

# Gordon Christmas Letter

(Authored by Jay.)

# 2025

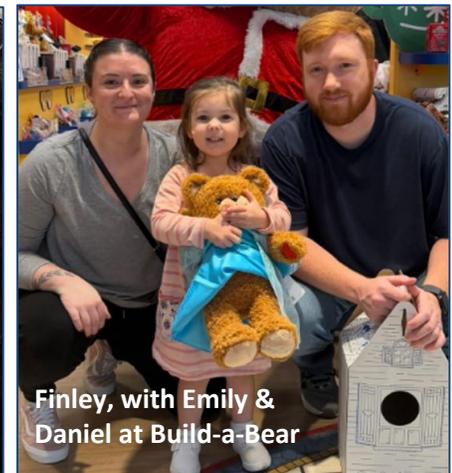
## Greetings From Jay & Liz

We hope you are well and enjoying the Christmas season. At Christmas, we think about family and friends, and we want you to know that **we value your friendship.**

**A Better Year** - We started last year's letter sharing that 2024 had NOT been a stellar year - Liz spent most of the year in a cast, boot, or recovering from breaking her foot twice, all to discover she had Osteoporosis. We're happy to share that the latest bone scans showed **much improvement** after a year of bone-building medication. She will remain on a maintenance dose the rest of her life, but she is able to work again at the garden shop, and on a recent trip, she walked 8 miles in a day with no pain!

**New England & Canadian Cruise** – In October, we did a Royal Caribbean cruise out of Boston with Kenneth & Teresa Shaw and Ronnie & Shela Graley. Some ports and favorite memories were **St. John** (river flowing backward at high tide), **Halifax** (quaint fishing village, Peggy's Cove, pictured above right), **Sydney** (where WW2 Allied convoys left as they crossed the Atlantic at risk of being sunk by German U-boats), and **Portland, Maine** (site of the most pictured lighthouse in America). Before the cruise, Liz and I drove up into the White Mountains of New Hampshire to see the fall foliage, but we were a couple of weeks late. We still enjoyed some trails and waterfalls.

**Our May Family Staycation** – Years ago, we all (our kids and their spouses) agreed to do a trip together every year the week of Mother's Day. After being hit or miss the first few years, we've done better in recent years, going out West in 2023, to Tybee Island last year, and then doing a "staycation" here in Alabama this year. We picked blueberries, visited the Blue Bell Factory, ate meals together, and enjoyed a day at Tom and Glenda Smitherman's farm. Andy, Siena, and Finley came back in November, and Daniel and Emily bought Finley a Build-a-Bear, "Sophia", for her birthday.



**Atlanta Braves Close-up** – A Samford University Professor who leads the Center for Sports Analytics and also attends Brook Hills (our church) invited me to partner with the department this year for a few special events with the Atlanta Braves business team. Being a huge fan, I jumped in! The partnership included leading a devotion for the Braves staff and the Samford students in January, participating in a community service project in July, and then attending a game in September. At the game, we were in a suite with free, all-you-can-eat food. Now I'm spoiled!

**Church, Groups & Podcast** - Liz and I still lead a group on Sunday mornings at church. We enjoy our relationships there. A new couple, Brian and Misty LaFavor, joined our group this year and help with the leadership. I'm also part of a discipleship group of four men where we "spur one another on" (Heb. 10:24). Liz also does a group each week with a couple of ladies. This year, my assistant of five years, Teresa Shaw, retired. Jane Kemp is my new assistant and is doing a great job. The Great Groups podcast is still a thing. Chris Amaro, one of my small group leaders, co-hosts. We've recorded 156 episodes since 2020.

**Anniversary #40** – In July, Liz and I traveled to Colorado to celebrate a big anniversary. We had planned to visit all 4 national parks there, but Black Canyon was literally on fire and closed to anyone other than firefighters. We did get to visit the other three--Rocky Mountain, Great Sand Dunes, and Mesa Verde. Some memories were seeing moose, buffalo, elk, horses, sledding down sand dunes, and staying in an 1874 hotel, The Windsor, in Del Norte. We also had some not-so-fun moments. Just outside one of the parks, a deer sprinted across the road in front of us, but not far enough. What appeared to be maybe \$3-\$4,000 damage was actually \$29,500 after some creative fees and salvage taxes, whatever those are. We are thankful that our own auto insurance and the credit card insurance covered it all.

