



Update from Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather December 2020, part 2

Love, Joy and Peace

This Christmas season feels different. Yesterday, we stopped by my mother's neighborhood to enjoy the outdoor Christmas decorations. I spent the whole time repeating these phrases to my kids: "put your mask back on . . . pull your mask up over your nose . . . move back, you are too close to Mama Lou . . ." Stressful.

We, like many living in the U.S., are trying to balance our desire for emotional connection with the fear of spreading a potentially deadly virus to our loved ones. Sad and scary.

But this is not our family's first sad, scary, and stressful Christmas. In 2013, we fled South Sudan in late December and then spent the 25th in Uganda watching the news document the start of a violent, heartbreaking Civil War.

That Christmas actually stands out as one of our most meaningful. It forced us to cling tightly to the promise that a Prince of Peace brings. The Christmas message of "God with us," rescued us from despair while we lamented the loss of life taking place on that sacred holiday.



Merry Christmas from the Smith-Mather family!

Wars and pandemics differ, yet both are tragic and life-altering.

So, during this pandemic Christmas, we will again be led to stand firmly on faith. Our circumstances dictate a different type of celebration, yet the joy of Christ's birth remains the same. God is still with us.

Let the weary world rejoice.

Update on Baby Alice

In our last newsletter, we shared about Alice's heart defect and the unknowns surrounding her health. Thank you so much for your prayers and notes of encouragement which uplifted us as we learned more in the weeks following her birth. Here is a brief update:

The doctors confirmed she has a "right aortic arch," a structural anomaly in her heart, which requires surgery usually done at a year old. With further blood tests, we learned that Alice does not have any of

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the other challenges we mentioned previously, like immune system and developmental disorders. Hopefully, after the surgery, she will not face other health challenges connected with this condition.

At present, Alice's heart is strong and so is the love her sisters, brother, parents, and our caring community have for her. We are truly humbled by your support and by God's giving Alice to each of us to care for, guide, learn from, and love.

What a wonderful gift!



Our amazing 2020 gift,
Alice Austin, under
the tree!