



# Gordon Christmas Letter

## Greetings From Jay & Liz 2018

(Authored by Jay)



We hope this letter finds you doing well and enjoying the Christmas season! Christmas is a time in which we think about all our blessings, and you, our friend, are among those blessings.

**College Football Championship Game. Again.** – For two years in a row, a member of the family won the ticket lottery at CollegeFootballPlayoff.com, allowing us to buy tickets at face value to the championship game. Last year, Andy & Siena both won, so we purchased eight tickets and sold four, so four of us (Andy, Siena, Andy’s best friend Andrew Parrish, and I) went to the game for free. That was the game that Alabama won in overtime against Georgia. We’ve since seen another Alabama-Georgia matchup—SEC Championship. Our ticket luck is over--nobody’s name coming up this year.



**Emily and Daniel Purchase A Home** – They found a townhouse in Chelsea, just five minutes from us. Daniel is an adjuster (settles insurance claims) for Allstate, and got an opportunity to travel this year and work in areas hard hit by weather. He got to be in different places throughout the country, but grew tired of being away, and his former boss lured him back off the road. Emily still works at Perry’s Steak House, where she sometimes is hostess, but her real job there is the office administrator. Emily and Daniel enjoy their two dogs, Albie & Ellie, and sometimes a foster dog. I somehow ended up with a second job cutting grass for their neighbors. I figure some people pay to go to the gym while I let people pay me to walk around and get some exercise. I enjoy it.



**China Trip with UAB** – For years China has been on my bucket list. My brother, Bruce, teaches at UAB and often takes students overseas to combine business field trips and tourism. He has invited us before, but this year we had a clear calendar in late May and enough air miles to cover for the flight. The flight took us right over the North Pole and down through Russia, landing in **Beijing**. There we saw the Forbidden City, Imperial Palace, Tiananmen Square, Temple of Heaven, and the Hutongs. An overnight train ride in a sleeping car took us to **Xi’an** where we saw the Terracotta Warriors, the Great Wall, and Mount Huashan. Thankfully, Liz wouldn’t let me do the plank walk on the side of a 1,000-foot sheer cliff. The adventure of going to Mount Huashan by ourselves was the best. Without speaking Chinese, we walked, rode the subway, exchanged money, took the bullet train, caught a taxi, hiked, caught a bus, and rode a cable car to the top, where we hiked some more! Next, we rode the 170-mph bullet train again to **Shanghai** where we visited the Yu Garden, the Bund (historic waterfront), Nanjing Road, Jade Buddha Temple, and rode the 270-mph MagLev Train to the airport on the way out. One memory—Liz wanted her picture made with every dragon we happened upon. I’m good with that—we just don’t have many dragon statues where we live!

**Andy & Siena Tie the Knot!** – On June 16, Andy and Siena exchanged vows at the McLeod Plantation on James Island, part of Charleston, South Carolina. I was honored to do the ceremony for them. It was a small ceremony in a beautiful location, and of course, the bride was beautiful. We enjoyed spending time with Siena’s family and friends, and we ate well during our time there. Andy is a mechanical engineer and works as a Process Development Manager with SKF in Charleston where they make precision ball bearings for industrial applications. Andy is in a factory manager training program and is in Sweden as we speak. Siena found a job in Charleston with a local accounting firm. She enjoys that more than the mutual fund accounting with Ernst & Young in Philly. Andy and Siena enjoy time with their Husky, Kody.



**Mission Trip to Ecuador** – In June, six days after the wedding, Liz and I led a mission trip to Cuenca, Ecuador. On those trips, we work with local churches to help them evangelize their communities and work to establish new home Bible studies with the ultimate goal that they become churches. For quite a few years I’ve been studying discipleship, realizing how difficult it is compared to the way Jesus made disciples. He spent all day, every day with his disciples, yet when we disciple someone here in the US, it stresses us to get an hour or two a week. As it happens, we led a guy named Antonio to Christ, and he had time to go with us and be part of our team. Before long, Antonio jumped right in. Seen in the picture here, Antonio is sharing a Bible verse with an apparent Steelers fan who owned a shop in Cuenca. The reason Antonio had time is that was that he had yet to find a job. He had recently migrated from Venezuela where the Socialist government brought the country to the brink of financial ruin. He and his wife could no longer support themselves and two children on what they made, so Antonio left them to work and

send money back for them. He can do odd jobs, but it takes a few months to get the paperwork to be able to hold a full-time job. Please pray for Antonio and millions of others suffering still in Venezuela where food is in very short supply even if they had money. Venezuela is near to our hearts because Liz served as a missionary there for two years between college and marriage, and Caracas is where we were engaged.