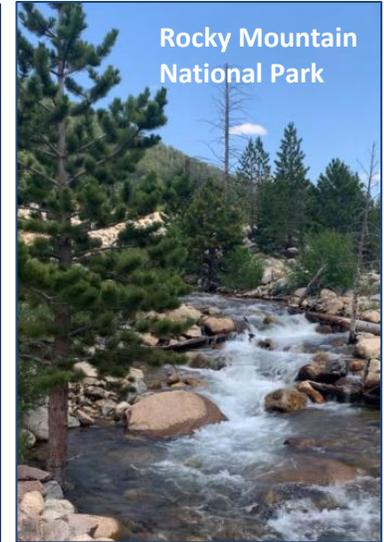


Horses on a ranch

**Charlie Kirk** – I had no idea how much Charlie Kirk’s assassination would affect me or our nation. Before then, I didn’t really follow him, although I’d seen his on-campus videos on social media and appreciated his common-sense views. After his death, I discovered his outspokenness for the gospel, as he often shared his faith in Christ. I pray that many believers, including myself, will continue to be encouraged by his boldness in sharing what matters most in life -- a relationship with Jesus Christ. Also, it has given me great joy to see God doing a great work on college campuses— starting with revival in Auburn and seeing more athletes being bold in their faith. See my Facebook for more.



Great Sand Dunes National Park



Rocky Mountain National Park

**Seeing God Work** –A young couple from our church (he was on staff) was leaving for the mission field in a Muslim-majority country. Leading up to their departure, I felt impressed to give them some money for travel expenses. His final day at church had arrived, and I needed to get it done. Two unfortunate things were factors. First, I felt sick that day and almost turned around and took a sick day. Also, it was going to require a trip to the bank for what I needed, and our bank wasn’t on the way. As I drove to work, I prayed, “God, if that impression was from you, I really need to know.” I hadn’t told Liz what I was thinking about doing, but she called me and asked if I would go to the bank and get some cash for her. “Okay, God. I hear you.” So, I obviously went to the bank. A couple of hours later, I slipped the money into a card and gave it to my friend. He told me, “You didn’t have to do that!” Later on, I laughed as I thought to myself, “Yes, I DID have to do that. God wasn’t unclear.”



Andy & Finley



Liz & Finley

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**Finley’s Memory Verse** – My favorite video of the year was one of Finley, our granddaughter, quoting what I think was her first Bible memory verse. She was giggling with pride as she shared Luke 5:17, “The power of the Lord was with Jesus.” I’ve got that on my Facebook: [Facebook.com/JayGordon4](https://www.facebook.com/JayGordon4).

**We miss seeing many of you often.** Sending Christmas cards is one of our favorite Christmas traditions and a way to keep in touch. We really miss seeing those of you who aren’t in our path anymore. Let us know how life is going and how we can pray for you. We’d love to hear from you!



*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

# Outtakes: More of 2025 from Jay and Liz that didn't make the cut...



**Small Group Mission Project** – We took a few Saturdays and renovated a room at Kings Home. It is a shelter that provides long-term services, love, hope, and opportunity for abused youth, moms, and children in need.

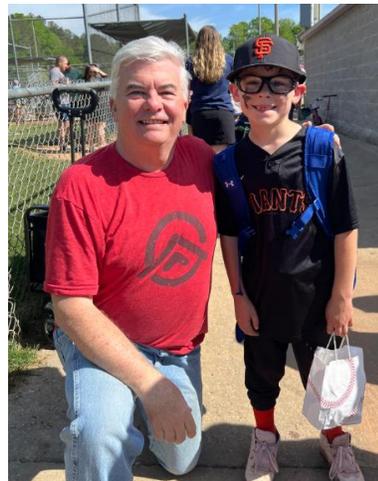
**House Rental** – We rented our house to golfers again this year during the Regions Tradition Golf Tournament here in Birmingham. Last time we were fortunate enough to be on a cruise. This time, we were not so lucky, so we stayed a few days at Liz's brother's lake house. For golf fans, which I'm not, Billy Andrade and his team stayed here, and due to rain, Davis Love III was scheduled to stay during the extra day, but they ended up finishing, so they all went home late Sunday night.

**We can't get enough pictures of Finley. : )**



**Finley Discovers Waffle House** – Sometimes the smallest things are fun to share. While we were in Charleston over the summer, we took Finley to Waffle House, which is the closest restaurant to Andy and Siena's house. Needless to say, she loved it. Andy and Siena joined us for a second trip the day we left.

The pajama picture is from Christmas 2024. What better than moose pajamas?



And finally, she was a butterfly for Halloween the last two years.

**Sports and Faith** - I (Jay) love sports and I love Jesus, so it's great when the two come together. I mentioned in the main newsletter how I've loved seeing athletes find ways to proclaim Christ. Germie Bernard, pictured here, even led a worship event at a meeting room in Bryant-Denney Stadium one night this season.

