



Merry Christmas!

We wish you a joyous and peaceful 2012!

As most of you know, 2011 marked a year of great change and painful loss for us. Peter's mom, Lynn, died unexpectedly at the end of January. Not a day has gone by that we haven't thought of Mom and missed her. At the same time, we have been strengthened by shared memories of so many who loved her and continue to be touched by her. Her strong faith, unconditional love, and generous hospitality continue to be a model to us all.

2011 saw another major transition in our lives as we ended our Global Mission service in June. We moved to St. Paul in July, back to the ELCA missionary apartments near Luther Seminary where we have lived during each of our four previous home assignments. The boys began school in September—Elijah in 8th grade at Murray Jr. High, and Simon in 5th at *l'Étoile du Nord* French Immersion—and have been adjusting very well.

Truer than ever, this Advent has been a season of waiting as Sarah and Peter continue to practice patience while discerning what future awaits us. After leading Luther Seminary students on a January Term Interfaith Immersion course in Senegal, Peter will begin an interim position as Associate Pastor at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Apple Valley (a St. Paul suburb). Sarah will explore different options in the Twin Cities, particularly in higher education.

It has been a real blessing for us to spend time with family this year—Thanksgiving with the Grows and Murrays, Christmas with Peter's family here in St. Paul, plus Christmas visits to Sarah's family in Bloomington and Black River Falls. We hope you are also able to share the love of family and friends this Christmas season.

Peter, Simon, Sarah, and Elijah Grow-Hanson

***“Unexpected and mysterious is the gentle word of grace.
Ever-loving and sustaining is the peace of God's embrace.
If we falter in our courage and we doubt what we have known,
God is faithful to console us as a mother tends her own.”***

Jeannette M. Lindholm (ELW #258)