**And Back to Maine!** – One of our favorite places is visiting the coast of Maine and Acadia National Park in Bar Harbor (Bah Hah’ba). Plans for the trip originated over dinner with our good friends, Tom and Glenda Smitherman. When we saw that JetBlue, our new favorite airline, was offering \$52 flights to Boston, we couldn’t resist. Yes, that was a one-way fare, but still incredible. We enjoyed historic and scenic sites in Boston, Gloucester, Rockport, and Ipswich, Massachusetts, the Strawberry Banke Museum in Portsmouth, NH, and then on to the Portland Head Light, the Portland (Ship) Observatory, LL Bean in Freeport, the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath, the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, Land’s End on Bailey Island, Belfast, then on to Acadia National Park. After that, we headed inland. Glenda wanted to see a real, live moose and we all wanted to see colorful leaves. We enjoyed the drive, the beautiful leaves, and shopping at The White Elephant in Strong, Maine. We ended up as far north as Rangely, Maine, and came back into New Hampshire near Lancaster, then followed I-93 back to Boston. We finished the Freedom Trail that we’d started the first day, which included the Old North Church and the USS Constitution.



Fisherman's Memorial Monument, Gloucester, MA with Tom and Glenda Smitherman

**Jay and Liz. More of the Same.** Other than the fun travel this year, our boring lives continue. Okay, not so boring, but not much new. Liz continues her three jobs with e3 Partners Ministry: Strategy Director for Ecuador, Senior Trip Leader leading church trips to Ecuador, and part-time office manager for e3 Medical based here in Birmingham. Jay continues to serve as Adult and Small Groups Minister at The Church at Brook Hills, that just voted to build a new building for children and adults. Liz and I are involved in two small groups--an on-campus group on Sunday mornings for Parents of Teens, and a multi-gen group in our home on Sunday nights. During the summer, both groups led a neighborhood Bible club for kids we call “Rock the Block”. The relationships built in these two small groups is a real blessing. Also, I’m enjoying disciple-making with three guys at church. We share what God’s teaching us in Scripture, challenge one another to obedience, and memorize Scripture together.



**Most Embarrassing Moment** – As you likely know, I’m a big Atlanta Braves Fan, but I low-key boycotted for a couple of years, not being happy with the organization trading away some really good players. I knew I’d be back, so I thought Liz and I would go to opening day in April. I really wasn’t all in yet, but wanted to see the new stadium they’d moved into a year earlier. Well, the Braves were down 5-0, I had to work the next day, and thunderstorms were on the radar rolling in. Come to think of it, as we left, I followed a guy into the ladies room, but that wasn’t the embarrassing thing I was going to say. After leaving the game early, we came to find out the Braves had rallied to win the game. This game was the start of what ended up being a great season for the Braves with Ronald Acuna, Jr. and Ozzie Albies, not to mention Freddie Freeman and Nik Markakis. You hate leaving a game like that. About three months later at the wedding, Andy’s best friend Andrew, also a Braves fan, asked me if I’d been to a game this year. “Yes,” I said, “we went to Opening Day.” “You didn’t leave early did you?” he replied. What could I say? I was a loser! But the Braves did put a free tomahawk in every seat, and we had empty seats around us, so I came home with ten foam tomahawks. Winner! I later took missionary friend, Charley Janney, back to another game.

**You Have Blessed Our Lives!** - Sending Christmas cards & letters is one of our favorite Christmas traditions. You are among the friends who mean so much to us. Even though we might not get to spend time with you throughout the year, we value your friendship! We’d love to hear from you as well, so please stay in touch as we pray for one another through good times and bad!

*May the joy of knowing Christ be yours this Christmas season!*

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4:9-10

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Dragons In China



Heading to Ecuador!



Jay taking pictures of the surf at Acadia National Park, Maine