

Dear friends of Vital Signs Ministries,

December 2020

I'm starting this December letter as I do many of them; namely, enjoying an early morning coffee at Paradise Cafe. Atmosphere? Uh, that's okay. Coffee quality? Excellent. Coffee price? Well, since they let me fill up my large Contigo travel mug for just a buck, I'd say that was superb! Today is Thursday and so I'm looking forward to being joined in a little while by Patrick and John for our regular "sanity check." Our time also provides the kind of intensive encouragement that helps us all to be more circumspect and consistent in our walk with the Lord.



Why is this of more importance than ever? Well, just in case you haven't noticed, the world has gone stark raving mad. Rage and lawlessness. Blasphemy. Injustice and lies dominating the flow of thought. Decadence of all sorts. Therefore, Christians need the truth of Holy Scripture, the armor and weapons of God, and the generous power of the Holy Spirit to not only "remain unstained by the world" but, indeed, to fight back for His kingdom. Alas, I fear that many of those professing Christ (in some manner or degree) are either travelling blindly down the same trails that the world is blazing or they are, at least, failing to produce the holy, courageous, and distinctly counter-cultural lifestyles that should typify the "royal priesthood" of God's adopted children. Lord, please help us.

In this letter, I'm going to list a few highlights of how Vital Signs Ministries has tried to be salt and light in the last few weeks. So, let's get going.

* We have engaged in our regular prayers, sidewalk counseling, and pro-life witness at the abortion business -- including battling the darkness by joyfully singing Christmas carols together on the Saturday mornings we're there. (One of those recent Saturday mornings is illustrated in the photo collage above.) This is always a tough duty. It has been all the 37 years we've been doing it. But with increasingly hardened hearts, nasty abortion zealots playing "escort," and now the winter weather of the Midwest, it's certainly as challenging a service as ever. Your prayers are deeply appreciated for us, especially on the 1st and 3rd Mondays and Saturdays of each month that we are there. Thank you so much.

* We enjoyed a very warm-hearted and stimulating *Wind in the Willows* Brunch with 11 guests at our home. That discussion, preceded as it was by last spring's Hobbit Brunch, has convinced us that we should attempt more of these literary-themed events in the coming year. For not only have they drawn in some different people, but they also have encouraged people to trade in the world's versions of entertainment and edification for things that more beautifully pass the Philippians 4:8 test – “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

* Our creation of the 9-page activity packets for people quarantined in senior living facilities just keeps rolling along. Indeed, we just finished #42 in that series and so you can probably imagine how difficult it is for us to keep coming up with fresh material. Nevertheless, if these facilities remain closed to us to do live “When Swing Was King” shows (and that looks likely at least for several more months), we will continue and create these packets until we have a year's worth of weekly packets. And then? We are planning to collect all the trivia questions, the unfinished song lyrics, the quotations and Scriptures and publish them for a permanent resource.

* Besides this, we will try other ways to stay in meaningful contact with quarantined seniors (and others who can use “friendly contacts”), including such things as the poetry readings Claire and I have started recording. In some cases, we record these readings on a flash drive or DVD and send them to the senior living centers, but we also upload them onto the Vital Signs Ministries YouTube channel where they can be watched by anyone who has internet access. Of course, please note these YouTube poetry readings and other Vital Signs video clips are available for your viewing too. And they can be used in your ministries to seniors you know, family members, and other friends. The same is true with our activity pages for they are all available for your use on the Vital Signs website.

