

McClure Mumblings



Steve & Debs serving with The Navigators in Southampton and beyond | May 2021 Edition



White Nothe, Ringstead, Dorset



The Great Cap, Dorset

Emerging from lockdown...

“But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love ... Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.”

1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

As we emerge from this latest period of lockdown in England (we entered phase 3 of the roadmap this week), we can really relate to Paul’s passion for those he is seeking to help. Just as it was not easy for Paul to be unable to revisit his friends in Thessalonica (see 2:17-20), so it has not been easy to be apart from friends and family during what have felt like long and challenging months. Paul and his team had visited Thessalonica briefly before having to leave in a hurry (Acts 17:1-10). Paul says that he had wanted to return but Satan had blocked the way. Still, he had been able to send his co-worker Timothy to encourage them and strengthen them in the faith. In the verses above we learn that Timothy had brought good news about their faith and love amidst all the difficulties that they had been facing. This enables Paul to say that now they *really live since they were standing firm in the Lord*. I really like how the Message translates it as *“knowing that your faith is alive keeps us alive.”*

We have been very grateful for the connectivity afforded by social media and video conferencing and we have been enjoying catching up with many of you through our Building to Last sessions. We haven’t needed to send a Timothy because we have been able to see you first-hand, albeit mostly online, although Formation School has been in-person since Easter. Where possible we have enjoyed walking with individuals and more recently, we have been able to see more people outdoors, but until now these opportunities have been limited. We were particularly blessed to have our dear friend Stephen Hartwell living with us from May 2020 until March 2021. This was a short-term transition period that lasted longer than expected but he has now moved into a flat of his own. For 9 months he lived in our downstairs front room which now houses a sofa-bed. As we long to reconnect face to face with many of you, please bear in mind that we are now able to put you up for a few nights if you wanted to visit!

More on the ministry over the page, but we also wanted to express our huge thanks for your prayers and for your financial support. Last time we wrote we were needing to raise additional financial support and we are excited to say that God has graciously continued to provide for all our needs through the gifts from many of you. If we have not heard from you for a while, we would love to hear how you are doing. It is always a huge encouragement to us to hear that you are standing firm and continuing to live out the calling God has laid upon your lives.

Ministry Update

Life has felt pretty full since the turn of the year and in particular since we began our new Building to Last ministry in earnest. Below are some highlights from these months:

Building to Last: In January, with another lockdown on the horizon we felt it right to begin meeting with people beyond their student years. Our strategy was to draw people together through a series of online gatherings and we initially invited many of those who had been involved with our student ministry in Southampton and some of our connections overseas as well. We set out looking at the life of Joseph: Beth Peterson shared on *Learning from Life*, Adam Collett shared on *Growing in maturity* and then Steve shared on *Running the Race*. The final part of this series will be next month and is entitled *Finishing with Resilience*. Typically, on these evenings there is an opportunity to reconnect, enjoy some input and a chance to process in smaller groups. Out of this has come four smaller generational groups which we have been meeting with. Our aim has been to support people in their different contexts of life/ministry and the contributions they are making there. We have been exploring life stages and have been framing this using Bible characters such as Joseph and David. All of these times have been a huge blessing and we are grateful to those who have been so eager to engage with us, many of whom are based outside Southampton and some outside the UK. We are encouraged by how these times have brought a focal point and energy to the task of making disciples of people beyond their student years.

Formation School: We are now well into the final term and it has been a really encouraging year with the students. The programme is an incredible opportunity to walk with a fixed group of people over a period of a year. This local ministry context brings a great deal of balance alongside the other things that we are doing and is a good fit for Steve's giftings. On a given week there is plenty to be done including organisation, administration, teaching and pastoral work. It has been fun seeing last year's graduates thriving in new areas of service and we are currently recruiting for next year's programme (running from mid-September to early July).

Serving the wider Navigator work: Debs continues to serve on the team that run the Nav Mums network and continues to enjoy being a part of this ministry. The group meets online once a month as a support to those in the Navigator family with young children. Steve is part of the International Missions Team alongside Stu Newland (St Andrews). Our team leader, Tim Forester has just stepped down from the team to begin a time of sabbatical. Steve has been helping to support two couples who are transitioning back to the UK following overseas assignments. We also continue to hold out hope of a low-key return to Norway this summer if an opportunity opens up.

To Hold up in Prayer...

- We thank God for blessing the new Building to Last gatherings. Please pray for us as we reflect on lessons learned and think through what the next phase needs to look like as we emerge from the pandemic.
- Please pray for a really good conclusion to this year's Formation School (Graduation is Sat 3 July) and for a great cohort of people to sign-up for next year's programme. Pray too for a new person to join our team as we seek to continue to raise up disciples who make disciples.
- Please pray for the kids who are still enjoying school and seem to be loving having all their friends back with them. We celebrated Aaron turning 5 and Jacob turning 7 with a weekend in Weymouth. Please pray too for our family holiday in the Lake District over half term.
- We are grateful for God's provision for us as a family especially over the period of transition at the end of last year. Please ask God to continue to help us to trust Him with our finances over the coming months.
- We thank God for our recent National Navigator Conference (7-9 May) which we both attended and for the Country Leader Discernment Conference that Steve was a part of. We are excited by the prospect of Phil & Ros Boydell (current Nav Scotland leaders) becoming UK country leaders in September.



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