

Christmas greetings from Ross and Kathy Callaghan

Hi there

Happy Christmas, and may 2008 be a wonderful year for you. It's great to keep in touch, isn't it, so we hope you enjoy our annual newsletter. As we get older we recognise more and more how important our friendships are!

For us 2007 has had lots of ups and downs. Here are some of the things that have happened in a very eventful year:

- **Travel**

For a long time we planned to have 2007 as our year for traveling. So travel we did, with two major trips overseas!

Late in March we flew to London via Singapore and then spent 2 weeks driving around England and Wales. Ross planned the itinerary carefully so we were able to visit all known relatives and friends, find graves and houses, and really get a feel for where our ancestors lived. Interestingly 3 of our grandparents came from the same area in the Lake District in England. We also flew up to the Highlands of Scotland for a lovely visit with Kathy's cousin.

Next we took a month long Cosmos Tour around Europe with friends, Gary and Charmayne Johnstone. We visited France, Spain, the Riviera, Italy, Greece, Austria, Switzerland, Germany and Holland, and a few other countries as well. What a wonderful experience! What a privilege to see so many places that we had only read about before. The special highlights were Paris, Barcelona, Rome, the Isle of Capri, Athens and the Greek Islands, San Marino, Vienna (where we attended a Mozart concert in the very building where Mozart performed!), Salzburg (where we re-enacted the Sound of Music), the Swiss Alps, The Rhine, and Amsterdam. How wonderful to visit these famous and historic places.

Then it was off to the Middle East, again with Gary and Charmayne. We spent 2 weeks touring around Israel, Jordan and Egypt. Israel and Jordan were special because we were able to see lots of Biblical sites making our reading of the Bible so much more meaningful. We especially enjoyed walking the Via Dolorosa and seeing the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem; visiting Petra in Jordan, and going on a Nile cruise in Egypt. These countries are hot though!

Unfortunately Ross developed a hernia on the first leg of our trip, but coped (just!) until he had surgery on our return to NZ.

In August Kathy went back to America to sing in the International Competitions with the Kansas City Chorus. There were 5 Kiwis this time and it was lovely to share the experiences, rehearsals and side trips. Teaching the Americans the Maori Stick game was lots of fun! A month later Ross was able to share the wonderful hospitality too. Before the competitions in Calgary, Canada we went on trips to Branson, Chicago and up into the beautiful Canadian Rockies.

The Kansas City Chorus came 5th in the competitions and it means that Kathy now has another international medal! After the competitions we visited friends in Vancouver, Oregon, Washington and San Francisco, before heading for home via Melbourne (and JJ).

- **Ministry**

We completed our ministry at the Lower Hutt Church of Christ in February and welcomed in a new full-time pastor. It was great to leave the Church in very good heart. We have continued our involvement in Girls Brigade with Ross helping out in reviews, training in 'Mentoring', Queen's Award, video making etc.

- **Housing**

We have bought a lovely new house in Paraparaumu Beach, just north of Wellington and are gradually moving in. This will be the start of a whole new phase in our lives! Unfortunately our house in Lower Hutt has not yet sold (after two good offers fell through). The sooner it sells the better!

- **Work**

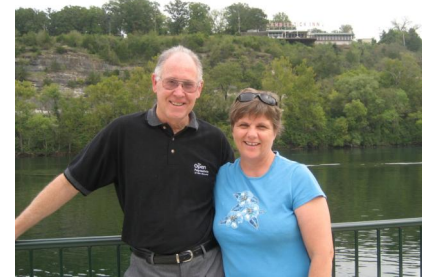
Our business has slowed down significantly as we were overseas for so much of the year. When we returned after the last big trip we found that the work we have been doing for our major client is being taken 'in-house' so we have little income, two houses and a mortgage (which is all rather stressful!).

We are trusting God in these situations, and hope everything gets resolved soon so we can get on with the next phase of our life: being semi-retired!

Debbie, Fraser and JJ are doing really well in Melbourne. JJ is now 20 months old and is full of energy. In his short life he has been to New Zealand 6 times, and will be back here again for Christmas. This means we have been able to fulfill Kathy's dream of being 'active grandparents'. It's lovely to talk with JJ on SKYPE. His little face lights up when he sees us on the screen. During the year Debbie and Fraser bought a house (close to the one they were renting so they are now well established in Melbourne); Debbie completed her Masters; had regular trips to New Zealand (twice while Debbie was presenting at Emergency Management conferences) and had a lovely holiday in Thailand.

Sarah and Michael also had a good year. Sarah taught the new entrants at Paekakariki School but will be moving to Dyer Street School next year. This is much closer to home, but Paekakariki will miss her. Sarah sings with the Faultline Chorus and starred in their recent show, *Desperate Divas*. She is in a quartet called 'Stage Hans' which has lots of potential. Michael's business as an IT specialist continues to go well. Sarah and Michael enjoyed a trip to Melbourne during the year and are continuing to do up their house.

Phil has been very busy in his badge making business and **Sarah** has completed her massage therapy diploma and set herself in business. Phil and Sarah lived in our house while we were away and enjoyed a trip back 'home' to Nova Scotia to visit Sarah's family, plus a trip to Melbourne. They now have a new flat in Central Wellington.



Ross and Kathy



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We thank God for His continuing goodness in 2007 and pray that He would be with you and bless you richly in the coming year. Keep in touch! You can get lots more detail on our activities (including photos of our trips) from our website at <http://rosscallaghan.googlepages.com> Check it out!

Merry Christmas and lots of love from Ross and Kathy Callaghan