

January 7, 2009

Dear family & friends,

We hope you enjoyed a wonderful Christmas and New Year! We are so grateful for all of you, and we pray that you will enjoy God's blessings this coming year.

The year 2008 was an exciting one for our family as we were blessed with the arrival of Esther Roanna who was born on August 12th. Esther is now almost five months old and she has a really fun personality. She is "talking" a lot and letting us know how she feels about things. Her smile can melt your heart and she is definitely the cutest baby we know (of course!)



Helen, who turned three in October, has continued to grow and develop. She has been such a wonderful gift to our family and is very popular in the church nursery with the caregivers, who love to hear her say "see ya!" She has by far the most outgoing personality of all of us. She lavishes kisses on her dolls Mei Mei and Ling and many people in her path. Helen has completely recovered from her open-heart surgery in the fall of 2007. This past year she started getting regular speech and occupational therapy to help her catch up developmentally. She has taken swimming lessons at the YMCA, and she enjoys going on outings with Grandpa Olson and big sister Laura.



Laura turned five in June and started homeschool kindergarten this fall. She is learning to read and also loves math. Most of all she loves when the teacher (mom) reads to her. She also loves when dad reads to her at bedtime. Laura has been taking ballet lessons and had her first recital in June. She has also been going to swimming lessons at the Y, and she's continued to sleep over at Grandma & Grandpa Olson's and go to Bible Study Fellowship every Tuesday night and Wednesday morning during the school year. She also had a blast at Vacation Bible Camp at church this summer, and this fall started Sunday School (with Grandma Olson as her teacher!)



Rachel has continued in her roles of a stay-at-home mom and teacher, but this year added the extra responsibility of one more kid. She keeps our house running smoothly and serves as secretary and taxi driver for all the girls' various appointments. Rachel continues to be active in the MOPS group at First Free Church and has joined a local homeschool co-op, Kingdom Builders, where she is treasurer. Rachel and Jeff are both grateful for our wonderful small group that meets weekly.

Jeff finds that life, while often too busy, is very good. This summer he fulfilled his promise to the girls to build a playhouse. And yes, it is a pink playhouse... Laura loves to tease him about being in a "girly family". He continues to work at the same company (15+ years and counting), now Thomson Reuters, where he works as a software engineer on the *Checkpoint* tax & accounting research website (checkpoint.thomsonreuters.com). Jeff is active at church, where he continues to work on the website (www.firstfreechurch.org), and helps provide computer support to the office. He is also on the leadership council and sings on the worship team. Two days before Christmas he decided it would be fun to have emergency gall bladder surgery.

Visit our website, www.olsonzoo.com and click through to our blog and photo gallery if you are interested in keeping up with us through the year.

Thanks for reading our letter, and may you know the peace that Jesus Christ brings.

Love,
Jeff, Rachel, Laura, Helen, and Esther Olson