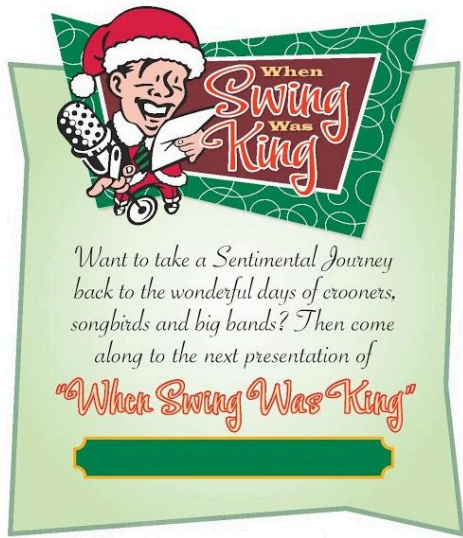


Dear friends of Vital Signs Ministries,

December 2021



I begin this month's letter on a cold, blustery morning as I sip hazelnut coffee at the Paradise Cafe in Regency. And though the snow isn't falling yet, there is Christmas music playing over the system here and I am in a decidedly Christmas mood. It only seems right then that I open this December letter by sending along Claire's and my Christmas greetings. May our Lord bless you and your loved ones with enough wonderful insights, comforts, and inspirations to make this Advent season one of your most significant ever.

Christmas is certainly underway at our house. The outdoor lights, the large pine wreath on the garage, and the nativity scene in the yard have been on display since just after

Thanksgiving. And the tree, the greenery, all of the Christmas posters and other wall decorations are also beautifully in place. Our favorite Christmas books are out, the carols are playing, and we are already into our Christmas **"When Swing Was King"** schedule.

And get this -- we have even hosted our first Christmas party! It was the annual Vital Signs Christmas card party and it turned out to be a real "happening" with 20 people packing our house (upstairs and down) and writing 158 Christmas cards and letters! And there was a bonus of many colored pages the kids created which will adorn our Christmas cards to seniors in our "When Swing Was King" audiences this month. Among the recipients of our correspondence at that event were political officials, business leaders, media, and Supreme Court Justices. And, as is the case with all of Vital Signs' other quarterly letter-writing parties, the messages we wrote



dealt (courteously but firmly) with the sanctity of life, religious freedom, the protection of children and seniors, moral sanity regarding sexuality, and other matters of justice and decency.



Still other cards were written to pass along our thanks and our sincere encouragement to police, local fire and rescue squads, senior citizens, and leaders of Christian ministries.

Furthermore, we sent colorful Christmas cards to 23 Christians currently imprisoned for their faith in Jesus. These bold saints are enduring persecution by the totalitarian regimes in China, Iran, and Eritrea. Each prisoner was sent 3 Christmas cards, every card of which included different personal encouragements and Scripture verses --- and in their own language! How wonderful is that! This is made possible by a phenomenal resource provided by Voice of the Martyrs. But let me print you an example, both to let you see how it can work AND that you yourself might be stimulated to write a few letters to these embattled heroes.

Yousef Nadarkhani,

We love you and your family. We are praying for you, your family, and your guards.

You are fighting a good fight. May you keep the faith and finish the race.

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

تو و خانواده‌ات را دوست داریم، برای تو، خانواده و نگرهباتانت دعا می‌کنیم.

در مبارزه ای نیکو شرکت داری.

امیدوارم بتوانی ایمانت را حفظ کرده، به پیروزی نهایی دست یابی.

سختیهای زمان حاضر در مقابل جلال و شکوهی که در آینده نصیبمان خواهد شد هیچ است.

رومیان ۸:۸

این مشکلات و رنجهای جزئی ما نیز سر انجام بسر خواهد آمد، و باعث خواهد شد که زندگی جاوید با جلالی عظیم نصیبمان گردد، که هرگز با آن زحمات قابل مقایسه نیست.

