



December 4, 2017

Merry Christmas!!! I pray that this season finds you healthy and joyful as we celebrate the birth of Christ and the hope that He offers. As we press to finish school and meet year-end deadlines, while trying to maintain the delight of Christmas, we rejoice in Jesus and in you, our loved ones. Because I do not see you to visit as much as I would like, here is a quick update on our lives.

Dan and I are still enjoying serving with Lifelines, the outdoor ministry of Cru. This fall our team saw six people trust Christ here at Plymouth State! Even so, our greatest efforts are in resourcing teams throughout New England to help them better connect with students and build disciples of Christ. We continue to love this age group and to see an increasing need on the college campus to reach out with hope and real relationship. At the same time, Dan is the National Field Director for Lifelines, overseeing Lifelines ministries nationwide. As much as he thrills at taking students rafting and talking with them about God, he especially enjoys working with the staff leaders across the country and helping them become more effective.

As Lifelines expands, our whole family had the opportunity to spend three months in New Zealand this spring to begin the process of launching Lifelines internationally. Despite flash floods and homesickness, we developed dear friendships “down under” and saw God bear tremendous fruit in our personal lives and in the ministry. We also had the amazement of watching penguins on the beach, hiking in underground rivers, and camping in untouched wilderness. It was harder to come home than we expected. We can’t wait to host our Kiwi co-workers, Dre and Mic, here next week while they visit the States!!

This has been a year of travel, actually, and I am beginning to realize and accept that this is our new role in ministry. Not only have we attended conferences in Colorado, New York, and Montreal, but Dan assisted the Ozark summer project and has been visiting our teams for a week at a time in Colorado and North Carolina when he is not camping with the students on weekends. Just two days ago he returned from a week in Texas. My turn will come in January when I leave for two weeks on a mission trip to Patagonia, along with our oldest daughter, Emma. My brother, Andy, will also be joining our student team. Two weeks after my return I will be leading a Facilitator School for a week in North Carolina. We appreciate your prayers for the strength and sanity of our family in the midst of all these exciting but somewhat disruptive trips. ☺

And now, let me tell you what God is doing in our family. Our household is changing as we have suddenly found ourselves with two teenagers in the house—both of whom are taller than me. Caleb is pushing 15 and is now a freshman in high school, although his courses have all been through co-ops and online. He had a cold this spring that made his voice sound deep and gravelly but it just never changed back... for months I thought we were being followed by a random man only to turn and

discover that the tall growling stranger was my son! Caleb went duck hunting with our friend Walt this fall, but to the girls' delight came home empty handed.

Emma, now thirteen, just finished performing in "The Nutcracker" ballet with sister, Aliza, yesterday. She has been taking dance this past fall and has been volunteering in the church nursery and knitting or making jewelry in her spare time. Emma runs the house when we are not home and doubles as a chicken-whisperer, communing with our flock of hens that follows at her heels. She is very driven and has just a few chapters left to finish reading through the Bible in a year!

Micah is our rambunctious ten year-old, full of ideas and eager for a laugh. He has been taking art at our local public school and wrapped up a winning soccer season only to slide into basketball. We will be back at the school tonight for their first home game. Last year Micah contracted Lyme Disease through a tick bite and this spring when he was battling headaches that I feared were related, we cut out sugar from our diet and reduced our gluten intake. That was a huge jump for our yeast rolls and chocolate cake loving family, but he has not experienced symptoms since so we are grateful.

Last but not least is sprightly Aliza, who is eight for a few more weeks. In addition to dance, she has been taking tumble—and cartwheeling, doing splits, and now back-walkovers throughout the house. Aliza also burned up the field in soccer this year, pouring her heart into every game. Independent and capable, I was still delighted when she crawled into my lap last night as we talked before bed. Aliza, Micah, and Emma are still homeschooling with me this year, which has been a great joy most days. 😊

Our much-coddled dog, Jaunty, and our massive cat, Simba, have been joined by a new house-pet in recent months, when we added Kasem, our new Beta fish to the family. Simba has been especially interested in this new arrival. Our home would also not be complete without Miss Alice, who is a dear friend from church who rents our downstairs apartment. Alice has truly been a gift from the Lord, through her friendship and in tending the chickens and cat while we are on the road.

I am out of space, but want to be sure to wish you a restful—or spectacular—Christmas, depending on what you need. May your hearts be carried by gratitude and lit with love through the rest of this year and beyond. And may God bless you with His Presence this season.

Much love,
The Litchfield Family

