



Merry Christmas 2016 from the Soley Family!

Dearest family and friends,

Some of the family memories I pray the Lord never allows us to forget are: playing outside in the snow, snowboarding, swimming in the early spring, playing in the beautiful summer rain, the highly competitive game of tag, working together on the yard, epic family water balloon fights, covered bridges and a mega-slip and slide with beautiful people in Iowa, making a 'Joyful Noise' with friends, the annual 4th of July at Nana Bogema's, swimming in Ft. Myers with Nana Speikers, a home-cooked, fresh seafood feast on Amelia Island, and helping the children make Christmas cookies.

We celebrated 2016, loving more deeply, living more intentionally, and finding thanks for everything - every change in plan and opportunity the Lord afforded us.

Nate – Techno Nate with his sidekick Andrew are doing their best to make our home a little *smarter*; complete with all sorts of fun accessories. It's cool, but kind of creepy if you don't know there is little computer, driven by brilliant minds, making all these things happen. He blessed us with a trip to Florida where he and the boys embarked on a guided fishing trip. To our delight, they landed some beautiful red fish and snook. He also taught the children to devein and shell fresh shrimp caught off Amelia Island. He prepared the most *amazing* seafood dinner for our family. It was beautiful to observe him as he played like a kid-in-a-candy store, along with the children in the Atlantic, trying not to drown in the huge surf. He even found a real shark tooth on the beach! He gives so much of himself for our family, and still today, as with *every* day, I look at him, touch my hand to my heart and simply whisper to myself, "My love."

All is well with me. I am celebrating little successes and, with God's grace, trying to do the next right thing. I tremendously enjoyed playing and sledding outside with the children in the cold of winter, simply hearing the crunch of the snow under my feet and smelling the sweet, cold air. Watching the boys' tricks on the snowboard and skateboard, as they entreat, "Mom! Watch this!" I pray they *never* stop asking – so proud of these brave boys! I also celebrated the spring family traditions of laying fresh mulch, with a tear of gratitude, "Praising God in the mulch!" I have been privileged to share our journey through some speaking engagements; sharing the hope-filled journey upon which the Lord has placed our family. He has been very generous in providing the words and resources to enable this - all for His glory. He cannot be outdone in generosity.

Andrew, 15 – He passed his driver's permit just after his fifteenth birthday - YIKES!!! His voice is changing, and he has surpassed me in height - reminding me of it - often. He enjoyed jumps on his snowboard, wake boarding, mountain biking, skateboarding, working on his models, and swinging on his home-made death trap - I mean - tree swing. He worked several jobs and generously bought treasures for his younger siblings; unsolicited. He participates in youth group and enjoyed two amazing, spirit-filled summer camps with great friends. He made some hilarious super-hero, action movies with Lib & Charlie. He makes hard work, fun for his siblings - he entertained the littles by giving wheel-barrow rides between loads during our mulching project. He expresses this maniacal laugh as he executes his sinister pranks (turning lights on and off with his phone) trying to scare us. We are proud of him, and he is growing into an amazing young man

William, 13 – It came as a surprise to all of us when he parted with his long, surfer-style locks; presently sporting a more "clean-cut" look. He is a truly thoughtful young man and probably the funniest kid I know. After another hospital stay for me, he thwarted many of my efforts to overdo; constantly volunteering to take-over. He enjoyed jumps on his snowboard, water skiing, fly fishing, tricks on his rip stick, and swinging on the home-made death trap of a tree swing – BOYS! He tried his first summer of corn de-tasseling. It was over 90 degrees each day. I don't think he is going to sign up next summer- just a hunch. He also participates in youth group and enjoyed two amazing, spirit-filled summer camps with great friends. He is constantly tinkering and has devised many clever creations (boom powder, home-made rockets, mini cross bow, and super-cool Lego machines) – definitely a God-given talent.

Libby, 11 – She has truly blossomed in the kitchen, and pretty much everywhere she has endeavored; including behind the camera. She prepared wonderful meals for guests (groups ranging from nine to twenty). Banana bread (a gift given us from Nana Bogema) has been my department; until this year. Libby has perfected the art, and I could not be more grateful. She is constantly barraged with requests from her little sister to "make her up." Libby has a huge fan in her little sister; and it is justified. Our little politically-

driven entrepreneur had her first Lemonade stand, and with her attempt to diversify, she also sold rainbow-loom bracelets, home-made, pro-life book marks, and cups endorsing her favorite presidential candidate – of course with a little sibling help. She also participates in youth group – *finally* – with her big brothers. She made beautiful creations using rocks and other natural elements. She also learned to sew with Nana Bogema. She planned and lead a faux Mass at home, complete with lector, altar servers, song list, and choir (again – with sibling help). She spent countless hours kayaking with her #1 fan and little side-kick (Ms. Mary). She shares her love for us through love notes; which we often discover on our night stands when retire for the evening. God spoils us through this gift-giving, sweet soul.

