



## The Journey so far...

*“Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.’ So I [Jeremiah] went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me. He said, ‘Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?’ declares the Lord. ‘Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.” Jeremiah 18:2-6*

Looking back over the past 2 years it is clear that the LORD has been leading us through some of the hardest and most challenging times either of us has known. Losing James in Norway (June 2013) came at the culmination of some particularly tiring months for us both and necessitated a rebalancing of responsibilities. It was also the trigger for Debbie that began a process which led into darkness and the subsequent mental health issues she has been struggling with over the past year. In the midst of all that, the necessary stepping away from our previous responsibilities with the Navigators student ministry in Southampton (and the stepping up to care for Debs and the family) has not been easy either especially for Steve. You will be pleased to hear (if you don’t see us regularly or already receive our e-mail updates) that Debbie has been making fantastic progress and is doing really well. We are still working on getting a good balance between the two of us in regards to childcare, but suffice to say that Debbie is playing a full role with the family and is often out and about with friends. We had an excellent 10<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and very refreshing 2 week family holiday in the Lakes during which we all did lots of mountain hiking.

As we’ve reflected on the lesson God taught Jeremiah through the potter and the clay (see above), it is sobering to think about God’s Sovereign control of our lives. God we are told ‘does what He pleases’ (Dan 4:35) is working to bring about good for His people and bring glory to Himself. We don’t claim to understand what God has been doing in our lives but a few things are already coming to the fore. Firstly God has been teaching us the nature of Hope; not a wishful thinking kind of hope but a confident and secure expectation based on the promises of God for both the present and the future. It’s a hope that is based not on ‘something’ but rooted in ‘someone’; rooted in the person, sacrifice and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Secondly God has been drawing us little by little to Himself, enabling us to know Him better, increasing our faith and strengthening our character. We are at different places with this but it is clear that this is something God is teaching us, “the more intense the pain, the closer the embrace (Joni Eareckson-Tada).” We’ve been in that place of struggling to see the light amidst the darkness, we’ve felt the anger and disappointment caused by the things we’ve been through and we’ve experienced the emptiness from having to let go of things which had become too important in our lives. Can the LORD not do with us what this potter does? Please continue to pray for us as the journey continues and God continues to lead us, teach us and mould us.

## The next steps...

The question we are most being asked at the moment (aside from 'how are you doing') is 'what next?' There are still challenges day-by-day but for the most part it would be true to say that we are in a better place than we were at this time last year. We are generally people who find uncertainty and a general lack of a plan to be a particularly testing place to be (esp. Steve). We are seeking God as to what next and Steve is going through a 360degree review and some motivational analysis/career coaching. Despite the uncertainty this has taken some of the pressure off and so in following the Lord's leading on this we are focusing our energies on other things. Hence Steve has been working on his study project on 'Hope' and stage 1 of that substantial project (i.e. study, reading Christian literature and writing a series of studies) is now complete. Steve has a new blog (hosted @ [www.the-mcclures.co.uk](http://www.the-mcclures.co.uk)) and he will also be part of a team who will teach on Hope at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Elvheim Discipleship week. While we are still motivated to be involved in a similar kind of community based disciple-making that we were involved with previously we are open to God's leading wherever that leads. If you have ideas we would love to hear them.

Steve is also involved with the planning of our 2015 Norway trip; we are still not completely sure who is with us by way of 'team' for the trip but we are grateful to those who have already signed up for Discipleship Week. It looks like being a slightly smaller group this year but that may be no bad thing. Ideally Steve would begin a new assignment in September (being discussed as part of the above process) but in the meantime he is giving himself to a few young men that he sees regularly in the evenings, supporting the ongoing work of the student ministry where needed and continuing his work on Hope and Norway planning.

Debbie on the other hand is having a great time with Jacob (just turned 1) and Samuel (3 in September) during the daytime whilst Steve works and then we generally have family time after school. Benjamin continues to thrive at school (year 1) and Naomi is preparing to start at his school in September. Where possible we are taking every opportunity to walk in the hills and countryside. We managed quite a number of Lake District summits at Easter and are trying to get out as much as we can. We are most excited about returning to Norway and hiking there in the summer.

### Key dates:

#### Sun 31 May

Jacob's dedication at ABC (9:15am) followed by 'Open House' at ours

#### Sat 6 June (TBC)

End of Year Student Ministry BBQ

#### Sat 20 June

Memorial BBQ for James Witham

#### End of June

Steve meeting with Thompy Wright to discuss 360 review feedback

#### Sat 18 July to Thurs 20 Aug

McClure's @ Elvheim in Norway **Fri 24-Fri 31 July**

Discipleship Week @ Elvheim on the subject of "Inspired by Hope"

#### Sat 1 Aug

Patrick Noonan's wedding (Norway)

### Please pray over the coming months:

- Please continue to pray for Debbie's ongoing recovery; pray especially for increasing levels of energy, less anxiety and a greater sense of God's presence and trust through these coming months
- Please pray for a special time for us as a family in Norway; that we would strike a good balance between rest & refreshment and our roles with the variety of people coming to be with us at Elvheim Hostel.
- Please pray for Steve who has been struggling with High Blood pressure over the past 6 months and following various tests is now starting a course of medication. Please pray for further improvement over the summer.
- Please pray for our next steps that we would hear God's voice clearly and respond accordingly. Pray for a role which complements our gifting and calling. In the meantime please pray for peace and patience.

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

Elvheim Discipleship Week 2014



Southampton Student Ministry Weekend away, Isle of Wight, 2014

Family out for fun at Motisfont



"Elvheim" hostel, Home Sweet Home in Skjolden, Norway



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