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January 2016

Dear Co-worker:

Doug Heidema appropriately writes the letter for this month that provides some of his plans for 2016. We trust you will appreciate his endeavors and pray for him in his new but nevertheless old time adventures with the Sepik brothers and sisters.



At the Grass Valley office

When Dan Carne and I went to Papua New Guinea for a month in 2012, Elfriede Urschitz from Austria came to the States and cared for Leah. But the separation was hard on her, and even though she appreciated the assistance of others, it was not the same as her husband's care. She didn't want me to go again to PNG, so I honored that request and let my passport expire. And until Leah passed on to glory only once did our daughter help out another night when I had to be away from home. Love tethered me close to meet the needs of the one God placed in my care. It was a privilege, not just a duty or inconvenience to have been her helper. During the daylight hours I worked on mission related work using the computer on the kitchen table; this meant going back and forth between helping Leah and the many other tasks. I found that the caregiving mixed with the other things is not an easy task, but in God's providence, we managed.

When searching for an apartment in NW Reno, we happened to turn the car around in the parking lot of a particular church, Covenant Presbyterian. We gave it another look and then decided to attend there the following Sunday. We soon joined, but little did we know that five women from that church would become a wonderful part of Leah's life. They faithfully and regularly gave their time, talents, conversation and loving company. This allowed space for me to do other things during their visits. I can honestly say they were a true blessing; it was sacrificial love in action for both Leah and me.

With Leah's passing the question became, "Lord, what's next?" Three years have passed since being in PNG and getting my hands directly into the work. With a good share of my life spent there, I realize my expertise and attention is needed for some matters. This seems to be the Lord's direction at this point in my life. Initially, I plan to be there during the months of February and March of 2016 and then also go over later in the year, the Lord permitting. (To obtain a long term special work permit is a trying effort and difficult to obtain.)

The return to PNG will present many of the same challenges as the past. These come as no surprise: isolation, poor services, different diet, warm temperatures with humidity, and the chance of acquiring a tropical disease. The difference this time is my marital status. I expect an unusual expression of unsuppressed bereavement for Leah by coworkers and make many contacts with friends and those who worked with her in the past. But I'm sure I will have opportunities for giving testimony, assurance, comfort and hope that all who believe will possess

it through the one and only Savior Jesus Christ. May God grant to me the fitting words, plus the courage and strength to speak.

As I formulate plans to return, I'm reminded of what the Lord says, "My grace is sufficient for you because my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Jesus may rest upon me. And for the sake of Christ, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. It is through Him that I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:8-10).

Grandson Judah and I have returned from a trip to the Midwest which began in Reno and driving as far north as the Mackinac Bridge in Michigan, then down to Dallas and finally back to Reno. I spoke at five different churches along the way. We saw many friends but missed others. It was a blessing to see relatives during the Thanksgiving week and many friends I haven't seen in 15 or more years. But Judah's family wanted him back home after three weeks, so we turned west. With the lowest fuel prices of the decade it was hard not to travel more. I am truly thankful for all who gave us accommodations and meals along the way.

Now that we're back in Nevada you may appreciate hearing about my hike with three grandsons, a granddaughter, and their mother. We all started the three mile hike up the Hunter Creek Valley to see a waterfall. Snow at the lower elevations had melted resulting in the trail turning to mud that caked our shoes with a sticky mass weighing pounds before falling off. The boys made alternate paths alongside of the main trail until the sides became too steep. Mother and daughter lagged behind and returned to the car where they phoned to report they had given up and were driving home. This helped spur the boys to complete the hike. But sad to say, the youngest failed to heed my prior instructions to bring gloves and hat, so Grandpa gave up his spare gloves and his older brother surrendered his hat.

As we reached higher elevations the trail improved but was icy. Soon snow flurries began, and the wind whipped through the barren part of the canyon. Eventually we reached a grove of fir trees and the icy waterfall. My repeated orders were: If you walk on the soil it's not slippery like the ice on the trail, and keep moving or your feet are our going to freeze, and try to keep out of the deep snow. We were all thankful on getting back to the car for the cooler temperatures that had frozen a crust on the mud so it didn't stick to our shoes again. We arrived at the parking lot just about dark. I'm sure the kids learned a few lessons on muddy and icy trail hiking in Nevada. Walking in PNG on muddy trails tends to suck off your shoes, so I would remove them and walk in just the socks. The socks would give some protection from burs and such but less mud would stick to the feet. Those poor socks were never white again.

His grace and peace,

Douglas Heidema



Grandsons at the Hunter Creek falls