**Neighbors** – I didn't get to coach my next-door neighbor, Nolan, this year, but I did at least make it to one game. They were playing the best team in the final game of the season and came back from waaaaay behind to win! I love talking sports with Nolan, who is also a Braves fan.



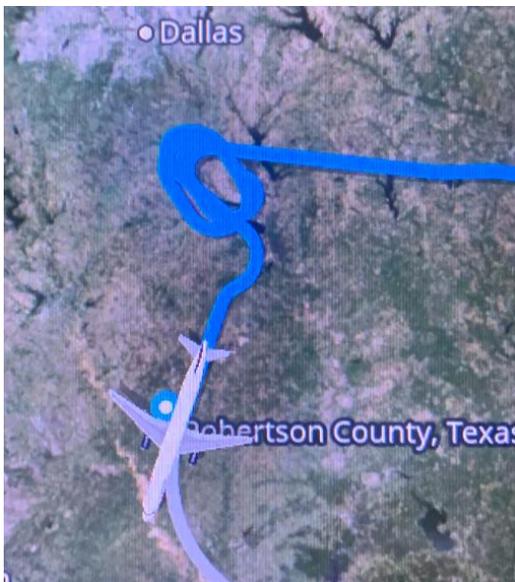
**Slovenia Baptisms** – Wade and Joan Killingsworth, a couple who used to be in our Small Group, are now missionaries in Ljubljana, Slovenia (just west of Italy and south of Austria). They left in January, 2020, just before COVID. Slovenia is the most unreached country in Europe and thus the location they picked. We have been praying for people to come to Christ there, and this year those prayers were answered. They wait to baptize people when the church does a retreat each year near the Adriatic Sea in Trieste, Slovenia.



**Emily & Sage** - Before I write our Christmas letter every year, I go through all my photos to remember what all happened. This year I went through Liz's phone too and found this good picture of Emily and Sage that I hadn't seen before. Sage passed away this year after battling cancer and actually living longer than expected.

**Travel** – Seems I (Jay) did a lot of traveling this year. In March, I went with my intern, Luke Long, to the Disciple Leaders Network conference in Oklahoma City. We drove because the round-trip flights were VERY expensive. Luke was in school at Samford University and wanted to drive back overnight to be in class on Friday. I just don't do overnights very well and probably wouldn't sleep in the car if he drove, so I found him a cheap one-way flight back and the problem was solved. It also gave me time to visit and spend some time with friends Doc and Doretta Allen in North Little Rock.

**Houston, we have a problem.** – I decided last minute to go to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Dallas, Texas. Since flights were expensive, and Frontier was not, I decided to give them a try. I drove to Atlanta on a Sunday afternoon. When I arrived, I discovered the flight had been cancelled. They had another flight the next day, but I would have missed something at noon the next day that I really wanted to attend. I thought about just going home, but decided to buy a one-way Delta flight and keep my Spirit Air flight coming home. I had used Travelocity and they often book you on different airlines to get the best price.



That Delta flight took off around 7:00pm headed from Atlanta to Dallas. The pilot said, "We've got some storms coming in to Dallas, but I think I can beat them." He did not. As you see in the picture, he said, "We didn't beat the storms, but we're going to hang out up here a while and see if it clears up. It did not. Next, he said, "We've used all the fuel we can hanging around up here, so we're going to go to Houston, fuel up, and then come back. We did not. We flew to Houston, but some problems caused us to sit on the runway for an hour or so. By the time we pulled in, the pilot says, "I'm sorry, this flight crew is timing out, so we've got another crew coming from Boston to take you back. We're not going to deplane at this time." We got hourly updates, but finally he said, "We're going to have to

