

Winter Solstice Greetings

2024

Friends, family—greetings to each of you. It's snowing hard here, a few inches on the ground and we're only halfway through the storm. Finals week means scrambling to finish up the semester—grading, taking notes about what went wrong and right, organizing the filing cabinet. At the same time I am preparing for next semester and dreaming of big long-term projects. Glad to have this yearly letter-writing tradition.

Each year I read through my old solstice letters. A lot has changed in my life since December 2023. I have a new job, a new relationship, a new outlook. I'm in a much better place than I was last year. National politics are scarier than I've ever experienced, but locally things are looking great. Trying to focus locally...

In July I left the Electronics Shop for a new role in the Department of Chemistry. I'm now "Instrumental Lab Director". The move is bitter sweet, since this role was previously filled by my friend and long-time mentor Rob McClain. Furthermore, I'm going to miss the luxury of focusing directly on instrument design full time, especially in a shop with professionals such as Amber, Steve, Matt, James, Sam, Tracy, and Lauren. Still, after six years I'm happy to try something new and this position as lab director is exciting.

In May of this year I visited my friends Darien and Kaitlyn in Pittsburgh.s Highlights of the trip included the Glass Center, Botanical Gardens, and Pirates Stadium. I recommend Pittsburgh to anyone who hasn't visited.



In July of this year I visited California. Claire and Ralph have moved into their fantastic new place on California Ave. This year our "big adventure" was the Lost Coast—a 25 mile long stretch of wild coastline. We spent four days and three nights following the coast, camping on the beach or in small canyons (see photos above). It was a walk on the beach, but despite the idiom it was physically demanding. The sun was relentless, and the ocean itself provided a special challenge with changing tides. We saw wild bear, coyote, river otters, sea lions. On the way home I was able to spend time with Uncle Jim.

Home improvement continues at a slower pace than I'd like. I broke another bone this year, my clavicle, and had to get surgery again. Trying not to make orthopedic surgery into a habit. Pets are doing great. I'm still blessed by a large number of friends and coworkers locally. Thank you all for being a part of my life this year. Please—stay in touch.

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