

Jeff and Annette Ransom

329 Old Blue Mountain Lane, Georgetown, TX

Phone: no change from NJ

Kids;Grandkids:

-Sara, married to Bryan; Nathan 13, Abigail 11, Rebecca 9, living in Arlington, MA.

-Rachel, married to Craig; James 11, Anna 10, Joel 4, living in Catskill, NY.

-David, married to Tricia: Arietta 3, Oliver 1, living in Austin, TX.

Past What persons/activities/tasks/committees at PUMC built up our faith?

Everything we tried, did, almost did, and loved made us better disciples for Jesus Christ. Until that point in our lives over 25 years ago, Sunday church was a family tradition where good people went to show that they were, or at least it had become something close to that, speaking for me only (Jeff). Annette, the trained church organist and consummate church office admin had not drifted so far away, but we were challenged with raising teens and sending them to college, and the east coast work environment, ever-demanding more time away from family. Choir was always the first escape to avoid other things at all our church families, but Sunday School classes and Disciple Studies laid important foundations along the way, yet there were more gentle proddings into many "firsts" for us by the dedicated saints at PUMC who helped us to grow.

Highlights include Natural Church Development, SPR, Cornerstone Kitchen, Don Brash's Class and the Lay Leader role, as well as the music and choirs. Many people encouraged us along the way: Jana, Catherine, Hyosang, Iona, Larry, Susan, LaVerna, Christopher, Chris, Tracey, Ed, Judy, Doug, Peggy, Yvonne, John, Pat, Michelle, George and Barbara, Mary Lib, Lori, and several more no longer there, but not wanting to overlook any others and the many friends we knew from this congregation. On a more personal level, I do very much miss the finest golfing gentlemen, George and John, I have ever played with, prowess on the course aside and unimportant. NJ was a tough leave all around.

Present. We're fully retired, professionally speaking, but not "retiring" from an active, spirit-filled life. We're members at the FUMC-Round Rock (TX), a friendly, large multi-generational congregation (unlike PUMC, this is a largely white, though a moderately affluent group), very mission active in local and regional efforts. For example, there is still a monthly gulf-coast rebuilding team for Hurricane Harvey recovery, and a sponsored engagement with a local elementary school for weekend (now everyday) food support of families, and the church just completed making over 200 beds for the "No Child Sleeps on the Floor" project.

Enclosed is a link to the weekly e-Blast which gives more detail on the outreach and other activities. newletter@fumc-rr.org In coping with COVID-separated Sunday worship, we have started Church Outside the Walls, now drawing more people than our regular attendance. We're doing recorded services on FB and Zooming Sunday School classes, meetings and other discussions. If you have an interest in more detail and time, we recommend sampling the Sunday service link, as there is inspiring worship and music, which first attracted us to this church. On an added note, our church is as divided as is The Church during the prevailing UM controversy on clerical sexuality, only distracted now by the coronavirus invasion.

We are each active in Senior University, a non-credit, moveable class organization, with Fall, Winter and Summer sessions, each comprising 6-weekly lectures, or trips, and events. This is a continually learning institution, often led by our neighbors, who have a wealth of knowledge, experience and professions they love to share with others (geologists, scientists, ex-FBI/CIA/military, behavioralists, pastors, financial, physicians, lawyers, etc.). It is a "Princeton U-like" environment, with more offerings than the Ethics in Work and Community department lectures we so enjoyed in NJ.

Our most significant family event(s) since moving to Georgetown (Sun City), TX, in 2016, has been the addition of 2 more grandchildren, from son Dave and Tricia: Arietta, now 3, and Oliver, just turned 1. We're now at 8 GK (and likely holding). Of the rest the eldest is 13 (must be a time warp, as we're far too young for teenagers) and the youngest 4 (from the East-Coaster daughters' families). These two families are still homeschooling (now a valued resource to many in their respective neighborhoods), and all of us are doing and feeling well, each in our own states, during this time. PTL We're in frequent contact, thanks to modern social networking.

Sun City TX is an active retirement community (about 14,000 and growing, with many physical, social and educational amenities). The most unusual feature here is our own neighborhood, 140 homes, which is a supportive, caring community within the larger

community. The heart of this lifestyle is the neighborhood organization, with its own small groups for a wide array of interests and events, in addition to the many subdivision-wide offerings. The local lore says, If you're bored here, you "must be mostly dead." (Credit quote to "The Princess Bride") We know more people here than we ever did in past living in other neighborhoods, except perhaps for the church. In this age group there are many more accumulated life marks than we previously experienced, and any new ones are almost immediately the attention of several helpful neighbors to assist social, and sometimes physical and spiritual, recovery back towards independent living.

Did you know C. S. Lewis already commented on our present situation over 70 years ago (sort of)? After pointing out that humanity had always lived under various threats to existence through out our history (wars, plagues, raiders, illnesses, air raids, accidents), "this" would be nothing new, referring to the threat of the atom bomb. By extension today we only need to replace that term with the coronavirus.

Originally from "On Living in an Atomic Age," (1948) in Present Concerns: Journalistic Essays, he wrote about not exaggerating the novelty of our situation, ". . . you and all you love were already sentenced to death before the [atomic bomb] coronavirus was . . . and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because . . . (we) have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty."

If it comes, let it ". . . find us doing sensible and human things - praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music . . . not huddled together like frightened sheep . . . (it) may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but (it) need not dominate our minds."¹
How prescient was that!!

As for how we deal with the impacts of the virus, or the controversy in our church leadership, or any other challenge to our unity in Christ, we may never fully comprehend peoples' pain and suffering, especially on a large scale, nor even appreciate the full implication of that anguish as God placed even Himself on the cross of our cruelty and indifference. We only need to respond as we are able to those who suffer around us, forgiving ourselves and others for injustice, under the suffering love of God.² "To be in Christ, to walk in the Spirit, is to participate in the energy of God's liberating, sacrificial love . . . which can transform a broken world to bring healing and renewal . . . and a hope that does not despair."³

Along with NT Wright, Donald Brash, and others studied while at PUMC, we have established an enduring legacy of faith previously unexplored. Or perhaps, led by the (Ecclesiastes) Spirit, it was a time to know, and a readiness to receive.

In Christ's love,

Annette and Jeff Ransom

* "Calm we will keep; Carry on we must." - Yoda-ish paraphrase, as seen on FB

¹The Gospel Coalition, "C. S. Lewis on the Coronavirus," Matt Smethhurst, March 12, 2020 (on-line search, "TGC")

²From "Forgive Us/My/Our Sin," Christianity Today, Jeff Peabody, March, 2020, pp.39-43. The prophet Daniel in 9:1-20, repeatedly used "We" in praying for God's forgiveness for the Israelites' apostasy, even as he was the most faithful in their Babylonian captivity. More in line with Christ's teaching than many subsequent and famous Christians, he assumed guilt which wasn't his. There are no right and wrong Christian distinctions. "Trust the Lord, and do good," Psalm 37:3. Our need for grace is wider than our own choices. It is not for us to reconcile holiness and depravity. God works His will for the sake of His own Name (Dan. 9:18). I can glorify Him when I choose humble ownership of sin - mine and others - rather than separation and contempt.

³"The Providence of God and the Mystery of Evil," Chapter 6, in Faith Seeking Understanding, Daniel Migliori, 2004.