Dear Family and Friends

As years go, 2020 started out pretty well. I went to pilates, P.E.O. meetings, Bunco games—the normal stuff.  I walked in the Dome, had my nails and hair done.  Went to church on Sundays.  I took Greenlea (6) to school once or twice a week and I babysat for Ozzie (2) often.   Scotti and I had a standing weekly date at the Delft to have a quick bite with Greenlea before her dance lesson.  Yup, normal.  But then the news reported the United States’ first case of coronavirus on January 21, and the World Health Organization declared a global emergency at the end of January.  These were our first signs that things were about to change.

Still, February brought more normal events:  Shana and family were here for the UP 200 Sled Dog race.  Ozzie and I went to the Wonder Babies program at the library once a week.   I had breakfast, lunch and dinner dates with friends.  But by the end of February, the US cases numbered 60; we had our first case of community spread and our death toll was one.

In March, the wind shifted quickly.   I had been planning to fly to Arizona for two weeks, but was starting to get nervous about going.  There was so much in the news about COVID-19.  We were given daily reports of the number of new cases and deaths worldwide.  I was shaken when I heard the news about the lockdown in Italy and then again when Mike called a few days later, “Hell, no, Mom; you’re not flying to Arizona,” he said.  (Mike and his team At U Penn Medicine had been working around the clock, developing a tool to be used for hospital capacity planning for COVID-19—forgive me, I’m sure I’m being too simplistic.)  But Mike knew.

Seemingly overnight, everything changed.  Once Michigan schools closed, everything closed. No meetings, library, church, restaurants, Bunco, hair, nails, etc.  Only my ultrasound at the hospital was still on, but going there—with all the new protocols in place—was *scary*.  And, well, we all know the rest of this story, don’t we?  Greenlea now calls the time before the pandemic, the “good old days.”  (Greenlea also told me, “I can say ‘poop poop poop,’ anytime I want except in church.”  And she also recently remarked, “So, Nana, I hear you color your hair.”  But I digress.)

It’s tough to find a 2020 highlight among all the overwhelming sadness.  No big trips, no large parties, no larger than life events, but there were many little things for which we were grateful:  like our camp; it was a safe refuge for all of us.  The fourth of July found us standing in Lake Independence (so warm) close to the dropoff watching the parade of boats go by.  As we cheered and waved hello to each boat (social distancing in place), we couldn’t help but feel we had the best seats in the house to a “real” 4th of July parade.  We grilled that day and sat around a fire at night.  The bonus was seeing fireworks that night from a few places around the lake.  A parade and fireworks on the fourth this year?  Priceless.

Shana and family came in July—driving nonstop from Philly (they were afraid to stay in hotels along the way) until they reached the UP, and after they had self-quarantined, they joined us at camp for some of the hottest days of the summer.

So I continue to wear my masks (I now have an assortment), wash my hands, social distance and Zoom and FaceTime with family and friends.  I do curbside pickup for groceries and take out.  It’s what everyone is calling the new normal.  I continue to babysit for Greenlea and Ozzie as my social bubble of 5 includes them.  And for that I am so thankful, so blessed.  We will sometimes have dinner together at Scotti’s and for a change of pace, they’ll come to my apartment.  The Canadian border is still closed, but I’m looking forward to seeing Adam and Krysta sometime in 2021 (hopefully).  Jakob and Zachary are both in college and will be home for the holidays.  I think Adam said Zachary will be home in time for our next Zoom meeting. Thank goodness for Zoom; it’s how we can see each other this year.

Best news:  Shana and family are here for the month of December.  They quarantined for 3 weeks before arriving here, and they’ve rented a lovely place across from the Ore Dock.  Mike and Shana both work remotely and Raines and Pax are doing virtual schooling.  So being here works for them and us.  Of course, they’re hoping for snow.

I don’t know what 2021 will bring, but I am hopeful that it will be better than 2020.  This past year has been an especially painful one for the United States—on many levels. Selfishly, I had wished that Willie were still here—someone to take care of, to chat with, to love and hug.  I know how difficult it would have been for him with all of his doctor appointments, but you know, the heart wants what it wants.  The missing will never go away, and I’m ok with that. Virtual hugs have become the norm for some of us, but if you have your loved one with you, please give her/him a big hug for me and Willie.   I pray to God this is the last time I will need to end my newsletter with these words:  Please stay safe, wear your mask and wash your hands.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas.  I truly hope that you and your family are indeed safe, and that you are able to enjoy the gift of time with your loving family—in whatever form that takes this year. Big virtual and loving hugs,