



Holding on to Hope...

"Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." Hebrews 10:23

We're conscious that it's three months since we sent our last newsletter (in October) and while some will see us in person and/or receive our regular e-mail updates, others may not have heard much from us since that letter. It will come as no surprise that it has been a difficult journey for us all. Debbie and Jacob were in the Mother & Baby Unit in Winchester for a total of 69 days from 9 Sept until discharge on 17 Nov (though she spent an increasing amount of time at home towards the end). We are very grateful for the care Debbie received from the staff at the unit and for the ongoing care of many (family, friends & health professionals) in the two months since. We have learned a huge amount about mental health not least that time is a great healer and recovery is rarely a linear process. Throughout the past few months there have been good days and not so good days but we are glad to say that the good days have gradually become more of the 'norm'. There is still clearly a long way to go but our lives are beginning to return to some resemblance of normality (all be it a new norm) and we are continuing to enjoy the space afforded to us by our ministry team who are working hard in the student group in our absence.

Throughout this time we have been learning lots about patience and seeking God to provide us with the grace to make it through the challenges of each day. The overwhelming theme throughout this time however has been 'hope' and it is to 'hope' that we have clung to closely especially during these dark few months. There have been moments when we have felt like God has 'uprooted our hope like a tree' (Job 19:10) and yet time and time again the 'God of Hope' (Romans 15:13) has drawn us back to Himself as our hope (1 Tim 4:10, Titus 2:13). This hope is described by Peter as a 'living hope' (1 Peter 1:3) and by the writer of the Hebrews as an 'anchor for the soul, firm and secure' (Hebrews 6:19) and by Paul as 'Christ in us, the hope of glory' (Colossians 1:2) and that which inspires us to persevere (1 Thessalonians 1:3). This hope is about eternity but it is also a hope for here and now; so we have therefore sought to 'set our hope' on Jesus day by day (2 Corinthians 1:7-10, 1 Pet 1:13) so that we might 'overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Romans 15:13). For those who hope in the LORD will 'renew their strength' and 'will soar on wings like eagles', will run and not grow weary' and 'will walk and not be faint' (Isaiah 40:31). Indeed God says that He is "good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him" (Lamentations 3:25). We know that this doesn't mean that we will have an easy road to walk but we know that whatever difficulties come our way God is still good, God delights in us and ultimately God is for us. PTO

"To encourage students to know, love and share Jesus Christ through purposeful, intentional and reproducible disciple-making as we share our lives together in community." SOTON NAVS Vision statement, Sept 2011

"To advance the gospel of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom into the nations through spiritual generations of labourers living and discipling among the lost" Worldwide Navigator Calling Statement

A letter from a former pastor at our church reminded us “to remember in the darkness what we knew to be true in the light.” It has been a very difficult road for us to walk but even when it is felt like everything was ‘against all hope’ (Romans 4:18), Jesus has repeatedly proved Himself faithful and even in the darkest of times He has enabled us to remember the hope we profess, ‘Christ in us, the hope of Glory.’

The Road to Recovery

The advice and encouragement Debbie has had from the various health professionals has been twofold; resume everyday aspects of life but don't overdo it. On the one hand relationships and social situations will only get harder if avoided so we have been trying to take small steps forward. So for some time we have tried to work at achievable goals such as inviting friends/family over for dinner, getting back to Church, getting out walking in the countryside and most recently Debbie taking more responsibility for the children during the mornings. Suffice to say that Debbie has done amazingly well and continues to encourage us all with the steps forward she is taking. On the other hand it has been important for Debbie to get the rest that she needs and so Steve continues to get up with the kids each morning, Grannie takes each of the kids out for adventures during the week and if we've had a busy day(s) we tend to try and follow them with more restful days.

Lots of people have been involved in helping us but in particular we had huge help from Debbie's family with the kids, we have had a very supportive home-group (which we host at our house twice a month), some fantastically encouraging Navigator leaders and some great friends who have regularly got alongside both of us. Words cannot express our gratitude to the many people who have sought to help, encourage and pray for us. Thank you.

With the coming of the New Year and Debbie in a place to start doing more with the kids on her own, I (Steve) have been able to return to work part-time. Full-time child care has taught me so much but if you know me well you will know that I have been itching to get back into things for a while. Debbie's psychologist pointed out that “you can care too much” and it's clear that I need to step back a bit to help with Debbie's ongoing recovery. I am still doing the school runs and am around in the challenging post-school, dinner and bedtime slots. My focus for some time will be mostly local initiatives so that I am around where needed but getting on with some projects too. To this end it will come as no surprise that we are planning to take team to Norway & Latvia again this summer (more details in our next letter) and we are devoting some time at the moment to planning and recruitment. I (Steve) will also be investing some time in a study project on the subject of ‘Hope’ and am hoping to plan the Discipleship week programme in Norway around this theme. We will let you know how we get on!



Friends from NAVS



Home Group



Please pray over the coming months:

- Please continue to pray for Debbie's ongoing recovery; it feels like we are starting to see the “spacious place” we referred to in the last letter within touching distance but there is still a way to go.
- Please pray also for the kids who have been fantastic and seem to be doing really well in all of their various groups and activities; Ben at School, Naomi at Pre-school/Ballet & Sam & Jacob at home but growing fast.
- Please pray for a good term as we continue to ease back into the things/people we have been involved with over the past few years. Pray that we would strike a healthy balance between rest, people and activity
- Pray finally for a good time of rest at Easter as we holiday as a family of six for the first time in the Lake District and as Debs and I celebrate 10 years of marriage in March.

To God be the Glory, All our love Steve, Debs, Benjamin, Naomi, Samuel & Jacob

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