



December 2025

Greetings, Friends & Family!

Winter arrived with a vengeance right after Thanksgiving this year, with nearly a foot of snow and frigid temperatures. It was a reminder to stop procrastinating and get to work on the sending out the annual greetings.

This has been a year of ups and downs. One of the high points came early in the year when the local newspaper named me "Educator of the Year". While it likely had less to do with my accomplishments than with my longevity (now more than four decades at Bishop Garrigan), it was still a nice honor. I was especially pleased to read some glowing comments from some of my former students when the award was announced on Facebook.

Probably the lowest point of the year came at the end of summer when the church I've gone to for most of my adult life (First Congregational United Church of Christ in Algona) effectively closed. While it legally still exists as a non-profit organization, when our longtime pastor retired, the bulk of the members chose not to pursue a new minister, and they seemed more concerned about the future of the building than the ministry. While they have had social gatherings since the closure, there's been basically nothing that feels like worship and little that feels like service. I'm still officially on the church board, but my biggest involvement this fall has been searching through the archives on our website to find old sermons (some of which I delivered years ago) that are still appropriate to air on the radio show we continue to sponsor.

Since September I've been attending the local Episcopal church, which is sort a compromise between the Protestant background I grew up with and the Catholic liturgy I've come to know through Garrigan. It's also the closest church building to where I live, so it's easy for me to walk there. Even fewer people attend St. Thomas than went to the Congregational church, but the Episcopal diocese has made a commitment to maintaining smaller churches. A semi-retired female priest serves the church periodically, and they get by with lay ministry at other times. The members have been friendly and welcoming without being intrusive, and I expect I'll continue to spend my Sunday mornings there.

Also related to religion, I was delighted to be on hand this summer when my friend and former student Jake Rosenmeyer received his final ordination as a Catholic priest. Fr. Jake was assigned to one of the largest parishes in the Sioux City diocese. He's one of three priests who serve churches in Ft. Dodge and Humboldt, and he also serves as chaplain for the St. Edmond Schools. He typically says three masses each weekend, often including one in Spanish. While he certainly keeps busy, I know he is and will continue to be a great clergyman.

One of Fr. Jake's first priestly duties was leading a memorial mass for Mary McCall, a longtime English teacher who retired from Garrigan a few years ago. Mary suffered a bad fall last winter and died in March. Her actual funeral was held in Minnesota in the spring, but she had asked to have a memorial service in Algona, and of course I made a point of paying my respects. Mary was probably my closest friend on the Garrigan staff, and I really do miss her.

My high school class had a reunion this year, and I was intrigued to hear updates on my classmates. Far too many have passed away, and many of the rest are now retired. While I'm easily the most senior teacher in our building now, I'm very much still working—and as long as I remain reasonably healthy I don't plan to retire any time soon. The school has started a new building campaign, and I look forward to seeing the results of it.

In late November I began my 43rd year at Bishop Garrigan. By pure coincidence our football team celebrated the occasion by winning the state championship. Our athletes also made it to state again in girls basketball, and we won conference championships in baseball and boys basketball.

While I had nothing to do with their success, of course I cheered on the Golden Bears, and I was also the P.A. announcer for both home baseball and football games.

This past winter was my last year working with large group speech, though I did tell some kids I'd continue to work with them in the radio broadcasting category. While dropping the activity does drop my income a bit, I won't miss the frustrations of working with it. I will continue working with individual speech, which is quite a bit less stressful.

I also continue working with quiz bowl. Our numbers are down quite a bit, but we have had some success there. We did particularly well in some online contests. We also hosted two quiz bowl tournaments this fall, and both went very well. One of my favorite activities is putting together our weekly "Bear Facts" radio show (which has been on the air since 1992), and I still work with the student website (which keeps me busy taking pictures at all kinds of school activities).

While I technically travelled less this year than I usually do, the one trip I made was a big one. I flew to Japan and spent three weeks there, exploring three of the country's main islands. I'm very glad I made the trip, and it was quite interesting. That said, I don't know that I'll be rushing back to Asia again. It's just not an easy place to visit. I'm very much looking forward to another big trip this coming summer, though. This time I'll be headed to Great Britain and Ireland. It will certainly be easier to visit places where I don't need Google Translate, and I know Britain is both beautiful and historic.

It was a fairly quiet year for most of the rest of the family, with one big exception. That exception is my brother Paul, who after being widowed for a couple years is now engaged again. He and Vicky Wickett will be married next May, and they both seem absolutely delighted. Our family met Vicky (who is also a widow) at a dinner at the Amanas last summer, and she seems quite nice. I was pleased to again see all my brothers at Thanksgiving, though we had to cut things a bit short so I could get home before the storm hit.

... And that brings things full circle back to December. I listened to an audiobook version of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* on my way back from seeing my brothers, and now holiday music plays in my car whenever I'm driving around. I always enjoy putting up the Christmas decorations and thinking about how I came to acquire all the different items that glisten around my apartment.

The holidays always put a smile on my face, and I hope they do on yours as well. I hope everyone has a wonderful Christmas and that things well go well for you all through 2026.

Merry
Christmas!

David M. Burrow