

Dear Family and Friends,

December 2014

Even more than other years, this year marked a time of transitions and beginnings.

John finished working for Progress Software Corporation in March. He spent the summer days reading and weeding. Books of early twentieth century fiction and history became his primary focus, and the grasses that had infested the vegetable garden made him an expert in identifying runner grass and witch grass. A few evenings each week, he plays his standup bass with Driftway Jazz, the Stringdusters, and a local bluegrass jam.

Kaelen and Ibrahim welcomed their baby girl on August 14 in Beirut, Lebanon. They named her Noor (which means light) and Ines (charity and patience). She is a lively alert baby, born under the sign of Leo, eager to respond to the attentions of her parents and extended families.

John and Joyce flew to Beirut for a visit at the end of October. By that time, Noor was two and a half months old and very responsive to attention. The weather was still summer in that part of the Middle East, perfect for long lunches on the waterfront and walks on the Corniche, a walkway that runs along the Mediterranean. Kaelen and Ibrahim took us exploring into the mountains south of the city to see the reserve of the Cedars of Lebanon (*cedrus libani*). Some of these beautiful trees are one thousand years old, proving how much the land thrives in its protected places.

John's mother Frances died on the Monday before Thanksgiving. At age 93, she had been living in the family house in Hull for over sixty years. After several falls, she had a pin inserted in her thigh, and although her rehabilitation was making progress, she announced that she was not afraid to die and that her time had come. Her bravery was a marvel and her funeral just after Thanksgiving was sad but uplifting for all who participated.

Joyce continues to divide her time between writing poetry, writing about poetry, editing *The Poetry Porch*, gardening and cooking from the garden, and singing with the Broad Cove Chorale.

Through these transitions in work habits, losing someone we love, and welcoming the arrival of our grandchild, we are amazed by all that has happened. The summer sustained one of the worst droughts in decades and the winter brought rains that filled the reservoir again. We said good-bye to Frances, our most cherished one, yet she remains alive in our prayers and memories. We welcomed the Christmas season and celebrated the birth of the Christ Child, which reminded us how every birth is a miracle. As we enter the next year, we will remember the events of 2014 as an affirmation of a kind of harmony, in which losses and gains are magnified in the experiences we share and the words we exchange, the promises that keep us going.

Best wishes for the New Year,

Joyce and John