

Dear Friends,

The end of 2011 was a blur, so let's backtrack.

I received the Master of Divinity from Carolina Graduate School of Divinity on December 16th.

My dad finished a lengthy battle with cancer on November 29th. We are so glad his struggle is over. The memorial worship service at First Lutheran Church in Springfield, Ohio, was a blessed time of closure. The ladies of the church and Pastor Christian made it an even more meaningful event with their meal following the service and his focus on Christ. We were touched by so many friends and extended family coming to the service. There must have been three dozen old friends from our first pastorate. It was wonderful catching up a bit and just seeing them and our families again.

On August 26th, Juliet Grayson Vines was born to our daughter Miriam and her husband Dan. Juliet was ten weeks early and came into the world weighing two pounds, ten ounces. She spent nine weeks at Duke Hospital, where she received excellent care from both staff and her mom and dad. She has been home ever since and now weighs eight pounds, two ounces—most of it being chubby cheeks. She comes to church and sleeps through Papa's sermons.

Corinne approaches her second birthday in January 2012. She has grown into a little girl this year and is so smart. We love it when she comes to visit us in this big old house that usually has just the two of us rattling around in it. Well, the two of us plus two cats and two big dogs.

Miriam, Cristin, and Susan still work at Duke; Susan is finishing her 21st year there. Dan began working at BJ's Wholesale Club in Burlington as their main money man. Matt started his own agency: Matthew Paul Realty. I am finishing my 12th year as pastor of Graham Friends Church.

At various times of the year we had nieces, nephews, and other family come for both brief and extended visits. Two nephews and both nieces on my side of the family came for Thanksgiving. What a great time Susan and I had as they sat around the dining room table playing cards with the rest of the family. It reminded me of when I was a boy, playing cards around the Ryman table at the holidays with dad and the rest of his family.

May you have a blessed Christmas and a New Year filled with good memories.

Mark and Susan Ryman, 2011

