, and had to get something out of the room that I had forgotten the evening before. So, he was in the waking up phase; utching around, kind of like he was still dreaming, as I slipped into the room. Suddenly, he looked up at me with big doe-like eyes, and with great astonishment declared "The cow jumped over the moon!", then quietly laid back down, and closed his eyes.

Well, the doc gave the ok for a break from treatment, and we heading off for 3 weeks stateside with family and friends. Was a very good and needed break, even though I was kind of kaput for the whole visit. So many people had sent best wishes along with homemade cards, and a knitted lap blanket! Really nice shared thoughts! Sadly, one lady is facing her 4th round of treatments in the last 8 years. That cannot be an easy sequence to go through again.

Later, as in June, I am taking an antibiotic for an infection in the lower abdomen. Mixed with the chemo, it hasn't been much fun. But the antibiotic apparently cleared up the problem. Tiredness, a kaput feeling, and an increasing amount of tingling in the nerve endings of the fingers and feet are still the usual accompaniers along the way.

As I write this paragraph on June 22nd., I have started the 10th. of 12 treatments. I am very aware of all the thoughts and prayers that have accompanied these causes and effects along the way. Many many thanks for the various implementations of those thoughts and prayers. It is all astonishing as you learn to look and observe.

At the end of May, I was planning to be in England on the weekend of June 6th; in Leeds for a seminar. But I admit that the number of logistics of simply getting there and back were a little daunting. A big rail strike was planned for the Friday in England; exactly for the afternoon I was to arrive. Nothing would move for no telling how long. So, I have canceled the trip. (The strike was also canceled, but only at the last minute.) With the chemo, the slight confusion, sleepiness and disorientation that that brings could have been disastrous for a trip nowadays, where close attention and being awake is always required. If I was not traveling alone, it would be a different story.

A campaign group has arrived here in Chemnitz, and will travel on to Dresden and then Leipzig in a week or two to help the congregations there, before returning stateside. Two families, and two or

three singles make up the team. The families have been here before. A very meaningful and touching assembly was held on Sunday at our building here. Although they are no longer leading the campaign groups, Clyde and Gwen Antwine are in Europe; visited with us, and Clyde spoke. It is always awesome to have them here. What was so touching is that, before they had left stateside, they had just been to the funeral in Oklahoma City of a 33 year old mother from their stateside congregation. That death generated a lot of responses on social media. One of the Facebook comments was from a lady from Chemnitz. She has studied with one of the Americans here who was familiar with the sick lady, and who had shared with this lady about the struggles that the young mother and her family had had to deal with. This had meant much to the German lady here, and led to her posting a sweet and meaningful response on Facebook. Clyde had spotted this post while stateside.

She was here in the assembly that Sunday, as Clyde had hoped and prayed for. He did not know her before, but was so excited to be able to meet and ask her personally if he could share her Facebook response with the congregation during his sermon. She said yes. It was a moving time for all in the congregation, even though most of us did not know the lady who died. Not many dry eyes around. That is connection, for sure! This is just one way that the Father works in lives of all people and their everyday events. I firmly believe that God participates to help and train our eyes and heart to see and notice.

We just had a vote in the congregation about whether to invite a campaign team back again next year. I voted no, along with two other's.

The vote isn't against people. I love seeing them here. The experience is without a doubt, good for them. But directly related, I have to say that I find it continually strange that we don't draw on a long line of experience (~25 years) over the years as having any kind of influence and effect at all on our thinking and understanding and decisions on issues like this.

However, the yes votes were more numerous in the vote above. That's ok too. If the group wants it so, it is naturally fine to have a team come here. That is freedom.

Here are a couple of quotes that I have found to be very true.

„Accountability leads to pretense not freedom as people posture for the acceptance of others. The life of the church is based on love, service and encouragement where people are free to be authentic, to ask the questions that are on their heart and to discover the transforming power of Jesus that actually frees us from sin by the work he does. Our concern for each other's brokenness and our honesty with people caught in sin is best expressed in love, not by trying to hold others accountable.“ Wayne Jacobsen, in the intro to his 490th. Podcast at: thegodjourneyDOTcom

“The world should take note that today, right now, Truth is the most unwelcome presence in the Western world.“ Paul Craig Roberts - current writer and blogger, but former Assistant Secretary of Treasury under Ronald Reagan

Just as I close this out at the end of June, we have news of the attacks in France, Tunisia and Kuwait. These kinds of attacks will only increase in number. Below is an answer, I believe.

As we watch the wheels rapidly yanked off the world as we know it, let the words of Paul comfort us, as he too was struggling with, and proclamation of, one of the most amazing and

hope-filled, freedom-shouting, liberating concepts of the gospel message. Read carefully.

“But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” 2 Timothy 1:8-10 NIV

Wow! This passage is filled with more nutrition than I had ever imagined. Destroyed death? Do we believe that? And for everyone? But I had never underlined it, as it has never been emphasized in my teachings, or the teachings I have heard. Here is the last part of vs.9 in another translation. “...but according to his own purpose and the favor that was granted to us through union with the Anointed One Yesu before the times of the ages, ...” Christian Bible. Notice that Paul speaks of our union with Christ before the creation. Could it be more clearly written? Can we possibly believe that? Paul also proclaims with no reservations to the Ephesians in 1:3-4 that this pre-creation event was our adoption. In reality, *adoption* is the main theme of the whole Bible! These verses indicate it wasn’t our choice. Every person who is on this planet was chosen before the creation. Paul cannot wait for the Ephesians to understand this. Do we understand this today? Paul puts it right up front, just as John did in John 1! Jesus claimed that this work was finished on the cross. The big news of this is that THIS was the Father, Son, and Spirit’s plan from BEFORE the foundation of the world; the Creation. Their plan has always included us, the whole world. His grace and purpose were already planned and worked out among the Father, Son and Spirit before Creation itself. It is THEIR plan, and we are included, without being asked. That is the Good News for the whole world! Religion has twisted their plan for its own purposes. And the results are headlines today.

“Yes, but Robert, what about this verse and that verse that clearly speak differently than those you mention?” Good question. My answer, these are basic texts; what happened before the foundation of the world, and how they concerned Adam and the Incarnation of Jesus. These verses I mention are important and included too in the biblical text! Or are they not included in the biblical texts? Thus, as I have learned the implications of this, such as involving the incredible Trinitarian relationship, their creation work together, and the perfect work of Christ on the cross, THEN I can seek understanding with the other verses you are thinking of in light and purpose of the Triune’s perfect plan. Our problem: Can our western theology deal with some very ignored texts. I will not bury my head in the sand. If we will teach these biblical truths, we will suffer along with Paul, and notably John and Peter, and early church “fathers” such as Athanasius and Irenaeus, as we too will now be fighting for this early, inclusive view of the young church! We truly have the Father that we have longed to know!

We do have a cool new addition to the congregation here. Nolan was born earlier this week to a proud set of parents, and no doubt, doubly exciting to their young son who now has a little brother! Much joy all around; including the heavenly realm, I am sure!

Much love and joy are wished for in your direction! May you sense the love of the father, son and spirit in your life wherever you are and whoever you are with.

Your Robert and Regina