

Merry Christmas from Virginia & David

Blessed Advent, Merry Christmas, and a wonderful 2023 to all our friends.

2022 has been a busy year.

Travels: In March we spent 2 weeks on an island on the North Carolina coast – 1 week with each of our childrens' families during their respective spring



breaks. We hiked some in coastal forest and bogs, and saw fantastic carnivorous plants, some in full bloom. Twice we visited Congaree National

Park and were captivated by the largest remaining old growth cypress swamp in the US. We took a wonderful guided kayak tour through the swamp (1st time in a kayak!). We'll be back.

We returned to the swamp wildlife refuge in coastal Georgia we visited for our 50th wedding anniversary, this time with friends Liz and Ernie High. It was again amazing, and we plan to return at other seasons.

In late August we attended the wedding of Sarah Jane Hartman and Colin O'Hara in



Pennsylvania, and spent a couple of weeks wandering a new area to us. We visted with Liz and Ernie in their new Maryland home, friends Marilyn and Bill Oosterman in Pennsylvania, saw Valley Forge, Dingman's Falls in the Delaware Water Gap, the Johnstown Flood and Flight 93 memorials, and the New River Gorge National Park before returning home.

Grandchild News: Rowena (Ro) is a happy camper in 3rd grade at All Saints' Episcopal School. She is also taking guitar lessons, and performed (well!) at the school's talent show earlier this year.



Grandson James lived with us until June to finish out his kindergarten year at Newport Grammar School. It was hard, in different ways, on him, his parents, and us – but he thrived in kindergarten. We are all happy to be back in our own homes, but there were many upsides to the 266 days he spent living with us. We got really close with



the grandchild who lives the farthest from us. James loves hiking in the mountains, and we had time and opportunity for him to get his 50 mile award pin from the park hiking program. He is now happy and thriving in 1st grade at his local school, and we are all thankful that the COVID issues that brought him to live with us no longer apply. Merryn entered All Saints' pre-K program this year and is growing



in every way by leaps and bounds. We now get “the girls” individually on alternate weekends. At this stage of their lives each having their own “special time” with us works very well. We took Ro and James with us on a whirlwind trip to Covington to see their cousin Emily as Mrs. Potts in “Beauty and the Beast”. It was their first taste of live theatre. They were captivated.

We had all-too-short visits with nephew Christopher McClurkan & his wife Marvelliz and new son Mikey, and old friends Daniel and Mary Elizabeth Armistead. College classmate Frannie Taylor stayed with us several days, and 2 other classmates, Eileen Queener and Nancy Williard, joined us for hiking and fellowship.



We still hike weekly when possible, 341 miles so far

in 2022. Mostly we hike in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, that being where we live. We continue to find new plants, fungi, and critters, and enjoyed the most spectacular fall color season in living memory here.

We dance, but this year we are just getting back into dancing after the easing of COVID restrictions. We get better the more we do.

We still have 2 cats, Mavi & Hedrick. Hedrick turned 20 years old in August and is still doing quite well for an ancient cat.



David continues as an active photographer. This year he won 2 1st place awards in the large regional photography show at the Tennessee Valley Fair in Knoxville. David also supplies Trinity Church in Gatlinburg 2 Sundays a month.

Virginia is active in the local Heartsease Garden Club and a local book group.

We are now in the

position we have heard other retired people complain about – busier than we

ever were, having to constantly juggle our schedules. But no complaints, we are doing what we love.



May the upcoming Christmas season and 2023 be full of joyful activity for you and those you love.

