

Merry Christmas Everyone!

Another busy year – but when does anyone ever have a year that isn't?? The girls are growing like crazy & we are excited to announce another little one will be joining our family at the end of April 2012! The girls can't decide if they want a little brother or another little sister, but everyone's leaning towards a brother. The doctor says fast heartbeat means girl #4 though. We'll find out in just over 4 months and be happy with whomever God gives us!

Hannah loves having Kindergarten at home with her sisters. She (usually) eagerly does work on her own and is excited with each new letter and word she learns to read. This spring, she was in a big dance recital for Betty Hayes – quite an ordeal, but she wasn't stage-shy at all. She's a busy 5-year-old this fall, having participated in both soccer and a new ballet class (she likes ballet a lot more!).

She also looks forward to church school each Sunday and is quite upset when she's too sick or we're gone for the weekend.

Samantha will be 4 years old in February and is quite the amazing little girl. She was in a Creative Movements dance class this fall, & she loved being in dance just as much as her sister. This summer, she aced her swimming lessons, even being pushed ahead to the next class since she showed no fear with the water at all! In fact, she's quite willing to try new things, including climbing a big rope ladder at camp this summer.

Sarah has been keeping us all running. She is talking up a storm and has even started to sing us little songs. She will soon be 2 years old. How did our baby get so old? She definitely doesn't let her sisters push her around – quite the opposite in fact. As I write this, Samantha is complaining that Sarah is sitting on all her books and won't share.

Amanda is busy everyday with the girls at home and is now doing homeschooling each day. Homeschooling has been a great experience so far, and we have already started to connect with other families that are already homeschooling, so the girls are never without friends and playmates. Amanda also tries to find ways to participate in ministries at church that don't keep her away from home too much. She continues to search for ways to serve the elderly, and is currently leading a monthly Bible study at one of the Assisted Living facilities in town. Amanda has also hosted a few Scrapbooking retreats for anyone at the church who wanted to get away for a day to get some scrapbooking done.



Ben still works at Epic as a software developer. He also does website work for church and a US Cellular forum, and he is working on building a homeschooling management program from scratch for me to use! He's so handy to have around. He is back playing the keyboard at church and also enjoying that.

We've been having many opportunities to make and develop several new friendships with other parents our age. It's been a little sad, though, to get close to someone and then have them leave. Within a year, we'll lose friends to Seattle, Arizona, and Texas. But we've been so blessed in the time we have and have made new relationships *because* of these friends; we wish them all the best in the days ahead. Plus, Ben's work trips sometimes offer opportunities for cheap travel, and we're just making connections all over the country!



This summer we started a big project on the entire house. After an energy audit revealed several opportunities for improvement, we started getting insulation and ventilation work done in the attic and underneath the bedroom floors. When he started poking around in the garage, Ben discovered our bedrooms were missing half the heating system – no cold air returns! With the help of some friends from church, the garage is now looking much better, and the bedrooms are warmer, and, more importantly, safer than they were with the old plywood ceiling.

In addition to swimming lessons, VBS, and some fun geo-caching adventures, this summer we went to Village Creek Bible Camp in Iowa with Ben's family. Our pastor was one of the teachers while we were there, so we enjoyed some good preaching, good food, and lots and lots of really fun activities. We are all excited to make this a regular family destination each summer.

Just as we were finishing up this letter, an unfortunate 'incident' happened to Ben on the beltline in Madison, and our little Cavalier is no more. We had been thinking about getting a van for Flessner Family Member #6, so this just moved up our timeline. A last-minute drive to Chicago and a few excellent negotiating skills later (guess who's writing *this* paragraph), and we're the proud owners of a new-to-us van with plenty of bells and whistles to keep Ben occupied!

Hope you all have a blessed Christmas.

- The Flessner Family

