

Merry Christmas from the Clontz Family!

Nov. 30, 2008

Merry Christmas to our friends and family!

As always it is hard to believe that it is Christmas time again! 2008 has been a year full of transitions for us. They have all been good transitions, but part of me rebels at change—even though I don't think that change is optional in life.

Craig and I started the year celebrating our 25th anniversary with a week-long trip to New York City. The highlight of the trip for me was getting to attend a taping of The Daily Show! Due to the writer's strike, we weren't sure if they would actually be taping when we were there. Luckily, our tickets were for the first night they resumed taping. There were reporters and such reporting on the return of Jon Stewart and as one videographer filmed the line he came to the couple in front of us and us and said, "Well there goes the demographics!" (We were a good 10-15 years older than most of the crowd!) We spent the remainder of the week visiting museums and seeing Broadway plays. It was a wonderful celebration!



Phillip, Steven, Laura, Josh & Matt

Our first transition in 2008 was Steven's graduation from Auburn in May. There is something about having an adult college graduate son that makes me feel my age! Last year was a busy year for him also, he was able to present his math research at a national conference, he was named the Dean's Medalist for Mathematics, and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. He was admitted into both the Masters in Mathematics program and the Masters of Education and is now working at a Graduate Teaching Assistant in the School of

Mathematics at Auburn. This year, he decided not to march with the Auburn Band, but he is still on staff as their webmaster and he videos the band performances at the games. This fall was somewhat of an adjustment for him as he had to learn to get up every day go to class, go to work, and still find time for study and play. But he seems to be finding his rhythm.



Our Eagle Scouts

Phillip is in his senior year at Buckhorn. He has been accepted at both Auburn and the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). He plans to major in math and computer science so he can teach High School students. At this moment, he is leaning towards UAH, but Auburn is still a possibility. Last spring, he traveled with some Buckhorn choir and foreign language students to Europe—Italy and Spain. As you can imagine he had a great time! This summer—just two days before his 18th birthday—he completed all the requirements for his Eagle Scout award. And he continues to work with his troop at Epworth as an adult leader. (We've taken to calling both him and Steven "Man Scouts.") This fall he did march with the band and plans to sing with the choir in the spring. Phillip and his girlfriend, Christina, have been dating now for almost a year and a half. She is a very nice girl and feels like part of our family.



Phillip & Laura 1st day of School



Christina, Phillip, Laura & Trent—Prom Night

Laura is a junior this year. She continues to play in both concert and marching bands as well as playing with the Trinity Handbell Quartet. Both she and Phillip are also staying busy tutoring students in math. Laura wants to be an elementary school teacher and she is considering her college choices. Right now at the top of her list are Auburn and Birmingham-Southern, but we'll see what the next year brings. Laura and her boyfriend, Trent, have been dating almost a year. He is a fine young man. His father is the youth pastor at a nearby Baptist Church. He will be going to the University of Alabama in the fall (we like him anyway ;-D). And one of the highlights of the year (for me) was seeing Laura and Phillip double-date to the prom!

Craig continues to do well. He celebrated 25 years with Dynetics and still loves his job. Dynetics has been keeping him very busy this past year, including two trips to his favorite place, Las Vegas. And he continues to recreate the clergy spouse role by serving as our church's webmaster.



Craig at work in the desert

In June, I left Trinity when I was appointed to serve as the sole pastor of New Life UMC in Grant, Alabama. Grant is a small town of 600 or so located halfway between Guntersville and Scottsboro on top of Gunter Mountain which gives it some beautiful views! New Life is a relatively new congregation (18 years old) of 230 or so members. They don't have a parsonage so I commute from Huntsville—about a 30-35 minute drive. Luckily it is a beautiful drive! Leaving Trinity was harder than I thought it would be. I loved the people! But New Life is a great church and I love preaching weekly. I have also been accepted into the Doctorate of Ministry program at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia (just outside Atlanta). I was supposed to start course work in June but due to starting at New Life, I deferred and will start work in January.



New Life UMC

With all that has been going on, we haven't had near enough time to travel as a family. We did go to Tybee Island for our annual week at the beach there. And in October, everyone except Steven traveled to West Virginia to celebrate my grandparent's 70th wedding anniversary!

As always we gather each night during Advent to light our wreath and we pray for our family and friends. We pray that you will all have a wonderful Christmas and a blessed new year. And we hope to hear from you soon!

May 2009 be a year of joy for all of you and may God bless you every one!

Craig, Sherill, Steven, Phillip & Laura