



## Sabbatical Rhythms...

<sup>6</sup>So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. **Colossians 2:6-7**

In our last newsletter we mentioned that Steve was having a sabbatical between January and March this year and so we start this letter with an update of that time. It had been a long time coming, but what a blessing it was to have a time away from everyday ministry responsibility. We are very grateful to those who took on extra things in order to make space for Steve to step away. His first priority was to take a break. Sometimes you don't realise how hard you have been walking until you stop! Of course, family life continued on at some pace, but it was lovely for a short while at least, that any ministry issues that arose were not Steve's problem! It has been some time since Steve felt quite so relaxed! Steve is still the kind of person who will always find something to be doing. He chose to spend one day a week out walking, and covered a combined 180 miles around the South Downs, South Coast, New Forest and local Hampshire area. The rhythm of walking proved a particularly helpful space to think, pray and process all that God was saying to him. You may have seen some of the photos on Instagram - this was definitely a massive highlight of the time for him and was an incredibly helpful rhythm to have.

Steve was also able to devote extended time to studying the Bible, and chose to focus on the life of David in the books of 1&2 Samuel and 1&2 Chronicles. He has now nearly finished listening more than 100 sermons given on this topic by Alistair Begg, and has read quite a few Christian books on the topic also. We've also been covering the life of David in our church homegroup, and Steve has reworked and expanded his Bible Study materials on this topic. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a series on the life of David will be coming to our Building to Last 20s to 40s ministry in the Autumn! Another key strand was to look to the future, and a number of conversations were helpful in this regard. The past 6 months Steve has been working with Rob (an ex-Navigator friend) who also facilitated a mini "360 degree" review. This was very focused, and specifically designed to affirm the gifts that Steve believes that God has given him in the areas of teaching, leadership, initiating/pioneering and administration. It was a very positive experience and will be a considerable help in sifting through the growing number of invitations and opportunities coming his way. His desire is to make his very best contribution within the Kingdom of God in line with the gifts God has given him.

All in all, this was a very positive experience for Steve, as well as for the whole family. The verses above have also proved an encouragement to keep on living in Christ. How easy it can be to lose sight of Jesus amidst all the busyness of life and ministry. Yet we are to be rooted in Him, built up in Him and strengthened in faith. We are hugely thankful for the opportunity to devote more time to building strong foundations, reflecting on the journey and preparing for all that lies ahead.

# Family & Ministry Update

While many tend to come back from Sabbatical to new roles, we always knew that, initially at least, it would be more of the same. Debs has of course been continuing doing what she was already doing. Below is an update on where we are at with our various roles and responsibilities. Further details of our upcoming trip to Norway are in a separate letter.

**Formation School:** It has been a strange year without Formation School. In its absence we did more with our alumni and Steve worked on a proposal for the church leadership for a new ministry trainee scheme. More recently the focus has been on recruiting a new cohort of students to begin Formation School in September. We've been doing things in the services, talking to other churches, and we are running a Taster evening on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May. **Please pray that God would lead us to those in whose hearts He is already at work, and who would benefit from being a part of this next year.** Meanwhile, the church leadership have signed off on an outline for a new Ministry Trainee Scheme, and we are hoping to begin with a pilot from January 2026. Again, your prayers are hugely valued for this also, as further work is needed to flesh out the finer details of how the scheme is implemented.



**Building to Last:** This year we've been continuing to work with an online group of 10-15 people. We've been thinking about how we get alongside others and have been using the One Another statements in the New Testament to frame this. It's been good to reconnect with this post-Sabbatical, and we're excited to see how this could develop in future years. We would particularly love to see more of our ever-growing number of Norway-linked connections engaging with this monthly opportunity.



**National Work:** Last month the Navigators celebrated 70 years working in the UK. We attended our National Conference at the Hayes Conference venue in Derbyshire, and we were thrilled to see over 350 people present. It was a fitting celebration where we enjoyed cake, ceilidh and the final talks from the outgoing International Director, Mutua Mahiaini, who has served for the past 10 years. Because it was such a special celebration, we really enjoyed seeing some people who we had not seen in years!

Coming back to his role as leader of the International Missions Team (IMT) has been exciting for Steve, and it's been encouraging to see how things progressed in his absence. There is a real sense of teamwork with everyone playing their part. Our focus over the next few months will be on our upcoming summer programmes (inc. our own Norway trip), and catching up with some of our mission partners. Steve also enjoyed reconnecting with the City work across Southampton, and we are preparing for some gatherings over the summer, and the national roadshow which is coming to Southampton on **Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September** (more details to follow). **Please pray for our summer teams, and for the movement of disciple-makers across both Southampton and the UK more widely.**

**Family:** Ben (16 yrs) is currently working hard towards his GCSE exams, and is hoping to start learning to drive later in the year, when he turns 17. He has places at several colleges for next year. The other big change is for Jacob (11yrs) who starts Secondary school in September, leaving Aaron (9yrs) as the Senior McClure on site at Primary school. Sam (12 yrs) and Naomi (14yrs) both have September birthdays, and will be moving into years 8 and 10 respectively. **Please pray for all of them as they look forward to Norway, and various camps this summer.**

**Update from Debs:** Debs continues to enjoy her different roles and responsibilities. Back in December she ran the 'Families Together at Christmas' event, and we were encouraged by the number of people there from church and non-church connections. Families Together has continued to go well, and we are seeing fruit from this ministry as several families have started attending church each Sunday. **Church have asked Debs to consider joining the team to launch a new toddler group for those on the East side of our city. Please pray for her as she considers this.** Debs continues to be encouraged by those she meets up with 1:1, walking with them through the ups and downs of life. Meeting with these individuals continues to be a real highlight for Debs and a great encouragement.



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