

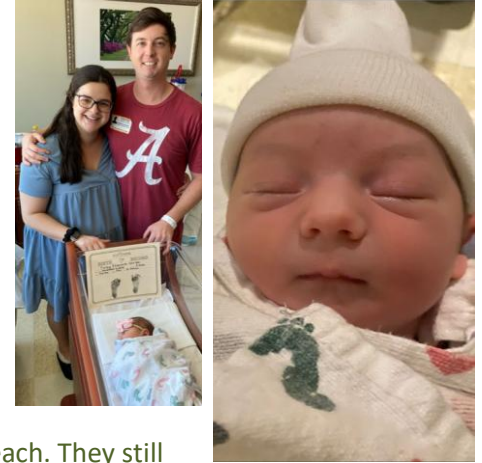


# Greetings From Jay & Liz 2022

We hope you are well and enjoying the Christmas season! Christmas is a time that we think about friends and family, and we want you to know that you are a real blessing to us! This edition is authored by Jay, with input from Liz (and the kids).

After doing this newsletter for a couple of decades, I've realized that it has turned into a nice family history when we put them all together. It looks like Christmas cards are going the way of the dinosaur, so maybe electronic delivery is in the near future.

**BIG NEWS** – We are grandparents now! Finley Elizabeth Gordon arrived on November 2 to Andy & Siena in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina. (7 lbs, 2 oz, 19 inches long) We got to see her soon afterward and are really excited to be grandparents. Liz got to spend a couple of weeks there to help out. Finley is doing well and ready for her first Christmas. Andy started a new epoxy flooring business this year, hired three employees, and it is going well. After maternity leave, Siena will return to work as an accountant. They have two pups, Baylor and Sheffield.



**EMILY & DANIEL** – Like us, Emily and Daniel are lovers of the beach. They still chase after three pups (Albie, Ellie, & Sage). It's great that they also live here in Chelsea and get to join us for dinner and board games every few weeks. Emily loves to play Scattegories, but I try to talk her into Catan or Ticket to Ride. Daniel is an insurance adjuster and Emily does office management. Emily finally held still for a picture with Daniel at the beach.

**ALASKAN CRUISE** – Liz and I went on an Alaskan cruise aboard Royal Caribbean with Kenneth and Teresa Shaw who have been friends since our days at Westwood. Seeing God's beautiful creation was awesome. We flew to Seattle early and drove down to Multnomah Falls in Oregon. Part of that drive's purpose was to be able to visit all 50 states.



**RENTING OUR HOUSE** – We had kicked around the idea of renting our house during the Regions Golf Tournament the second week of May every year. I listed it last year and nothing happened. I forgot to change it this year and an inquiry came through for the same dates we were going on the cruise. We made it happen, and it paid for our cruise. I'm not a golf fan, but when I mentioned the renter at church,



someone said, "Gary Pavin's renting your house!!!!?" I found out he had actually won the US Open a while back. His flight out was cancelled and he asked about another night. We settled on a signed golf ball.



**CALIFORNIA** – I traveled alone a couple of times this year. In June, I went to the Southern Baptist Convention in **Anaheim**, but flew out early for a stop in **San Francisco** where I finished my first bucket list—seeing a major league game in all 30 MLB cities. Before the game I fulfilled another dream of driving down Hwy. 1 through Pebble Beach down to Big Sur, pictured at the left. I didn't have time to play a round of golf, so I saved \$650.

**EGYPT & SLOVENIA** – In October I went on a mission trip to Slovenia, but made a detour to Egypt where I visited some friends, one of whom used to be my assistant. Seeing the pyramids that had been there for hundreds of years when Moses saw them was remarkable. The main part of the trip was a week in Slovenia with missionaries who used to be in our Small Group. There were thirteen of us, mostly from our Small Group. Unfortunately, somewhere along the way, I picked up COVID for the first time and spent 3 days in quarantine until I tested negative. I got to watch The Chosen all over



again. (You need to see The Chosen. It's free to stream.) The picture at the right is Lake Bled in Slovenia. The country is really beautiful.

**JOBS: CHURCH, e3, BUG JUICE, & MORE** – Liz retired from e3 this year and went to work for Bug Juice Gardens, a plant nursery. As you know, she has a green thumb so is right at home there. Her parents are doing well. We celebrated her dad's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday this year. I'm in my 8<sup>th</sup> year as Adult and Small Groups Minister at The Church at Brook Hills. Tara, our dog, is somewhere near 15 years old and still feisty, although she is nearly completely deaf. Now Liz has to put up with that in Tara and me! : )



**SPORTS UPDATE & DAD** – For posterity, I have to do the annual sports update. That reminds me that we've been reading some "love letters" from my dad to my mom when they were in college. My mom equated his love letters as a "Mississippi College Sports Update". We concur. : ) It was exciting to see the **Braves** catch the Mets in the final series of the year to win the division, although playing without Freddie Freeman this year; he's now a Dodger. I did make it to an Atlanta game this year to get a free, replica championship ring from last year's World Series. The first 40,000 fans got one. The man beside me was number 40,001.



**WORLD GAMES** – Also on the sports front, the World Games came to Birmingham this year. Our church staff had the opportunity to volunteer as part of our work. My role was to be a VIP driver, shuttling international sports federation officials, etc. I got to meet some Slovene athletes, but this picture is with the Ukrainian Kick-boxing team. The Ukrainians were received as heroes in Birmingham as they are waging a valiant fight against the Russian invasion of their country.

**OUR SMALL GROUPS** – We really enjoy our involvement with two small groups we lead or co-lead.

One is an empty nester group on-campus on Sunday mornings. The other is a Sunday night group in our home. The Sunday morning group has grown and grown and we'll be multiplying at least once in 2023. We had a record 35 people present this past Sunday. **Our Verse of the Year:**

*Pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 2 Timothy 2:22 (ESV)*



**DISCIPLESHIP PASTORS NETWORK** – I help coordinate a monthly meeting of church staff members who lead adult discipleship in their churches in the Birmingham area. Each month we gather for lunch, sometimes with a program and sometimes to just ask questions of one another and share ideas. It's really rewarding to network, encourage one another, and develop close friendships with these men and women.



**DISCIPLE-MAKING** – Liz and I are both involved in discipleship groups. These D-Groups are made up of people who seriously want to be mature in Christ and commit to a season of intentional, highly-encouraging spiritual growth. Meetings include sharing highlights from a Bible reading plan, prayer, Scripture memory, equipping, assignments, and accountability. The groups contain 3-5 people (same-gender) and are usually characterized as closed for a season, high-expectation, limited in length (12-18 months) with an expectation to prayerfully consider reproducing the experience with others after it ends. If you'd like to see the plan, let me know. If you'd like to be in one, maybe I can help.

**WE MISS SPENDING TIME WITH MANY OF YOU!** - Sending Christmas cards and letters is one of our favorite Christmas traditions and a way to stay connected with many of you at least once this year. Even though we might not get to spend time with each of you, we value your friendship! Despite all the fun stories above, everything wasn't awesome for us this year. It never is. We experience ups and downs just like everyone, we just didn't write about all those times. We'd love to hear from you, so please let us know how life is going and how we can pray for you.

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