

*Tears are falling, hearts are breaking
how we need to hear from God.
You've been promised, we've been waiting
Welcome Holy Child.
Chris Rice*

Christmas, 2015

Dear Family and Friends,

Late afternoon sunlight streams through our front windows as I write. It is an unseasonably warm near-winter day. But I have the tree lights turned on anyway, and they glow along with the sun. Off and on I have been listening to TV reports of yet another horrendous shooting, this time in San Bernardino, California. It all seems far away from our home this lovely afternoon where pumpkin pie smells and Christmas carols create an atmosphere of comfort, peace.

Yet the words of Chris Rice's beautiful carol resonate particularly when I think of how "tears are falling and hearts are breaking" all over the world yes, and right in our own backyards. On a recent trip to Central Dupage hospital for my annual checkup I waited long in the vestibule for the valet to retrieve my car. It was a raw and wind-whipped morning, and as I waited I watched. I was struck by the great efforts of those whose labored steps seemed almost beyond their ability to get through the doors on their own. I observed others in wheelchairs or on crutches or with canes. One woman, not even very elderly was bent in two. But it was the faces that held me. Expressions were grim, defeated, bereft of even a ghost of a smile. And tired, so tired.

*Bring your peace into our violence
Bid our hungry souls be filled
Word now breaking heaven's silence
Welcome to our world.*

So Bob and I look over the time since last Christmas and muse on the changes we have encountered this year, some saddening, some gladdening and some fulfilling. Our "tears have fallen" with the loss of people we love. Our "hungry souls have been filled" by the "Word (Jesus) who broke heaven's silence" in the blessings of faith, family and friends. We have travelled to see the beloved children, grand children and great-grandchildren who live in the warmth and beauty of Arizona. Papa Bob has danced with great granddaughter Lilah Rae (age 4) at her insistence, and moved gracefully to her choreography on a dais at the Phoenix Botanical Gardens, the mountains purpling in the distance. We have sat on bleachers in the Yale Bowl in New Haven, CT. to watch Hayden Carlson play football. We have watched our swimmers and dancers. We have had in-depth conversations with our college students who are poised for graduation this spring and we have discussed life and love with our post college young women and men who are finding their way in careers.

This year I have stopped complaining about the “learning curve” aspect of my job as a clinical social worker, learned what needed to be learned and am relishing the counseling that has been a privilege and a challenge. And this year Bob retired after a lifetime of being a commissioned salesman, starting at age 8 with an egg route! He is excited about the volunteer possibilities that he is pursuing. We are thankful that he can finally devote more time to what has always been his avocation, his natural bent and his joy, which is mentoring and serving.

*So wrap our injured flesh around you.
Breathe our air and walk our sod.
Rob our sin and make us holy, perfect Son of God.
Welcome to our world.*

Now it is dark in the living room except for the glistening tree. Its beams remind us of the Light that did come into our world and *did* breathe our air and walk our sod. He *does* wrap Himself around our tired, hurting, injured flesh. And Christmas brings it all home again.

Grace, love and peace to you all for now and in the New Year.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'April', written in black ink.

April (for Bob, as well)