

Merry Christmas! We hope that you and your loved ones are doing well, enjoying the Advent season, and feeling thankful as you reflect on God's blessings over the past year.



For us, one of the greatest blessings of the year was welcoming the newest member of our family. **Christy Joy** was born to David and Andrea on July 29th. She is a beautiful, healthy baby, and we are so thankful for her life! It was a joy to be with David and Andrea during the labor and delivery, and to be in Fort Worth with them to help out during Christy's first week of life – special memories that we will always cherish.

The other event that stands out for 2017 is **Hurricane Harvey**, which has profoundly impacted our community. Friendswood received over 50 inches of rain in just a few days, and over a third of the homes in the city flooded. As the waters rose, our home began to fill up with neighbors whose homes had already flooded. The dozen or so people in our home were busy carrying food and water up to the attic (along with axes and saws in case we had to cut our way out to the roof) when some boats from the "Cajun Navy" arrived to take us to higher ground. As we rode the boats through flooded streets and saw homes with water up to the rooftops, we assumed that we too would lose our home, cars and possessions in the flood. After several days when the flood waters finally receded, we were surprised and thankful to find that the water had not entered our home, and that Jason and Laura's home was dry as well. We immediately began the hard work of helping others who were not as fortunate. For the next several weeks we hauled wet carpet and sheetrock, made meals, did laundry, and helped to powerwash and disinfect damaged homes. There was so much devastation that our efforts felt like trying to empty an ocean with a teaspoon, but it was amazing to see the community come together with everyone helping their neighbors, and eventually the initial cleanup was completed. However, full recovery is going to take years. The enormity of the disaster has meant that work on affected homes has progressed at a painfully slow pace. Please pray for the many people who are displaced, grieving, and under a great deal of stress.

Before the storm, we had been planning to gather as a family for Labor Day weekend. After a bit of a delay due to the impassable roads we did manage to get together, but of course the focus changed from fun and relaxation to hurricane relief. It was still good to be together; and our kids, who had grieved from a distance what was happening in their hometown, were glad to be here to be a part of the cleanup efforts for a few days. We are so thankful for our wonderful family – Sara, Eric and 2-year-old Elenore live in Columbus, OH, David, Andrea & baby Christy in Ft. Worth, and Jason, Laura, Mika (8), Luke (6) and Jono (2) just a few doors down the street from us. They are all actively serving others in their churches and communities. We cherish the times that we can be together and look forward to gathering as a family for Christmas this year.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you, our far away friends and family, especially at this time of year. We hope to hear from you this holiday season, and meanwhile wish you a joyous Christmas and God's richest blessings in 2018.

Love,

David and Joyce Byrne

Our Labor Day weekend ended up involving lots of labor! Here we are taking a break for a family photo.

Left to right: David, Andrea & Christy Moses; Joyce & David Byrne; Mika, Luke, Jason, Laura & Jono Porterfield; Elenore, Sara & Eric Hopkins.