spend the night here and try again in the morning. We'll depart at 7:00am. We've got hotel and transportation vouchers for you." Doing the math... Oh, did I mention it's 1:30am now? Doing the math, I realized I'd get less than 3 hours of sleep in a hotel. So, I just bedded down in the airport. After a short night, I prepared for our 7:00am departure. We did not. Finally, we boarded at 8:30am. The pilot then says, "I'm sorry we're having to wait for refueling." Thirty minutes later he says, "They got us routed almost to Oklahoma City and turning back to land from the north. You folks have been through a lot, so I'm going to ask them to change that so we can go straight in, but it will take a minute to get that approved." Next, he said, "They refueled us for the long route. Now they are going to have to take some fuel off." Next, he said, "They actually didn't balance the fuel for each wing, so they are going to have to correct that." By that time, I'm ready to say, "Let's take a chance, just steer left a little during takeoff!" Next, he says, "We've got some passengers who want to get off. If you want to get off, please do so now because we have to update the passenger manifest every time something changes." Thirty more minutes and the flight attendants announce at least 7-8 times, "If you are getting off, you have to go now." I'm not sure what all was going on in the front of the plane. Did I mention that I had looked for rental cars at 6:00am and there were none available at any agency at the Houston Airport? Those people getting off didn't know that. I'm glad that I had checked or I would have gotten off. That early in the morning, I could have driven the three hours and still been there in time. A few more things happened before we took off. The crew kept telling people, "We can't pull away from the gate until you sit down." It's all foggy now, but I remember motioning to a woman two rows in front of me to sit down. She started crying after that. I hope it wasn't my fault, but after three hours in a plane that didn't move, and announcements to get off if you wanted, I couldn't conceive what standing up accomplished when 200 other people just wanted to go to Dallas. I was tired and ill. I asked for God's forgiveness. We made it to Dallas about 2:00pm. If I had known back in Atlanta what was ahead, I would have just driven back home. But, believe it or

not, all the other meetings were such an encouragement, I'm still glad I went. I took the picture above left on the seatback video screen tracking our trip.



**Blue Bell Ice Cream Factory** – Back to happier stories, here we all are at the ice cream factory following our “tour”. Andy had to work so he didn’t go with us.

**Pace Maker** – Liz’s mom had a pacemaker put in this fall. She was in a sling for a few weeks so Liz and her brothers took turns taking care of her and staying in Jacksonville.

**Old Friends** – We got to see George and April Hicks for dinner in Northport. Before dinner, we dropped in on an Alabama baseball game. I saw Big Al and knew that Finley would enjoy seeing a picture of Poppy and Gigi with Big Al! It was a fun reunion. Later in the year George invited me to see an Alabama – Vandy football game. It was good to reconnect. He still has one kid in the UA band.

**God’s Creation** – We missed the leaves in New Hampshire before our cruise, but there are some beautiful trees at the entrance of our church.

**Williamsburg** – I forgot to mention this above, but Liz and I went to Williamsburg in February for a different conference designed for discipleship pastors in mega-churches. We got to tour Williamsburg, have meals with some new friends, and enjoy hearing what others are doing in their churches. There were probably 35-40 discipleship pastors there and we enjoyed time with spouses as well. We did have to skip the last half day because ice storms and snow were rolling in and we thought we might have to spend some unplanned time there if we didn’t get out in time. We enjoyed some beautiful snow as we drove out early that morning.

**Song of the Year** – I can’t seem to get enough of “Holy Forever”. My favorite version so far is by a couple named Kenny and Jay. I ran across them on social media. Megan Tibbits also does a great version on the harp, and I’m not really a fan of that instrument.

**Bama Baseball** – Liz and I made it to a baseball game in Tuscaloosa before having dinner with George and April Hicks. We knew Finley would like to see a picture of us with Big Al.

**Emily & Daniel** – Emily is still enjoying working for a company that provides tech support for businesses not large enough to have their own IT staff. Some days, one of the pets goes to work with her. Daniel works as an adjuster for Liberty Mutual Insurance. Emily and Daniel still chase after their



two dogs – Albie and Ellie. It’s great that they live nearby and sometimes join us for dinner and games.

**Andy & Siena** – Andy still has an epoxy flooring business and recently started a new job back in engineering with Setco, based in the Cincinnati area. He will be able to work mostly from home with some travel. Siena works full-time for an accounting firm



and does part-time work in preschool ministry at Seacoast Church, allowing her to place Finley in the church daycare. They have only one pup now, Sheffield, as Baylor passed away this year. I'm going to have to find more pictures of Andy & Siena!

**History & Braves Update** - Since we've turned this annual newsletter into a history of our family, I often enjoy giving a sports report, just for the record. The Braves were awful and I literally stopped watching after the All Star Break. It's funny that I went to a September game. Someone else had to tell me that the Braves were riding a 9-game winning streak. Well, with me there, they didn't make it to 10.

**Crimson Tide Update** – As of writing, Bama is ranked #10 and hoping to make the playoffs. It's Kalen DeBoer's second year and we're 9-2, hoping to beat Auburn and go to the SEC Championship Game. After last years annual update, Bama was relegated to a bowl game. On our cruise I saw and spoke to some Michigan fans who reminded me, "We beat y'all twice last year!" One was in the quarter-final playoff January 1, 2024, and then again in a bowl game on December 31, 2024. Oh, well. Kalen DeBoer is a winner, so even in the new era of paying players, I have confidence he can hire the right guys!

That's about all! Until next year...

May the grace and peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!