* Other hospitality ministries are ones we host at our home. In these past few weeks those have included a couple of Sunday afternoon High Tea dinners, our quarterly Board meeting, and the Hartford Cafe which is open every Tuesday morning from 6 until about 8:30 or so. This fellowship outreach has been going since America's “great hunkering down” began last March. Our attendance varies from 4 to 10 and Claire does a great job in providing scones or biscuits or muffins. Last week we splurged and provided for our friends that fabulous apricot torte from the Lithuanian Bakery. The Hartford Cafe opportunity, (like my morning coffee with the guys, the debriefing meeting at the Malek's home after our pro-life witness in front of the abortion mill, and all the other fellowship gatherings large or small) are of inestimable value in keeping us focused, spiritually sharpened, and joyful...despite the craziness and dangers of the surrounding culture. And so we certainly plan on continuing them in the new year, even as we plan to utilize all other platforms for fellowship, encouragement, and mutual edification: phone calls, Zoom gatherings, the YouTube recordings, and letters.

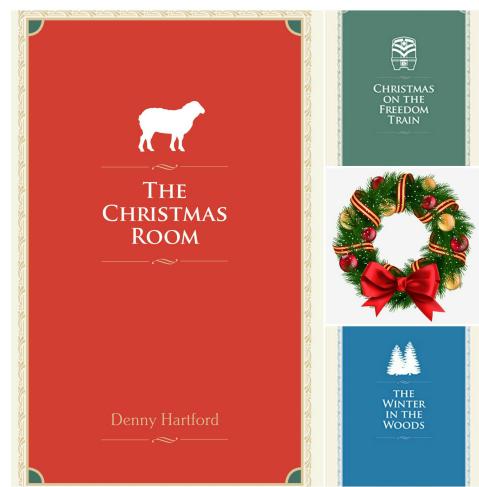
* And speaking of letters. With the intensity of the quarantines increasing and people's concerns about the China virus (often quite legitimate), Claire and I are engaging in personal correspondence more than ever. For instance, we have written over 150 cards and letters just in this last quarter.



* And that number doesn't include the ones we have written at two special Christmas card parties we recently organized. One of those parties was the regular December event in Vital Signs' series of letter-writing parties we host 4 times in the year. In that party (shown here), 16 of us produced 170

cards that went to quarantined seniors, political officials, first responders, and heroes of the Faith. Wow! The second one, however, came about when we persuaded our local church to begin such a quarterly letter-writing program of their own. We organized the first one for them which was also a Christmas card party and it was a great success. 21 people attended and 125 cards were written. Some of the recipients of those letters were the same as on the Vital Signs list. But there were significant additions too. For instance, the 20 quarantined seniors on the church list all came from an assisted living center in the church's vicinity. And that means it created a stepping stone for further ministry there. Also, we included in that address list the missionaries the church supports and church members who have been absent because of moving away or from virus concerns. A neat idea? You bet. So why not think seriously about the possibilities of Vital Signs helping your church, Sunday school class, or small group to engage in such an important and do-able project?

* Among the writing I've done in recent weeks have been posts for Vital Signs Blog. (The one I think is particularly relevant is titled "Living in the Big Tech World.") But regarding writing, Claire worked out a deal with Amazon to offer a 5-day period in which Kindle owners could download free copies of my novel *The Christmas Room* as well as the short stories "Winter in the Woods" and "Christmas on the Freedom Train." That promotion is now over (Amazon wouldn't let us go further than 5 days) but we did reduce the price for a paperback copy of *The Christmas Room* to \$6.50 and the Kindle downloads for all three titles remain just \$0.99.



Is that it? Well, just about.

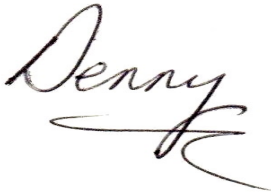
- * There has been more work on our new website.

- * We have used Zoom to do a series of a conversations (which, for general edification, we then post on social media) between Christian Brotherhood “alumni” sharing notes from their study of Christmas-related Scriptures.

- * I have been doing work for sermons that I have preached (or are coming up in these next 2 weeks) for Grace Bible Church, Wellspring Church, and Herman Community Church.

So, okay; that’s it for this year. But, as the Lord pours out His grace upon us -- including your prayers, encouragement, and financial support -- we will stay the course as long as we are able.

Christmas blessings and our most profound thanks
for your friendship and support,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Denny", followed by a long, horizontal flourish.