

Northern Vermont Greetings 2023-2024

Dear Family & Friends,

Events near and far this year call to mind E. B. White: “I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve (or save) the world and a desire to enjoy (or savor) the world. This makes it hard to plan the day.” These notes point toward savoring. Though not so for many, our blessings are abundant.



The joy of the year was **Molly and Josh's July wedding** at Lareau Farm Inn (the birthplace of American Flatbread pizza) in Waitsfield. Guests came from New England, New York, Florida, Washington State, Mexico, and beyond. All four parents stood with the couple for the ceremony that combined Jewish and Unitarian Universalist traditions, officiated by Peter and Fred. A stirring surprise (to all but Josh and Molly),

and essential to the occasion, was Ian MacHarg playing bagpipes. These high skills and spirit in the Highland tradition were a nod to the Thoms family's Scottish lineage.

For their honeymoon in September, Josh and Molly traveled to Paris, Provence, and the southern coast of France. Their trip brimmed with spectacular meals, bicycle rides, cliffside drives (in a ruby Alfa Romeo – an unexpected, but not unwelcome rental car mishap), appreciation of rich history and culture, and one sunrise dash into the Mediterranean. Josh was a faithful travel correspondent, sending daily recaps each evening via text.



The other major event was the July flood, bringing profound damage to the downtowns of Montpelier, Barre, and many other communities. Our Unitarian church basement filled up, with a few inches on the first floor. We were part of the large work crew in the early days; church services did not resume until October 15th.

Through the heroic efforts of individuals and Montpelier Alive, most businesses and community organizations have reopened. Central Vermonters are nimble in supporting each other amid the



many challenges and changes presented by the flood. Caption for the photo at right, published locally and in the N.Y. Times: “A man crosses Main Street in the early hours of the July flood.”



In April, the four of us spent nine days in San Miguel de Allende in Central Mexico to visit Peter’s brother Frank and his wife, Kathleen. We valued this time spent together in the community they have called home since 2011. The city was bursting with vibrant color, the warmth of residents and travelers from many backgrounds, and remarkable Easter Week observances. Frank continues to publish books and Kathleen’s art flourishes. One of her pieces now hangs in Molly and

Josh’s apartment in West Hartford, a treasured wedding gift.

Abby continues to dedicate time to connecting with people (and nature). She supports Uriel (banking, shopping, friendship), who works on an East

Montpelier farm. He's from Chiapas, Mexico and has been away from his wife and children since 2019. Uriel hopes to return home by June. And Abby delivers for Meals on Wheels each week.



Abby tutors Soma, from Afghanistan. She and her husband live in our neighborhood; he works at the regional hospital. Abby drives Moska, a high spirited five-year-old, also from Afghanistan, to and from preschool at least once a week. Abby serves as treasurer for the church Women's Alliance and is a steadfast friend to downtown trees, watering them in the early hours on summer mornings. To the right is a picture from our summer visit to the Von Trapp garden in Waitsfield.

Peter stays involved with the church – history and records projects, shepherding summer meditation gatherings, lawn mowing, and planned giving. In the Leaf Peepers 5K in October, Peter ran the last mile alongside Cora, an eight-year-old. Of 142 runners, she was the youngest and he the oldest. Welcome for both, she finished ahead of 33 older runners; he ahead of 32 younger ones.

Abby has embarked on a new creative endeavor: making barn quilts. The plan is for a trio that will be installed on the west outside wall of our house. The first project is pictured at left, inspired by our favorite backyard visitors. Molly plans to join her for another day-long barn quilt workshop in March. Peter and Josh are gently encouraged to ponder participating.

Abby and Peter stay involved with Central Vermont Refugee Action Network, which currently supports 27 asylum seekers, and which hosted the Mexican Consulate from Boston in May. They provided services to 120 Mexican farmworkers from Central, Northern, and Eastern Vermont.

Molly is in her second year as an education law staff attorney at Community Legal Aid in Springfield, Mass. She represents young people facing issues with special education, school discipline, language access, and bullying. As part of his general surgery residency, Josh is doing two years of research through Jackson Laboratory. His focus is pediatric surgical oncology and he takes weekly shifts at Connecticut Children's Medical Center.

In January of 2023, Josh and Molly took up tennis by purchasing racquets at a local thrift store for \$3.50 each. Though hardly the optimal season to start, they have stuck with it. Peter has given some 'seasoned' pointers. Even Abby took to the court during a weekend in Essex, where we continue to share a house on the Connecticut River with her siblings. Ever the athlete, Josh seems happy to run back and forth when we play with Molly and Peter on one side and him on the other.

Looking back, Abby, significantly, and Peter, moderately, are exploring family histories. Looking ahead, seeking relinquishment (as years pass, deciding what to keep and why), this fall, Peter gave 250 books to a local library. How many remain at 16 Fuller Street is undisclosed.