Charlie will be 10 in January – This is one *creative* young man. On a whim, he decided to take spare lumber, screws, and a drill to construct a wakeboard rack – and the result was *really* good. He also leveraged a spare palate to organize and store the snowboards. He spent countless hours practicing on the tramp with a wakeboard that he designed from an old swing. He loves to dance and fix his hair. He landed an awesome catfish (with Nate’s help) – I think the biggest Soley family freshwater fish to date. He made some funny movies with his siblings and was the first one in the lake in early April- brave soul. It snowed the very next day. His recent passion is designing Lego creations using gears and cogs for a variety of candy dispensers (inspired by William). Skateboarding has taken over and he spends as much time allowed on this sport. He loves it! He is perfecting his tricks (ollie, kick turns, and dropping-in, etc.) Snowboarding has been a logical offshoot from his skateboarding and he works hard at this as well. He is fearless as he executes his jumps and tricks.

Thomas George (T.G.) 8 - I am certain he is the happiest, and most gentle soul this world will ever know. His smile will soften even the hardest of hearts, as it is authentic; coming directly from his heart. This little charmer set the breakfast table as a surprise for Nate and me several times throughout the year. He was the second brave soul to jump into the lake; immediately following Charlie’s lead. Brrrrrrr. His passion is fishing, and he landed huge bass all summer long. He can be found on the dock before breakfast, rod in hand, glowing with joy. He is already scheming how he can make a living of it; explaining that we are welcome to visit him in Florida when he’s a grown-up. “That’s where the big fish live!” If it was not for his passionate respect of nature and life, I suspect there would be no bass remaining in our lake - not kidding. He is our Ranger Rick, and has a love for bonfires. He regularly collects items for fires in case he is given permission to build one (with help from dad or mom).

Patrick will be 6 in January – He has assured us that when he is a dad, he will do *all* the chores for his children, so they can play video games more often. During our morning runs, he exclaimed, as he lunged ahead of me, “I was *made* for speed!” He taught himself to ride a bike without training wheels. He, with great jubilation, landed some beautiful fish off the dock! He *is* a little fish, and swims as often as allowed. He is the object of Mary’s affection, and most every little girl he meets. He is such a smooth little fella. He is the most proficient conversationalist of the bunch; we anxiously await the application of a filter in his interfaces, however. We are working on this. On the morning of his fifth birthday, he exclaimed that he must still be four, because Mary was still as tall to him as she was the day previous. He has lost a few teeth, and when he lost his first tooth he exclaimed, “Thank you God!” and was shaking with excitement!

Mary Frances (the Goosh) - will be 4 on January 2nd – She loves dresses that twirl and she takes full advantage when dancing to Just Dance, to which she, with great concentration, loves to dance with her siblings. Her twirls in her fancy skirts are enough to make even the fanciest of princesses stand in awe of her delicacy and charm. We all chuckle when she says, disGUSTing, glubs, so adowable, brulella, (umbrella), barbara-cube (BBQ), pleba-please (pretty please), and when she reaches out her arm and pointer finger responding, “Just a second.” Mary is the first to remember to feed the cat; typically 3x the suggested amount. She is doted on and loved as the baby - and loves every minute of it. I am delighted to share, she now uses the big-girl potty – CHECK! Every coin she finds, she immediately deposits into her ‘pinky pank.’ Dora is still one of her favorites, and often asks for Daddy to print out a map for her ‘packpack,’ after which she embarks on her next adventure, exclaiming, “Bridge, river, chocolate tree!”

As we reflect on the year, we celebrate and lament how grown our children have become. We are humbled and grateful for the goodness dwelling in each of them. We are abundantly blessed by each of you - our family and friends. Thank you. God continues to teach us to be grateful and to simply do the next right thing.

May He draw each of us closer to Him as we celebrate His incarnation and the hope of what He is to bring in 2017.

Love - The Soley Family – Nate & Kristen, Andrew, William, Libby, Charlie, Thomas-George, Patrick, Mary-Frances & Angel (our kitty)