



Light out of the darkness...

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." James 1:17

At the beginning of a new year we've been reflecting on the past few years; without question they have been the most difficult years of our lives and yet amidst the challenges there has been much blessing.

Family 'flourishing' – The picture above was taken last term and is a great reflection of the fun that oozes from our four wonderful children. Each of them is such a blessing and we count it a huge privilege to watch them first hand growing and maturing. In particular 2015 was a huge step forward for their love of mountains and we had some amazing family times in the Lakes and in Norway. Ben (Year 2), Naomi (R) and Sam (Pre-school) are all doing really well at school while Jacob continues to grow up faster than we can keep up with! It is quite incredible to see how well these guys are all doing especially given the challenging years we have had! We are also pleased to announce that we are expecting a 5th child in May; we are still getting used to the idea (it was not exactly planned) but the kids are very excited about the prospect of another brother or sister. You can read more on this in Steve's recent blog post entitled Unexpected Blessing; <http://www.the-mcclures.co.uk/2016/01/13/unexpected-blessing>

New and 'Maturing' Faith – Many of the godly men and women of Scripture were also people who lived a life of suffering. A lesson that we are learning is that the 'crucible of suffering' is a place God uses to grow us in faith. Out of the darkness God brings much light. It is almost 3 years since the tragic death of our friend James Witham. We still miss him but have heard of at least 5 people who have come to know Jesus as a result. His death triggered a journey that has been anything but easy and yet we are starting to see how God is deepening our faith, sharpening our vision and priorities and teaching us to depend more on Him. The Apostle Peter speaking about suffering 'all kinds of trials' writes *"these have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed (1 Pet 1:7)."* Isn't that remarkable? Our faith, which is of greater worth than gold, is also refined in the fire and in so doing is proved genuine. As we begin to emerge from the 'refiners fire' it's clear that God has been teaching us much about Himself and doing much in us that will prepare us for co-labouring with Him in the years ahead!

Building foundations...

As we give our time in ministry to invest deeply in a new generation of student labourers its great fun to do this alongside the new generation of little ones that God has been blessing us with. Returning to student ministry has not been an easy transition to make but it has caused us to bring a new mindset on ministry. We see that we increasingly need to work through others and are so grateful to Lydia Clarke and Adam Collett who have been serving alongside Steve in the leadership of the ministry. This spread of roles and responsibilities has been really positive and is ably supported by our Student and Graduate Leaders. Last term Steve delivered the up-front content at our fortnightly NAV nights but this term we have shared it out across the team as we think about the nitty gritty of what it means to live out the Christian life. The students have been hugely positive about the change in format and have been enjoying the input and interaction arising from these times. Our Bible study groups have also been going well and it has clearly been a good step for those on our team who've been leading those groups. The groups enjoy much flexibility and autonomy to meet, study the Bible and pray together. Please pray for both the groups and the ministry nights as we continue meeting this term. For the ministry this past term has been about consolidation and building foundations, a time for growth in maturity amongst those God gave us in previous years. At times there was frustration; in particular new people came early on but did not keep coming. Then we were encouraged by Micah 7:11 *"The day for building your walls will come, the day for extending your boundaries"* and were encouraged that the time for such growth would come. Please pray for this over the coming term.

Please pray over the coming months:

- Please continue to pray for good health for Debbie during the remainder of her pregnancy; give thanks for all the help she has had (Debbie says she currently feels the best she has in years) but pray for the stress free birth of baby #5 and a special time with our new gift from God!
- Pray for our family (and support network) as six becomes seven asking God to fill our home with blessing and help us put Him at the centre of all of our lives.
- Give thanks for the foundations laid in the student ministry this past term. As we seek to help the students work out the vision for intentional disciple-making, please pray for much fruit both in them and in those that they in turn will go on to help.
- Finally please continue to pray for us as we work on summer plans and are involved in a variety of different contexts (conferences, speaking engagements and Steve's role on the International Missions Team).

To God be the Glory,

Steve, Debs, Benjamin, Naomi, Samael, Jacob & Bamp



Spring Term Diary

Sat 16 January

Southern Quadrant Day in
Southampton (all)

Tues 19 to Thurs 21 Jan

Bergen, Norway (Steve)

Mon 25 January

Student ministry Leaders
community, Edgbaston CC
Birmingham (Steve)

**Thurs 28 Jan, 11, 25 Feb, 10,
17 Mar**

Ministry Evenings with the
students at our home

Mon 1 to Fri 5 February

Helping at Southampton CU
Events Week (Steve)

Fri 26 to Sun 27 February

National "Big Weekend" in
Blackpool (Steve)

Sat 26 Mar to Sat 9 April

Family Holiday in the Lakes



Our Address: 53 Harefield Road, Southampton, UK, SO17 3TG

Home Tel: 02380-677557, Steve Mobile: 07852-233960, Debs Mobile: 07767-145012

Email: steveanddebs@the-mcclures.co.uk, Skype: steve.debs.mcclure, Twitter: mcclure1978 / mcclure1980

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