



God gives and God takes away...

"He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from my powerful enemy, from my foes, who were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me." 2 Samuel 22:17-20

It's been a little while since we last sent out a newsletter and far more has been going on in our lives than we have the space to write about here. We had a great time in Norway over the summer; Discipleship week was excellent, the France & Norway summer team had a really good time (see attached report from Stephen) and afterwards we had a great time together as a family. Thank you so much for your prayers for us throughout the summer.

At the end of our time in Norway we were excited to return home, but it turned out to be quite a difficult homecoming for Debs in particular. Since the events of the previous summer (when one of our student team, James Witham was tragically killed in a hiking accident), Debs has been struggling with her mental health. Initially this was in the form of post-traumatic stress in the months following James' death and later pre/post natal depression before/after the arrival of young Jacob. Debbie was supported over this period by a variety of different people including the local NHS Perinatal team, and shortly after our return home they suggested Debbie spend some time in their Mother & Baby Unit in Winchester. Debbie (along with Jacob) was thus admitted to the unit on Tuesday 9th September and has been receiving treatment and support there ever since. In order for Steve to focus on supporting Debs and caring for the rest of the kids, the Navigators have allowed him to step out of his leadership of the student ministry and take 'compassionate leave'. Steve has been well supported by a number of others (esp. Debs parents) both on a personal level and with the family. So far both home and family remain in good shape ☺

Debbie has been making good progress in recent weeks and the doctors are pleased with how she is getting on. She has been home a couple of times during the past week and we have had numerous trips out to coffee shops and garden centres. Recovery is a slow process and we both need to keep reminding ourselves to take one day at a time. The verses above (also Psalm 118:5 & Job 36:16) have been very special to Debs over the past year and particularly this idea of being brought into a spacious place. Please join us in asking God to bring her through this darkness and into such a 'spacious place.'

"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

The heading on the previous page has particular resonance for us both. For the time being life has been completely turned on its head both in terms of the distance between us (the unit is a twenty minute drive from our house) and in terms of the absence of ministry. This is the 10th year that we've been leading Southampton student ministry and its absence leaves a huge sense of loss. The past year and a half has been particularly hard for us but we are still trusting God to work out His purposes in our lives through all of this. We do not know where God is leading but it is already clear to see the way that God has drawn us together as a couple and to Himself. We are conscious that all of this is news to some while others will have known for a while; we are so thankful to those who have written cards, helped with the kids, brought round meals and expressed love in so many other ways as well.

Entrusted to faithful men and women...



Much of our time and energy over the past couple of years has been devoted to the student team (see picture) we have been growing and developing. With Steve stepping back the team has done an amazing job of stepping forward to take the lead. Led by Lydia Clarke (full-time doctor) and an able team of graduates (Adam, Kate, Jane, Pieter, Luke, Stephen & Tom) and students (Hugo, Abi, Naomi & Tim) the team have hit the ground running and have had an encouraging start to the new term. It is a huge opportunity for each of them to grow in faith, grow as leaders and seek God as to how He would continue to use them in the years to come. We are so grateful for the ability to step back during this difficult time and so thankful to have such a great group of people to take the ministry forward in our absence. Please do continue to pray for the student ministry.

Please pray over the coming weeks:

For us...

- That the treatment would be effective for Debs and that she would experience healing & make a full recovery.
- That both Debs and I would know and experience the reality of Emmanuel, "God with us", and know deeply that He will be with us in all that is yet to be.
- That both of us would know God's direction, comfort and healing, and that we, the doctors, leaders, counsellors and friends will have supernatural wisdom, insight and grace.
- That God would continue to deepen our relationships with each other and with Himself

For the kids...

- That they would learn to trust God more as they pray for Debs each day and start seeing their prayers being answered
- That they would find helpful ways to express the upset and sense of loss they are experiencing and that each day they would still feel loved by both Mummy and Daddy.
- That they would enjoy time with the variety of people helping out (in particular Grannie who is giving in excess of 20 hours per week to helping) without feeling abandoned. Pray too for those who are helping us in this way.

For the student ministry...

- That the team (ably supported by our regional leaders Phil & Susan) would know God's presence and wisdom as they seek to take the ministry forward.
- That they would meet and disciple a new generation of students from a variety of backgrounds, in whose hearts God is already at work.

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

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