

## Christmas Greetings to All!



This year the Christmas cards just didn't get sent, so please accept this message as our sincere Holiday wish for God's richest blessings to be yours!

### Page One: Life



Susan helped me organize the shoes! (Puffy slippers are hers!)

Given our situation, we've scaled back some of our Christmas Traditions and learned that the Season STILL has great meaning and joy! The tree is up with lights, but not the usual "overload" of decorations... and it's still pretty! There's a change-up on the outdoor lighting and, although it's "different" it's "mighty-fine" (because 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'-- and because I said so!) Those lights are always a tangled mess!!)

We have enjoyed the things we DID do, instead of trying to do "everything!" (What a concept!!). Time with family and friends are the treasures that fill the heart. Susan loves Christmas music, and these familiar carols and tunes touch those deep memories and bring joy.

### Page Two: Susan

A growing challenge is the amount of work the brain does to compensate in one area for losses in another. This "neuroplasticity" is a miracle in its own right as the brain continually "rewires" itself when it encounters a pathway that is now blocked or has disappeared. The amazing recovery of stroke victims is a common example, but I think that's what's going on here as well. As one area atrophies, the neurons reach out for other "partners" and can even "relearn" some things. However, this is not an ongoing solution or way out of the disease.



Our "joy-moments" continue each day, but there are increasing times when she needs more sleep to "catch up" on all that extra activity-- to the point that we've missed a couple events we hoped to attend. I take joy in knowing that her extended nights or naps keep her with me as long as possible.



*Some behaviors confuse me but make sense to Susan!*

### Page Three: Gary

I don't let myself get lost in the research, but every now and then I look up a scholarly article that helps me understand what's going on, where we are in the process, and how I might be able to give the best care I can. This is general knowledge, since I lay no claim to the knowledge and wisdom of our caregivers. At best, I may be able to ask better questions and speak intelligently (well, sort of) to make the most of our ongoing appointments. But we are blessed to have access to information... even if the information is not always what we want to hear. Bottom line: the disease continues to progress. And it hurts to watch and not be able to help.



Susan's  
Thanksgiving  
Smile

### Page Four: Lessons

Truth & Reality. As a Chaplain and Pastor, I have always believed we can deal with the reality of the truth... even if it is tough and hard and bad. No matter what emotional compensation or mental gymnastics a person does, you just can't adjust and go forward based on a lie.

That's why Jesus said it is the truth that sets us free! And Christmas is the truth and reality that although it can be really bad... personally and cosmically... Christ is there for us as the way, the truth, and the life... even unto the end of the age.

No matter how bad, there is HOPE because of that Special Baby! Our lives fit into His larger plan, and He WILL do all things well. And so, in the face of the "bad truth" with the "good truth" ever in mind, we Celebrate!

Merry, Merry Christmas!

Gary

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*There is never any obligation, but if you would like to receive occasional "Susan Updates" you can sign up at [www.uschaplainservices.com](http://www.uschaplainservices.com) by sharing your contact information at the bottom of the home page.*