

Van Weerdhuizen's Words

News from Ken and Chris
Serving with Wycliffe and JAARS
April 2020



Change. The word can bring excitement or dread. We've experienced both. One thing remains constant: God's faithfulness. We look back and see his hand in the past. That gives us confidence as we work through some of the current changes. And it gives us hope as we look at some upcoming major changes in our lives.

Changes for today

Like it is for you, COVID-19 is bringing changes to our everyday life. But Ken's responsibilities at work actually began changing before all of the COVID-19 impacts. In the past months, there have been several positional and internal structure changes in the aviation department. Needing a change, Ken has stepped out of his role as Aviation Operations Manager at JAARS. He's working with his supervisor and others in Aviation to firm up the details of his next role.

Added to that are other changes in Ken's health, beyond the heart and thyroid challenges from the past seven years. There's no easy way to say this, but this is our current reality. Ken has been diagnosed with the early stages of early onset Alzheimer's. I think that sentence was more difficult to write than any I've ever written. We so wish we could have communicated this to each of you personally.

We know that comes as a shock to many of you. As you might imagine, it's been something "hovering around the edges" for us for some time now. In an attempt to process this, it's helped us to look at other times of change to help us get perspective.

Changes in the past

I remember getting ready for bed on what seemed to be an ordinary evening in the Philippines. Ken tuned the shortwave radio to Voice of America, as he often did, to catch a bit of world news at the end of our day. What unfolded next shocked us. We have all come to know it as "September 11, 2001." Continuing to listen for the next hour, we commented, "Our world will never be the same. Life as we know it will change." And it certainly has!



Final blessing of translation teams in an Asian country. Photo credit: Anonymous. Used with permission.

Some of the changes have been frustrating, sad, grieving. Yet, looking back, we can see that God has used those resulting changes for good as well. Some of the forced changes affected the world of missions in general and Bible translation in particular. We've had to look for new ways of working. Local churches have taken more responsibility for reaching out to their own communities and within their own countries. They've identified church members who have been trained in translation principles. We've found new ways to work remotely so local translators can be connected to consultants who are sometimes on the other side of the globe. God brought people from faraway places to our doorsteps in this country, allowing us to bring the gospel to those who otherwise would have never had opportunity to hear it. And they can communicate it to family and friends "back home"!

COVID-19 Changes

Recently we got an email from a friend who is an advocate for JAARS in Tennessee. He has plans to represent and advocate for JAARS at several upcoming aviation and mission events. All those plans are now being held loosely. He commented, "I suspect that this emergency is going to totally change our way of life in many ways ... I am not sure if we will ever feel comfortable going back to the way we were just a few weeks ago."

Ken and I are working differently these days, too. JAARS has closed its campus with minimal essential operations still being accomplished on site. Those involved in Aviation Orientation now bring classroom instruction to students through virtual connections. But training flights are delayed for an unknown period of time. Before the current state-wide "stay at home" order, Ken and another pilot gave several of the planes a good cleaning after they were used for training flights.



Because my role as a Member Care provider for Wycliffe folks is designed to be accomplished remotely, I've just set up an office in our guest room. My work has actually increased as I communicate with members who are in various stages of trying to decide if they stay where they are or come to the US. Realities change daily and sometimes hourly. There are decisions to be made based on host-country requirements, health conditions, family needs, availability of flights out of the

country, and the list goes on. It's both a privilege and a heavy responsibility to be walking through this with "my families."



Upcoming changes

At our suppertime devotions together, it's become our custom to list three "gifts" in our lives, using some prompts. Friday night the prompts were, "A gift in a ring, a sphere, and a curve."

A ring – we listed the rings we wear as symbols of our marriage vows. Our marriage, our relationship, is a gift! There have been plenty of "for better" and plenty of "for worse" times in our lives to this point. We don't expect that to change. The other thing that is not changing is our commitment to each other and the vows we made nearly 40 years ago.



A sphere – we thought of the various spheres of influence that we have in our family, churches, work, friendships around the world, community. So many of those

are tied closely to our relationship to the Lord and the outworking of our faith in each of those spheres. You are a gift to us from the Lord!

A curve – we defined it as a change of direction. We're changing directions now, but can't yet see what's around the corner. However, we are assured of our final destination with the Lord. And what a gift that is!

I don't think we've yet fully come to terms with the changes this diagnosis will mean for us and our ministry. We're still sorting through which hopes and dreams to cling to... and which ones to hold lightly. We are clinging tightly to the promises that we are children of God and that he will never abandon us.

We are in conversations with Wycliffe and JAARS to plan a way forward for continued ministry. It's likely that we'll relocate to Michigan sooner rather than later. (That was in our thinking for closer to retirement; we both turn 60 this year so retirement is still a ways off.) It's also likely that my responsibilities and hours worked will increase while Ken's will decrease in the coming years. Beyond that we have more questions than answers... and don't always know the questions to ask. We waver between accepting this and fighting against it and trying to pretend it isn't true.

Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8) He promises each of us as his children that he will work for our good, that is, to conform us to the image of his son. (Romans 8:28-29) We are told to pray that his kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10) So we face each day knowing that God is sovereign, knowing that he will continue to work in and through us for our good and his glory.

Thank you for continuing to walk this journey with us. As we move forward, please let us know how we can be praying for you as well. We want to be part of bearing your burdens, to weep with you as you weep, and to rejoice with you as you rejoice.

Still serving with you,

Chris – and for Ken

End Stuff (with more pictures at the very end)



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(If you would like to become a financial partner, when you write a check to Wycliffe, please include a separate note stating, "Preference for the Wycliffe ministry of Ken and Chris Van Weerdhuizen, account #231901." Or click [here](#) for on-line giving. If you would like to stop receiving our newsletters, please reply and put "unsubscribe" in the subject line.)

From their Family Albums



We are thrilled to announce the coming of grandbaby #6! We're praying that Jason and Becca stay healthy through the pandemic... and that the crisis is past before the baby is born.



Eric and Rachel and boys making a Christmas memory



Don and Anna and family "social distancing" by going to the lake



We get to talk to Tim and Lauren's family on Facetime most weeks

And a few more...



Celebrating Becca as Michigan's School Librarian of 2019



Savoring a lovely autumn day with my mom



How to have a white Christmas in Michigan: come back in February! (Too many people were sick in December so we postponed one of our celebrations.) And you gotta love those hats!