دوم قرنتیان ۴:۱۷

Okay, let me move on because that Christmas card party capped off a very busy November. A marvelous start was the Vital Signs Pie Social where 90 guests helped Claire and me celebrate our 50th anniversary. But, as the month went forward, our schedule included the annual weekend retreat with our book club at Prairie Creek Inn outside of Lincoln; a presentation I gave at a chili supper at the Nazarene Church in Fremont; a first Sunday of Advent sermon that I gave at Grace Bible Church in Bellevue; the regular Sunday afternoon sermons at Aksarben Village Senior Living; a Saturday morning presentation that I gave to a public forum sponsored by Nebraskans Embracing Life; and a Monday evening talk I gave to men and women at CenterPointe Drug Treatment's Campus for Hope in downtown Omaha. All of these sermons and other presentations take preparation so, as you can imagine, November had some pretty long days.



Of course, these November tasks were folded into our other Vital Signs duties: the pro-life presence at the abortion business (where, in this season, we add Christmas carols to our prayer meetings there), the daily correspondence and social media, the weekly activity packet we send to senior facilities, the hospitality and accountability meetings, and all of the ever-popular "When Swing Was King" shows.

We are very pleased that that the "When Swing Was King" and Aksarben Village services have kindled several strong friendships with residents of the senior facilities, friendships that create other opportunities. In the last few weeks, for instance, that has involved two hospital visits, a funeral, the honor of one of the Aksarben residents inviting us to be his guests at a formal holiday dinner, and the privilege of creating a special Sunday program featuring yet another Aksarben resident (Dr. Bruce Baker) as a guest speaker.



Regarding our "home business" of these past few weeks, there's been packing shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child, attending a high school play which had Ryan Garvey in the cast (one of my mountain climbing pals), getting a "radical trim" on the

massive silver maple trees in the front yard, having our upstairs carpet cleaned (instead of replacing it which was our initial hope – maybe next year), keeping up with the fallen leaves on both our yard and that of a neighbor, getting our kitchen pipes free from a deep clog, doing a weekly Zoom conversation with my siblings, hosting one Thanksgiving dinner and being guests at another, and undergoing our annual Medicare Wellness physicals. By the way, the reports on those exams were, as our nurse practitioner said, “*awfully good for guys your age.*” Hmm.

Coming up? Well, besides more of the same, there are several Christmas dinner parties on the calendar; there will be a distinctly Christmas flavor for the blog posts; and we will continue the tradition of giving a presentation at our church on Christmas Eve.

One more topic before I close – books! As you know, Vital Signs Ministries hosts occasional book discussions which are open to all of you. This year we had 3 such events to discuss Rush Limbaugh’s *Rush Revere* series, Randy Alcorn’s *Heaven*, and the Eric Metaxas biography of William Wilberforce. But besides these group events, there are many more book conversations going on among the Vital Signs team (and our friends) and we would be delighted to have you join in. For instance, a few weeks ago I had an extremely stimulating conversation with Gary Warrick over Joel Rosenberg’s new non-fiction book, *Enemies and Allies*. Anyhow, for those of you who might be looking for book recommendations and perhaps even a chance to discuss books with others, here are a few items you may find of interest.

1) Check out this post from my Book Den blog, “5 Star Christmas Reading (And a Few Runners Up)” -- <https://thebookden.blogspot.com/2021/11/5-star-christmas-reading-and-few.html>

2) Among the books Claire and I (and a few others) will be reading in the next couple of months are *Shepherds Abiding* by Jan Karon; *Rigged: How the Media, Big Tech, and the Democrats Seized Our Elections* by Mollie Hemingway; and *We Will Not Be Silenced: Responding with Courage to Our Culture's Assault on Christianity* by Erwin Lutzer. Also, for the next Vital Signs Saturday Book Brunch (probably in late January or early February) we will host a discussion of two classics: *A Man Called Peter* by Catherine Marshall and *Born Again* by Chuck Colson. Please let us know if you’re interested in traveling along any of these book paths with us.

That’s it for now. Merry Christmas, dear friends, and thank you so much for your loyal and generous support of Vital Signs Ministries. May our Lord bless you in abundance in this holy season.

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